<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
<th><strong>Stephanie O’Grady</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis Title</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thirst for Fullness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis Sub-Title</strong></td>
<td><strong>An Application of John Paul II’s Theology of the Body to the Twilight Saga</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis Director</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maura Hearden, Ph.D.</strong> (Theology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The current American obsession with Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, a series of books about a love story between Bella, an average American teenager, and Edward, an immortal vampire, reveals that there are certain enduring truths about humanity which must be addressed in every age. The relationship of Bella and Edward parallels man’s thirst for fullness through communion with another, but ultimately falls short of satisfying the desire for eternal communion. The theological anthropology presented by John Paul II in his theology of the body, reveals what is lacking in Meyer’s presentation of the human condition: man’s desire for communion, which is written into the human person, is only fully satisfied through man’s relationship with his Creator.
Outline

I. John Paul II’s theology of the body presents a more adequate answer to the questions raised by Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga*.
   a. Through the lens of theological anthropology the entire human condition can be rightly viewed in light of the human person’s relationship with the Divine Creator.
   b. The truth that man was made in the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) is essential to understanding man’s unique position within the created world, as well as to understanding the basis for John Paul’s theology of the body.

II. The success and content of the *Twilight Saga* make it an important area of exploration for anyone evaluating the truths which endure in the modern American culture.
   a. Meyer’s stories have steadily grown in popularity over the last six years with the release of each new book and the screen adaptations of the novels.
   b. *Twilight*, the first novel in the series, is a story about the love between Bella and Edward and the obstacles they must face in trying to continue their relationship.
   c. The relationship of Bella and Edward itself, from their obsessive love to Bella’s need for a perpetual savior, provides the most insights into the depths of the human heart.

III. John Paul’s theology of the body reveals expounds upon the truth that man was created as male and female in the image of God.
   a. The key to understanding the theology of the body lies in the fact that the human person was made to both receive their life as a gift and to give themselves as gift to another.
   b. The entire work of the theology of the body is broken down into two parts, the first of which, the words spoken by Christ to the Pharisees, are most applicable to the *Twilight Saga*.
   c. The starting place for the theology of the body is the beginning of the Book of Genesis, the creation of man and woman.
   d. Original solitude is one of the three original experiences of man during which man comes to see himself as unique among creation, as created for his own sake.
   e. Once man sees that he is created for his own sake, male and female can give themselves to one another as sincere gifts.

IV. An application of John Paul’s theology of the body reveals a deeper thirst for fullness than cannot be satisfied in the earthly relationship between Edward and Bella.
   a. The *Twilight Saga* is not the first series of popular books in any age to revolve around a tragic and obsessive love story.
   b. Certain aspects of Edward and Bella’s relationship, such as Edward’s affirmation of Bella’s personhood and their desire to be together forever, point to deeper desires of the human heart which can only be satisfied through Divine Love.
   c. The characters of Carlisle and Edward both appear to experience a type of original solitude at different points in their lives when they realize their need for communion with another in order to find fulfillment.
d. Edward and Bella’s relationship closely follows the progression of love set forth by John Paul, but they do not succeed in attaining the last level of love in which human love is taken up and transformed by Divine Love.

e. John Paul’s theology of the body is founded upon the idea of grace building upon nature: human love is not destroyed but lifted up into the realm of the Absolute.
Only through the recognition that man is not the origin of existence can he come to realize the true destiny of the relationship between man and woman.

It is Jesus you seek when you dream of happiness, He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you, He is the beauty to which you are so attracted, it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise.

—John Paul II, World Youth Day 2000

Introduction

Since 2005, Stephenie Meyer, author of the *Twilight Saga*, has captured the attention and the imagination of contemporary American culture through her enthralling and tragic love story about a young teenage girl who falls head over heels in love with a vampire. Over the course of six years, the audiences for Meyer’s fictional creation expanded far beyond the scope of the literary world as the books were converted into successful screenplays, and myriads of websites and fan paraphernalia surrounding the *Saga* began to emerge. When Meyer’s fantastical love story was first published, it was a subject of fascination primarily for the female teenage population, but eventually, the mothers and boyfriends of these girls were drawn into the mysterious world of vampires, shape shifters and undying love.¹ As of today, on the global scale, the *Twilight Saga* has sold more than 100 million books and has been published in almost 50 countries.²

---

As per usual with such cultural phenomena, the media, as well as certain Christian groups, were quick to respond to the success of the series. The darker storyline and the preponderance of mythical creatures caused many Christian and conservative groups to condemn the series as harmful, and by the standards of some groups, as evil. Despite Meyer’s use of beliefs and practices considered superstitious, as well as creatures that represent evil within the Christian tradition, an assumed theological anthropology lies at the core of the *Twilight Saga* which cries out for a deeper evaluation. When such an evaluation is undertaken, certain parallels with aspects of Christian theological anthropology are revealed. These parallels emerge from universally asked questions which are best answered not in Meyer’s fiction, but in the late Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body.

The Catholic Church may disapprove of the belief in vampires and shape shifters, but the Church would affirm the observation that there are certain enduring truths to which man is drawn. These truths appear in every age and in every culture, although their original beauty is often twisted and degraded. The popularity of the *Twilight Saga* contains within it a vital truth for every human person. The contemporary American woman’s obsession with the *Twilight Saga* reveals in a special way the innate desire of every human person for communion, a desire which has recently been effectively addressed by John Paul II in his writings entitled *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body.*

---

theological anthropology presented by John Paul II not only brings to light the roots of this desire in man’s creation in the *Imago Dei* (Image of God), but also shows that the fullest meaning of the desire for communion is only revealed and fulfilled when man accepts the gift of his creation from God, and in turn makes a gift of himself in love to his Creator. For this reason, the communion between Bella and Edward will be the primary focus of this evaluation. The mythical elements of the story as well as the other characters will only be used as supportive evidence when necessary. They present their own difficulties for the media and Christian groups.

*Theological Anthropology*

In order to proceed, it is necessary to define the terms “theological anthropology” and *imago Dei* (image of God), two key terms to understanding how the *Twilight Saga* can reveal certain truths about the nature of man. The word “anthropology” comes from the Greek word for mankind, *anthropos*. It is essentially the study of the human condition. Being the only species on the planet which can study itself, human beings find themselves in a unique position. To some it may seem strange to devote an entire science⁴ to the study of what it means to be human. After all, do we not know from experience what it means to be human? Should we not be able to understand our existence without reflection? And yet, despite each person’s intimate experience of their humanity, in the end, the words of St. Augustine ring true: “I became for myself a great question.”⁵

---

⁴ Science is here used in the broader term-scientia, body of knowledge.
⁵ Carl Anderson and Jose Granados, *Called to Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 2.
seeks to answer three essential questions for man: “Who am I?”, “What am I?”, and “How ought I to be in the world?”⁶ These are not merely abstract questions, but, rather, they are questions which have important consequences in everyday life.⁷

Only within the modern age has theological anthropology come to be seen as a discipline of its own. As is the case with anthropology in general, theological anthropology still seeks to understand man in the fullest sense.⁸ However, what distinguishes theological anthropology is the discipline’s core belief that the human person can only be fully understood when his or her essential relationship with the Creator of the Universe is taken into consideration.⁹ In other words, “the human person is always-already defined and determined by his relationship with God.”¹⁰ The human person’s relationship with God is constitutive of his existence in the world. If man can only come to fully understand himself in relation to God, then the person and works of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God Himself who possessed both a human and a divine nature, becomes the key source of revelation for humanity.¹¹

Because of the fact that theological anthropology maintains its object of study, man himself, the discipline’s search for knowledge and understanding will always be somewhat lacking because of the intricacies and subtleties present in

---

⁷ Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 3.
each human being. In addition, although the key relationship in theological anthropology is that between God and man, there is little direct information present in the Bible about the meaning of being human. The task of theological anthropology is therefore the task of every human person: to strive constantly for a deeper understanding of the meaning of being human in light of the revelation of God in the person of Christ Jesus.

*Imago Dei*

The fact that man must understand himself in relation to God, and the fact that Jesus Christ “fully reveals man to himself,” point to a deeper reality which is an underlying tenant of both theological anthropology and of John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. When considering the definition and implications of the *imago Dei* as found primarily in the Book of Genesis, this paper will rely on the interpretation of John Paul II. Not every theologian or branch of theology agrees with his interpretation, but that debate is left to other projects. The deeper reality is the creation of man in the *imago Dei*, is detailed primarily in the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. The opening chapter of Genesis posits the bold claim that God made man in his own image: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Being made in the *imago Dei* lies at the heart of the reason why man finds himself

---

to be unique in the world, the only creature who can develop an entire discipline dedicated to understanding itself.

At the very beginning of a work founded on the belief in an invisible God who cannot be depicted by images and who transcends human understanding, God declares his intent to image himself in finite, physical and imperfect beings. Such a juxtaposition of the human and the divine in one theological assertion opens the door to a fundamental reorientation of each. Consequently, this statement has been understood by many theologians to stand at the very center of a properly Christian concept of what it means to be human, and the starting point of theological anthropology.\(^{15}\)

Despite being the most central point in theology and theological anthropology, the Bible is sufficiently vague about the meaning of the creation of man in the image of the invisible God. There are, however, certain main conclusions which need to be understood in order to grasp a general understanding for the purposes set forth. First, at the heart of the *imago Dei* lies the belief that man, meaning the human person, reflects and represents God in creation.\(^{16}\) In the ancient near east, a representation or an image of a god was not a merely a depiction of the deity, rather, the image manifested the power and presence of the god itself.\(^{17}\) The same principle applies to the image of God in man. Although there remains a real difference between God and man, the image of God in creation, man

---


\(^{16}\) Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 31.

\(^{17}\) Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 32.
images God himself because he manifests the presence of God in creation.\textsuperscript{18} Man is a real symbol of God’s presence in creation, meaning that man is a sign which both points to God and manifests God’s presence at the same time.

Second, in manifesting God’s presence, man shows forth the personal and relational aspects of God. God revealed himself as a personal being through his creation of man himself as a personal being and through his personal interactions with man. God in himself is a Trinity of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From all eternity, the Father gives himself to the Son in a gift of Love. The Son receives the gift of the Father and returns that gift. The exchange of Love between them is the person of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when man images the personal nature and relationality of the Godhead, he images the eternal exchange of Love between the Divine Persons of the Trinity. The relational aspect of the \textit{imago Dei} is most clearly seen in the second creation account when God creates a helper for Adam, after declaring that it is not good for Adam to be alone.\textsuperscript{19} According to John Paul II, God created man as male and female so that together they might fully image God. Only through their relationship can they fulfill this task of manifesting the personal presence of God in creation.\textsuperscript{20}

Thirdly, the \textit{imago Dei} is first and foremost a gift of the Creator to man.\textsuperscript{21} God calls man to participate in making his presence known in creation. Man enters

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{18} Cortez, \textit{Theological Anthropology}, 32.  
\textsuperscript{19} Cortez, \textit{Theological Anthropology}, 34.  
\textsuperscript{20} Cortez, \textit{Theological Anthropology}, 35.  
\textsuperscript{21} Cortez, \textit{Theological Anthropology}, 35.
the world in a spirit of wonder; wonder about creation and wonder about himself. He finds himself to be a great mystery. The gift of being created in the *imago Dei* is a gift of love which starts man on a journey which can only find its true end in relationship with the Creator; “the experience of love is the birthplace of wonder, the first step along a new journey toward the fullness of meaning.”22 At the heart of the understanding of the *imago Dei* in the writings of John Paul II is the belief that the *imago Dei* is a call to love. “Man remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love.”23 From the beginning, man is oriented toward love, a truth which he cannot escape and which is present in every age and culture.

**Twilight**

*Background Information*

About three things I was absolutely positive.

First, Edward was a vampire.

Second, there was a part of him--

and I didn’t know how dominant that part might be--

that thirsted for my blood.

And third, I was unconditionally, and irrevocably in love with him.

---

So reads the excerpt on the back cover of *Twilight*, the first in the four-book series. With these seven lines, Stephenie Meyer was able to entice thousands of readers to enter her literary world of “vegetarian” vampires and love sick teenagers. The series was born out of a dream Meyer had on June 2, 2003. On her website she recounts how she remembers the exact date when she began to write the story which would take her and her writings to the level of cultural phenomena. The morning of June 2, 2003, the date her children began swimming lessons, she awoke from a dream in which two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was just your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire. They were discussing the difficulties inherent in the facts that A) they were falling in love with each other while B) the vampire was particularly attracted to the scent of her blood, and was having a difficult time restraining himself from killing her immediately.24

For the next three months, Meyer continued to develop the plotline and the characters. Chapter after chapter was written until eventually she had written an entire book chronicling the story of characters she had decided to name Edward, an old, romantic name, and Bella, the name she wanted to give to the daughter she desired to have. This was the first book Meyer had written, and the first time she had written anything for six years.

---

After climbing through the hoops and mastering the skills needed to navigate the complicated world of publishing companies and literary agents, Meyer’s book was published by Little, Brown and Company in 2005. Over the next three years, Meyer also wrote and published the rest of the Saga: New Moon (2006), Eclipse (2007) and Breaking Dawn (2008). While writing the books, Meyer could not have possibly imagined the popularity which her story would attain. By 2010, just five years after the first novel was released, book sales totaled 85 million.\textsuperscript{25} In 2008 alone, her book sales totaled over 22 million copies, making her bestselling author for 2008.\textsuperscript{26} One place to witness this popularity is on Facebook, a social network. As of March 8, 2011, there were 19,584,515 fans who “like” the Twilight fan page on Facebook.

With the release of each new novel, Meyer’s fan base grew. Fans were desperate to continue their journey with Edward and Bella. The four books possess a total of about 2,300 pages, with the fourth book being the longest. For the purposes of this paper, only the first book will be evaluated. Although the relationship between Edward and Bella does mature over the course of their struggles in the second, third and fourth books, the beginning of their relationship provides sufficient information and succinct parameters for evaluation. In addition,

\textsuperscript{25} Clarke The Twilight Mystique, 3.
a plot synopsis of the first book is necessary to understand the context for the relationship between Edward and Bella which remains the main focus of this paper.

*Summary of Twilight*

Not surprisingly, Meyer begins her book involving vampires with a short quip about death. The short preface of the story draws the reader in as the narrator muses about death and dying in the place of a loved one. The main plot line then begins. The novel is told from the first person perspective of Isabella Swan (Bella,) who is a junior in high school and is moving to Forks, Washington to live with her father. Her parents are divorced and she has decided to live with her father for the time being to allow her mother to be with her new husband. Bella herself is a character to which teenage girls can relate as she encounters situations common to this age group. She struggles with moving to a new town, finding new friends, and fitting in at school. On her first day of school, she encounters the Cullen family, five blessedly beautiful students who have been adopted by Dr. Cullen and his wife. She quickly learns that the family keeps to themselves and there is most definitely something different about them. Over the course of her first day, she comes in contact with Edward Cullen who attempts to stay as far away from her as possible in class and to distance himself from her immediately as the class ends. Bella is distressed by his treatment of her presence and is determined to discover why he has acted in such a fashion. Despite the tension involved in their first encounter, Edward begins to redeem himself when he returns to school a few days later. After
only one encounter with him upon his return, Bella finds herself drawn to Edward in a way she can barely explain to herself. Their relationship is solidified and the story picks up the pace when Edward saves Bella from being crushed by a car. He travels inexplicably quickly across the parking lot and blocks the oncoming car with his bare hand.

Bella and Edward find that they cannot help but be attracted to one another; they cannot deny their desire to be together. Slowly but surely, Bella discovers other oddities about Edward: his cold hands, his uncanny ability to show up exactly when she needs to be saved from a group of attackers. As she pieces together the information she has gathered, Bella gets closer and closer to the truth about Edward and his family. Eventually, the truth comes to the surface and Bella concludes that Edward is a vampire. Instead of scaring her away, the prospect intrigues her because she still cannot deny her desire to be with Edward. Most of the plot in *Twilight* centers on the developing relationship between Edward and Bella, in particular on Bella’s discoveries of the “truth” about vampires.

Meyer’s vampires are not the vampires of the Dracula movies or those of most popular fiction. The vampires are immortal, they have cold skin and no heartbeat, they can move impossibly fast and are incredibly strong, they have rock hard skin which shimmers and shines in the sunlight, and some of them have extra abilities (such as Edward’s ability to read the mind of everyone with the exception of Bella). The Cullen family is a rare breed of vampire because they are “vegetarians.” Dr.
Cullen, the heart of the family, discovered during the early days of his immortal “life” that he could survive by feeding on animal, rather than human blood, and his family adheres to the same restrictions. Even though Edward does not drink the blood of humans, he admits to Bella that her blood is particularly attractive for him and at the beginning of their relationship he struggles between his thirst for her blood and his love for her.

Just as Bella becomes more integrated into the Cullen family, a further problem develops: a group of three travelling vampires shows up in Forks while Bella is with the Cullens and one of them is a tracker who becomes intent on hunting and killing Bella. After a series of attempts to escape the tracker, Bella falls into his trap. Edward and the Cullens arrive just in time to save Bella and kill her attacker. Bella ends up in the hospital with a host of injuries as a result of the attack on her life. Bella and Edward once again profess that they do not want to live without each other, and so Edward promises to stay as long as she wants him with her. The novel concludes with a normal and somewhat ironic event—Bella’s high school prom.

Over the course of the next three books, Edward and Bella go through a period of separation, the temptation of another man in Bella’s life and a continuous threat on Bella’s existence and the family that Carlisle has built. In the end, Edward and Bella marry and have a child. Ultimately, Bella is granted her desire to become an immortal so that she and Edward can live together forever. Throughout
the books, there are many deep themes presented such as Edward’s struggle with his knowledge about the state of his soul, and whether or not he wants Bella to be in the same questionable situation, whether or not he wants to risk her soul to be with her forever. These questions are important, but for the current purpose, they are all secondary to the deeper theme of the relationship between Edward and Bella.

*The Relationship of Edward and Bella*

Edward and Bella’s relationship is the crux of the story. Although the fact that Edward is a vampire has important effects on their relationship, it is not the most significant detail. The characteristics which are of most importance for the present endeavor are the obsessive qualities of their relationship, Edward’s role as savior, the safety and security Bella finds in Edward, and an experience of inequality in their relationship.

Even without the vampiric aspect, Edward and Bella’s relationship would be one which would concern most parents if they discovered their son or daughter in the same situation. After only one true encounter with Edward, Bella admits “If I was being honest with myself, I knew I was eager to go to school because I would see Edward Cullen. And that was very, very stupid.”27 The feeling of obsession begins after Edward saves her from a car accident. “I was consumed by the mystery Edward presented. And more than a little obsessed by Edward himself. Stupid,

stupid, stupid. I wasn’t as eager to escape Forks as I should be, as any normal, sane person would be.”  

The extent of her obsession is evident from the fact that she admits the foolishness of her actions, but is consumed by thoughts of being with Edward.

Edward’s struggle with his attraction to Bella also exhibits obsessive qualities but in a different manner. He mentions often to Bella that she should avoid being with him because she is in danger when he’s around. Edward thinks it best to distance himself from Bella but cannot bring himself to follow through on that concern. When he first finds himself attracted to Bella, he tells her, “It’s better if we’re not friends...Trust me.” However, very shortly after he finds he cannot live without her presence.

“I got tired of trying to stay away from you. So I’m giving up.” He was still smiling, but his ocher eyes were serious.

“Giving up?” I repeated in confusion.

“Yes--giving up trying to be good. I’m just going to do what I want now, and let the chips fall where they may.”

---

28 Meyer, Twilight, 67.
29 Meyer, Twilight, 74.
30 Meyer, Twilight, 88.
Ultimately, Edward finds himself in the same position as Bella. They both are aware their feelings for one another may be too extreme and they are dangerous for one another, but they cannot resist their desires.

Connected to this obsessive desire to be together, is Edward’s role as a savior figure in Bella’s life. Bella, as an average teenage girl, is extremely accident prone and seems to be drawn into life threatening situations. Edward comments, “I’m definitely fighting fate trying to keep you alive.”31 The pattern set forth in the school parking lot when Edward stepped in and stopped a car from crushing Bella is repeated often throughout the book. At one point, Bella strays into a dangerous situation when she separates from her friends while they are shopping in the city of Port Angeles. Edward and Bella have decided to be friends by this point, but nothing further had developed. Danger quickly approached Bella in the form of a group of men who are obviously planning on attacking Bella, who they trap in a dark side street. Edward swoops in at the last moment to pull her into the car and drive away. After this event, Bella comments, “I wanted nothing more than to be alone with my perpetual savior.”32 Edward and Bella thus both come to see Edward as the savior. Edward sees it as his job to protect accident-prone Bella, who also comes to see that Edward is present to save her life.

Within this same event, the safety and security which Bella finds in Edward’s presence also comes to the forefront. When he arrives to pull her away from the

32 Meyer, *Twilight*, 166.
attackers, she admits, “It was amazing how instantaneously the choking fear vanished, amazing how suddenly the feeling of security washed over me--even before I was off the street--as soon as I heard his voice.” As a result of Edward’s heroic actions, Bella comes to learn to feel safe with him, despite the fact he ultimately poses more of a danger to her life than any other attacker.

The fact that Edward saves Bella’s life so often throughout the story, along with the fact that he is an unimaginably beautiful immortal, leads Bella to question whether or not she deserves this relationship with Edward. She finds herself utterly in love with him and yet, she cannot help but question why he has chosen her over other girls, in particular over Rosalie, his adopted sister, who was originally brought in the family as a partner for Edward. Bella’s questioning highlights the doubt she feels about the inequality of their relationship, which is a key characteristic. Bella’s fear about not being sufficient for Edward becomes clear in the following conversation which Edward begins:

“No, I really think that”...

“You’re wrong.”

I glanced up to see that his eyes were gentle.

---

33 Meyer, *Twilight*, 162.
“You can’t know that,” I disagreed in a whisper. I shook my head in doubt, though my heart throbbed at his words and I wanted so badly to believe them.

“What makes you think so?” His liquid topaz eyes were penetrating...

“Well, apart from the obvious...sometimes it seems like you’re trying to say goodbye when you’re saying something else”

“Perceptive,” he whispered...“What do you mean by ‘the obvious’?”

“Well, look at me,” I said...“I’m absolutely ordinary...And look at you.” I waved my hand toward him and all his bewildering perfection.

His brow creased angrily for a moment, then smoothed as his eyes took on a knowing look. “You don’t see yourself very clearly, you know....trust me just this once, you are the opposite of ordinary.”

Although Bella seems to think that she could in no way deserve Edward, Edward clearly believes the opposite and strives through his actions to show this to Bella.

---

Bella’s struggle with what she sees as a deficiency in the relationship on her end is an important struggle for her within their relationship. Through the struggle, Edward “saves” Bella by helping her to know herself. These key characteristics of the relationship between Edward and Bella highlight both strengths and weaknesses on the part of the characters. John Paul II’s theology of the body will be detailed in the next section and applied to their relationship in the final section in such a way as to show how his theological anthropology can bolster the strengths of the relationship and redeems its shortcomings.

Theology of the Body

Key to Understanding the Theology of the Body

In his thorough and in-depth introduction to the *Theology of the Body* (TOB), Michael Waldstein states, “With Pascal Ide, one can condense the whole argument of TOB in the statement, ‘Gift expresses the essential truth of the human body.’”\(^{35}\) John Paul II’s theological anthropology, which is the TOB, flows from this truth and finds its fulfillment in the same truth about the nature of the gift of the human body, of the human person. John Paul adamantly states that,

We find ourselves, therefore, within the very bone marrow of the anthropological reality whose name is ‘body,’ human body. Yet, as can easily be observed, this marrow is not only anthropological but also essentially theological. The theology of

---

the body, which is linked from the beginning with the creation of man in the image of God, becomes in some way also a theology of sex, or rather a theology of masculinity and femininity, which has its point of departure...in Genesis.\textsuperscript{36}

The whole of TOB is grounded in the belief that human beings were created as male and female in the image of God, and his creation as such means man lives to make a gift of himself in imitation of the Trinitarian God who is an eternal exchange of love.

\textit{Overview and Structure of Theology of the Body}

TOB is the accumulation of 129 Wednesday general audiences which began on September 5, 1979 and concluded on November 28, 1984.\textsuperscript{37} Although John Paul wrote prolifically throughout his entire priesthood and papacy, TOB is the summary of all those other works and is essentially his masterpiece. The talks emerged as John Paul’s response to the sexual revolution. From the beginning of his priestly ministry, John Paul knew that he had a “special love for love,”\textsuperscript{38} in particular for the spousal love between married couples. It was the beauty of love which captured his heart and drove him to display this beauty to the world through his writing and preaching: “love is fair, it is beautiful. After all, young people are always searching for the beauty in love.”\textsuperscript{39} Despite the fact that John Paul lived a celibate life, TOB presents profound and redeeming truths about marital love which cut to the core of

\textsuperscript{36} Waldstein, 165.
\textsuperscript{37} Waldstein, 4.
\textsuperscript{38} Waldstein, 2.
\textsuperscript{39} Waldstein, 2.
the experience of being human, the experience of being masculine and feminine in the image of God.

Pascal Ide’s brief summary of TOB finds its roots in a larger statement from the Second Vatican Council’s document *Gaudium et Spes*, The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World,” which states, “Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prays to the Father, ‘that all might be one...as we are one’ (Jn 17:21-22) and thus offers vistas closed to human reason, indicates a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God’s sons in truth and love. This likeness shows that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self; cf. Luke 17:33.40

The sentiments of this statement can be traced through the entirety of John Paul’s corpus of works, most especially in TOB. Within the text, there is contained the two fundamental principles of TOB: first, the truth that man was made for his own sake and not as a mere object for use reveals the “personalistic norm” of John Paul, and second, the truth that only through a sincere gift of himself can man find himself, his true identity.41

---

40 Waldstein, 23.
41 Waldstein, 23.
The meaning behind these two principles becomes clear through Waldstein’s analysis of these truths in a triangle of theses, the hinge of which is the core belief in love as a gift of self.42

1. To love is to give oneself.

2. The spousal meaning of man and woman is the paradigmatic case of a total gift of self in our experience.

3. The Trinity is the exemplar of love and gift.

The definition of love at the first point of the triangle is essential both to the Trinitarian exchange of love and the spousal love which is the most perfect example of love as a gift of self found in creation. The gift of self that is found in spousal love is analogous to the perfect gift of self found in the Trinity, “in the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit.”43 The spousal love between a man and a woman finds its true meaning in the communion of persons in the Trinity itself, as

42 Waldstein, 23.
43 Waldstein, 24.
portrayed by the arrow of the triangle which descends from the Trinity to spousal love.\(^{44}\)

The task which John Paul sought to complete with TOB resulted in a complex work which has been studied intently by theologians since its presentation. The original text can be overwhelming at times, and only portions of the entire text will be expounded upon for the purpose of this paper. However, in order to understand sections of TOB, the overall structure of the work must be understood. With a general picture of the way John Paul sought to achieve his purpose of presenting “an integral vision of man,”\(^{45}\) and defending “the spousal meaning of the body against alienation between person and body in the Cartesian vision of nature,”\(^{46}\) the individual sections of the writings take on their true value. John Paul himself, in his last catechesis on the subject, set forth the structure he had presented in the Wednesday Audiences: “The first part is devoted to the analysis of the words of Christ, which prove to be suitable for opening the present topic...The second part of the catechesis is devoted to the analysis of the sacrament based on Ephesians.”\(^{47}\) Together, the two parts form what John Paul referred to as an “adequate anthropology.”\(^{48}\)

The first part of the text, on the words of Christ, can be further broken down by the three words of Christ which John Paul presented as corresponding to the

\(^{44}\) Waldstein, 24.
\(^{45}\) Waldstein, 107.
\(^{46}\) Waldstein, 107.
\(^{47}\) Waldstein, 107.
\(^{48}\) Waldstein, 107.
Lord's appeal to the “Beginning,” to the “Human Heart,” and to the “Resurrection.” These three words of Christ address the position of man from the beginning, the middle, and the end.49 “In these three words, Jesus speaks about one and the same thing: God’s plan for human love.”50 The focus of this paper will be Chapter One of Part I: “Christ Appeals to the Beginning,” which sets out “God’s original plan for human love.”51 The original plan is the key which unlocks every human experience, and thus unlocks all the subsequent sections of TOB. Without a return to what it originally meant, and still means, to be human, to be made in the *imago Dei*, man cannot understand how to make a return to God, the source of his life. John Paul’s purpose was not to moralize but to show, as Jesus did, that a redemption of the body is still possible.

TOB begins at the beginning, with Christ’s words in Matthew, Chapter 19:

> Some of the Pharisees came to him to test him and asked him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?’ And he answered them, ‘Have you not read that from the beginning, the Creator created them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife and the two will be one flesh?’ So it is that they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined let man not separate.’ They objected, ‘Why did Moses order to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?’ Jesus answered, ‘Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.’ (Mt. 19: 3-8)

49 Waldstein, 115.
50 Waldstein, 115.
51 Waldstein, 115.
By appealing to the beginning, Christ was instructing the Pharisees, as well as those today who read His words, to refer to the two creation accounts in Genesis in which it is stressed that man was created by God as male and female. The information found in the two creation stories unlocks the meaning of man’s existence.

**Appeal to the Beginning**

John Paul treats the two accounts separately and that pattern will be followed in the present endeavor, but it must also be understood that although these are two separate accounts, they have become intimately connected as a result of their sequential placement in the Book of Genesis. They may have been written at different times, in different locations, but they have now been theologically connected. They convey the same essential truth about the creation of man as male and female in the image of God, and yet they are also able to provide different nuances of the human condition. In addition, before treating these accounts, it is important to note that although they may fall under the genre of myth, the Jewish writers were attempting to use this literary genre to demythologize their creation accounts. They were able to use the same techniques and structure as other myths present in the Ancient Near East to frame the uniqueness of their accounts. Although not all of the information should be taken literally, it should also not be taken as mere fantasy. The myth served the greater purpose of presenting the

---

53 Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 27.
essential truths. John Paul writes in TOB that myth “does not refer to fictitious-fabulous content, but simply to an anarchic way of expressing deeper content...we discover that content under the stratum of the ancient narrative...”\textsuperscript{54} The truths presented are so deep the only way to fully present them is through the mythic narratives.

In TOB, John Paul focuses primarily on the second creation account, but does not fail to first set forth the truths present in the first account. The first account is known as the “Elohist” text because of its designation of God as Elohim, historically, this account is more recent than the second. The Elohist text describes the creation of the cosmos in seven successive days, culminating with the creation of man, and then the subsequent seventh day on which God rests. The account contains what John Paul calls “a powerful metaphysical content.”\textsuperscript{55} The metaphysical content lies in the creation of man as described in the account, “God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; man and woman he created him” (Gen. 1:27), which is connected with God’s command to “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule” (Gen. 1:28). Creation and procreation are intimately linked and all of creation is called good by the Creator.\textsuperscript{56}

The second creation account takes on a more subjective and psychological nature than the first.\textsuperscript{57} It is known as the “Yahwist” text because the name Yahweh

\textsuperscript{54} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 8:2.
\textsuperscript{55} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 2:5.
\textsuperscript{56} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 2:5.
\textsuperscript{57} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 3:1.
is used to refer to God. The second account carries out the themes of the first in a different manner: it is the playing out subjectively of the objective fact of man being made in the image of God, as found in the first account. Rather than a simple sentence describing the creation of man in the image of God, the second account records that man was created first and when God saw that it was not good for him to be alone, “With the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he formed a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This time she is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones. She will be called woman because from man she has been taken” (Gen. 2:22-23). The passage concludes with the words Christ uses against the Pharisees, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh. Now they were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame” (Gen. 2:24-25).

Immediately following the second creation account in the Book of Genesis, the story of the Fall of man from his state of original innocence is recounted. In light of this, it is particularly important to recall that Christ told the Pharisees to appeal to the account of creation which details man’s original state before he turns from God. Christ does not condone the Pharisee’s mosaic justification for divorce, rather, he appeals to the words of the first divine order...Christ’s answer is decisive and clear. For this reason, we must draw normative conclusions from it, which have an essential significance...for the theology of man and for the theology of the body, which, as a particular aspect of

---

58 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 3:1.
59 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 3:3.
theological anthropology, is constituted on the foundation of word of God who reveals himself.\textsuperscript{60}

John Paul calls the current state of man, after the Fall into original sin, the “historical” state, and he therefore echoes the heart of Christ in calling man to look at his “theological prehistory.”\textsuperscript{61} Man will not be able to understand his current historical state without reference to his prehistory. In appealing to the beginning, Christ himself appealed to the state of original innocence as normative, knowing full well that man had fallen from this state. The beginning, however, contains within it, in addition to the entrance of sin, the promise of redemption which Christ came to bring to its fullness.\textsuperscript{62} Genesis 3:15 contains a promise that has been interpreted by Christians and Jews as a promise for a messiah who will save mankind from the dominion of the serpent, of Satan: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

The lack of explicit, historical information may cause doubts about the legitimacy of delving into such a topic as the experiences of man before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Yet, John Paul writes that “we must reach the conviction that in this case, our human experience is in some way a legitimate means for theological

\textsuperscript{60} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 3: 4.
\textsuperscript{62} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 4:3.
interpretation and that, in a certain sense, it is an indispensible point of reference to which we must appeal in the interpretation of the ‘beginning’…”

In spite of this hopefulness, certain questions remain to be answered: How can anyone retrieve events that supposedly took place at the very dawn of history?...Aren’t the original experiences John Paul II describes permeated by a purity and innocence sin has extinguished in our hearts? How can experiences belonging to a sunken past help us to attain happiness here and now?64

Carl Anderson and Jose Granados provide a helpful analogy to answer such pressing questions in their book on TOB entitled Called to Love. The analogy they present compares the original experiences of man to primordial music which has been distorted, but not completely destroyed. On the surface, it appears that the music, the original experiences, are merely noise. But, upon closer evaluation and upon a more intent listening, the original musical pattern can be discerned. In point of fact, the only reason we can know that something is wrong, that these original states have been distorted by sin is if we have some innate knowledge of how things were supposed to be from the start. “[I]t’s only because the original harmony still resonates in the background that we can hear the dissonance as the disruption it is.”65 Continuing with the analogy, the original music is in essence the basis of all other music that can be played: the original experiences of man are the foundation for every other experience. They are still distorted, yet, with Christ comes the

---

63 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 4:4.
64 Anderson, Called to Love, 23.
65 Anderson, Called to Love, 23.
promise of their redemption. Although they may still “hover as a vague memory on
the borders of our adult awareness...only the encounter with Christ enables a total
recovery of our original experiences.”66

Original Solitude

Within the context of man’s original innocence, John Paul recognizes a total
of three original or foundational experiences of man: original solitude, original
unity, and original nakedness. Although all three are important in man’s quest for
his identity, only the first two original experiences will be used in this context. John
Paul begins where the text of Genesis begins, with man’s experience of original
solitude. The important information about this experience is found in the second
creation account as God declares that it is not good that man should be alone (Gen.
2:18). This is the first time in either of the creation accounts where God declares
that something he has created is not good. The statement reveals two levels of
meaning: first, the statement is a reference to the nature of man, meaning every
human being, and second, it is also a reference to the relationship between man and
woman.67 The first level of meaning drives home the point that the solitude of man
is something which he experiences in his being, in his nature.

Man comes to know his identity through his interactions with the rest of
creation. The Lord God sets before the man all of creation, even providing animals
for the man to name. And yet, he does not find a suitable partner. “The term

66 Anderson, Called to Love, 24-25.
‘original solitude’ underscores man’s uniqueness when compared with the other kinds of beings that surround him.” John Paul calls this experience of failing to find another like himself God’s “test” for man, to show him that he “cannot be put on par with any other species of living beings on the earth.” In the end, man finds himself “before God in search of his own being.” When man does not find another like himself in all the earth, when he recognizes his special dignity within the whole of creation, he is led to his fundamental relationship with the Creator. Furthermore, man experiences this original solitude, as he experiences everything, through his own body. As a result of his being made “in the image of God,” man finds that he becomes a partner with God, with the “Absolute” through a covenant of relationship with God. The statement that man is alone in creation means “that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself.”

Through a bodily encounter with the world, with the earth and the animals, man discovers that he possesses a dignity and a call above everything else which he can see. In finding that he is different from the world, man establishes himself as a “person.” When man finds himself alone in the world, he also finds a call from the Creator to cultivate and subdue the earth. Only through his body can man fulfill

---

68 Anderson, Called to Love, 27.
70 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 5:5.
71 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 6: 2.
72 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 6:2.
the decidedly human task which he has been given.\textsuperscript{75} Through his body, man finds himself not only different from the rest of creation, but also in a position of openness to the created world.\textsuperscript{76} He finds, furthermore, that his body expresses his person: “My body is personal; it is part of the definition of who I am, and any answer to the question of my identity has to take my body into account.”\textsuperscript{77} The body opens man to the world, and through that encounter he is able to discover the Absolute. Together, these two conclusions sum up the meaning of original solitude, which is man’s “capacity to find God in the midst of the world.”\textsuperscript{78}

Man’s body, which manifests his personhood and unique relationship with the Creator serves also as a reminder that man is not his own creator, that he owes his existence to the Absolute.\textsuperscript{79} The body serves as man’s openness to creation and to life as well as serving as a reminder of his own mortality. Death is only a problem for man, one which should constantly call him back to the knowledge that life can only be found in his relationship with the Creator.\textsuperscript{80} In the Garden, God warned man if he ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he would die (Gen. 2:16-17). With these words, God showed “man as a limited being and, by his nature, susceptible to nonexistence.”\textsuperscript{81} The body which man possesses is different from the bodies of all the creatures of the earth. The choice between life and death

\textsuperscript{75} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 7:2.
\textsuperscript{76} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 32.
\textsuperscript{77} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 30.
\textsuperscript{78} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 33.
\textsuperscript{79} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 33.
\textsuperscript{80} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 33.
\textsuperscript{81} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 7:3.
points to the greater eschatological purpose of humanity which is distinct from the rest of creation.\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{Original Unity}

As stated before, the experience of man’s original solitude is one that applies to all of humanity, to both the male and female incarnations of what it means to be in the image of God.\textsuperscript{83} However, only together can man and woman experience original unity. Only with the creation of Eve does Adam first come to experience joy, the joy of finding another who shares his humanity and his unique position in the created world.\textsuperscript{84} When presented with Eve, Adam declares, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). His statement reveals that Adam recognizes Eve’s humanity and his own through their bodies: “To love is to share your world with another person who is flesh of your flesh and bone of your bones,”\textsuperscript{85} and “this mutual indwelling of another’s experience is ‘original unity.’”\textsuperscript{86}

For John Paul, “the creation of man isn’t complete until he exists as male and female and the two are one.”\textsuperscript{87} Only through their relationship with one another can they come to truly experience their identity, what it means to made “in the image of God.”\textsuperscript{88} The creation of man as male and female and their call to become one flesh, a communion of persons, reveals that the God in whose image they were created is

\textsuperscript{82} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 7:4.
\textsuperscript{83} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 8:1.
\textsuperscript{84} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 8: 4.
\textsuperscript{85} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 40.
\textsuperscript{86} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 40.
\textsuperscript{87} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 42.
\textsuperscript{88} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 43.
not a single Person. The God whom they image is “an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.”

Man and woman find themselves in their unity with one another because they were made in the image of a God who is himself a union of Persons. Through an encounter with another like himself, man comes to see that he was made for union with another and made to give himself to another. The joy which Adam feels after the creation of Eve, the creation of another to whom he desires to give his entire being, serves as a reminder that he did not create her, she did not originate in him. Their experience of the gift of one another turns their eyes to God.

For John Paul, the original experiences of man lead to a new dimension in theological anthropology: the dimension of gift, or what he calls the “hermeneutics of the gift.” From the first moment of his creation, man experiences the gift of his life, given to him out of the love of the Creator. The God who is love, who is Goodness itself, calls man out of nothing as a gift. This fundamental act of love, the gift of creation, therefore, determines the whole purpose of man’s existence: man was created to be loved and to give himself in love, to receive the gift of another and to give himself as a gift in return. The nature of the gift of creation casts a new light onto the moment in the second creation account when God declares that something is not good. Man’s solitude was not good because “[n]one of these beings...offers man

---

the basic conditions that *make it possible to exist in a relation of reciprocal gift.*”\(^93\)

“The very essence of the person” is to exist “for someone.”\(^94\) Only in a communion of persons can man make a gift of himself.\(^95\)

Everything about man, most especially the male and female bodies, reveals that he was created to be a gift to another. John Paul states:

> There is a strong link between the mystery of creation, as a gift that springs from Love, and that beatifying ‘beginning’ of man’s existence as male and female, in the whole truth of their bodies and of their sexes, which is the simple and pure truth of the communion between the persons.\(^96\)

The fact that their bodies are ordered toward a communion of persons from the beginning reveals what John Paul calls the “spousal meaning of the body.”\(^97\) The “spousal” meaning of the body is linked with the freedom of man and woman to receive the gift of one another and to give of themselves in return.\(^98\) Through their bodies, man and woman affirm the person of the other, accepting them as a gift in and of themselves, for “[t]o love is to say: ‘It is good that you exist.’”\(^99\)

The “spousal” meaning of the body remains with man, even after the Fall because “man will not fail to confer spousal meaning on his own body.”\(^100\) Man’s body retains the essential truth that he was made to be a gift, in imitation of the

---

Creator, despite the attack it undergoes in every age. The “spousal” meaning of the body calls man to recognize the possibility of redemption even through the distortion: restoration to the truth which his body displays is possible. Only when the meaning of the body, and therefore the true identity of man, is once again rooted in the Love of the Creator can true happiness abound.

The passage from *Gaudium et Spes* which lies at the heart of TOB is expressed most fully in the dimension of gift: “man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self.” In recognizing one another as persons who were created in their own right to love and be loved, man and woman are able to give and receive each other in reference to the Absolute. The text “implies that Adam can accept Eve only if he recognizes that she is a gift coming from the hand of the same original Giver who is at the origin of his, Adam’s, very being,” and the same holds true for Eve. Each man’s recognition of the gift of his own creation reveals the proper mode of being in the world. In order for man to give himself freely to another, he must first encounter the Source of his creation. “The eyes of a heart that sees, perceive every object we touch and every moment we live as a gift.”

---

104 Anderson, *Called to Love*, 68.
Application

Romance Novel Fascination

A closer look at the obsession with the *Twilight Saga*, in particular the obsession with the relationship between Edward and Bella, reveals the human heart’s desires to be seen as a person, created for their own sake, and to be given in love in such a way as to be completely united with another. What teenage girls see in Edward is an image of the man they want to love them someday. Edward loves Bella for who she is, affirms her dignity and holds her life as more important than his own. The desire for a man who contains these same characteristics is a noble desire which reveals something deeper than a mere human relationship. As perfect as Edward may be, the human heart’s desire for union will never be fully satisfied in another human being. The union between a man and a woman, which is a pure and natural desire in man, is meant to lead the man and woman to the depths of their being, to the origin of their personhood and dignity. Without that final step into the infinite, into Love Itself, the human heart will never be fully satisfied.

Edward and Bella are not the first characters of a tragic love story to capture the hearts of a culture. Their relationship is merely the most recent example of humanity’s attraction to love. In earlier times, Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth drew the attention of the culture. It seems that love has been a fascination of the heart from the beginning. Plato and Aristotle mused
about the meaning and definition of love, the Romans and Greeks idolized love, and the stories of every age are littered with tales of desperate young lovers who are willing to sacrifice anything to be together. The storyline is the same in every age and yet the story never grows old, the culture never tires of sharing in the experiences of the most famous lovers. This universal fascination with love cannot simply be a coincidence or cultural phenomena. The fascination with love endures through the ages because it calls to the depths of man’s being, to the place where his desire for Infinite Love often lies in hopeful expectation.

Stephenie Meyer herself recognized the universal attraction to love. When writing the *Twilight Saga*, she specifically designed the novels to revolve around the themes in such classics as Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Merchant of Venice*, and Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. In all of these novels, the main characters must fight for the love they find in the end. As in the classics, Edward and Bella’s relationship seems doomed from the beginning because of “a barrier that intensifies the lovers’ yearning and increases the drama of the climax...Edward’s vampirism.” On her website, Meyer even explains how she named Edward after the main characters in some of these novels. Meyer knows the draw of the human heart to love stories, even if she never explicitly states the revelation. Love stories always draw an audience.

---

106 Clarke, *The Twilight Mystique*, 35.
Revelatory Aspects of Edward and Bella’s Relationship

In light of TOB, the characteristics of Edward and Bella’s relationship, some of which appear in Section II, come to their proper fullness. Even on the surface level, their relationship affirms the differentiation of the sexes which John Paul states is constitutive of what it means to be human. Being male and female are “two reciprocally completing ways of ‘being a body’ and at the same time of being human...two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body...”108 In their obsession with Edward, the fans of Twilight reveal that they still recognize at some level the complementarity of the sexes. Women want to be pursued by the man and to have a sense of safety and security in his presence. The different roles of men and women in relationships and in society are not all arbitrarily established by the prevailing culture. If man and woman were created to complement one another, if the differentiation of their bodies does indeed arise from the level of ontology, from their being, then there will always be certain roles for each of the sexes which have been established from the beginning.

On a deeper level, the women long for a man who will affirm their personhood as Edward does for Bella. The affirmation of the personhood and inherent dignity of the other in a relationship is the foundation for a truly loving relationship. Examples were cited above in Section II which demonstrate Edward’s love for who Bella is as a person. Edward reveals Bella to herself by showing her that she is a person. TOB allows that affirmation to transcend a finite action and to

108 John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, 10:1.
enter instead into the realm of the infinite. With the advent of the recognition that the other was created by the Divine Communion of Persons to share forever in the eternal exchange of love which is God Himself, the kernel of truth which Edward exposes in affirming Bella’s person is thrust into the divine exchange of love. Human beings are created to seek the Truth, and so in seeking to imagine themselves in the place of Bella and in seeking to attain a man who loves them as Edward loves Bella, the fans of the series are ultimately seeking for something beyond a human relationship. In the story, Edward is a Christ-like figure who saves Bella, literally by rescuing her from death and figuratively by revealing her true worth. However beneficial this may be in the story, there is a limit to the application of the analogy. Edward, and any finite being, will always remain Christ-like but can never be Christ, be God, to another person. The finite cannot satisfy the desire for the infinite. What they seek is a relationship with Christ, who “fully reveals man to himself.”

The fans of Twilight, and every human being, are searching for Infinite Love. Edward and Bella exemplify this desire for love to last forever multiple times in their relationship. In fact, the desire to be together forever is the driving force for Bella’s desire to become a vampire- no matter the risk to her soul.

I asked, suddenly anxious. “Will you really be here?”

“As long as you want me,” he assured me.

---


Edward stands firm in his opposition to changing Bella into a vampire until he has no choice in the last book. Yet, Bella constantly presses the issue. Their exchange at the end of the first book highlights perfectly their innate desire to be together forever. The topic of changing Bella into a vampire had come up after a near death experience for Bella, but Edward was refusing to fulfill her request.

“Is that what you dream about? Being a monster?”

“Not exactly,” I said, frowning at his word choice. Monster, indeed. “Mostly I dream about being with you forever.”

“Bella…I will stay with you- isn’t that enough?”

I smiled under his fingertips. “Enough for now…

I touched his face. “Look,” I said, “I love you more than everything else in the world combined. Isn’t that enough?”

“Yes, it is enough,” he answered, smiling, “Enough forever.”

---

110 Meyer, Twilight, 318.
111 Meyer, Twilight, 498.
The desire to be with one another forever is not an arbitrary desire, but one that cuts straight to the deepest desire of the human heart for communion. The heart does not desire a temporary communion with the beloved. The heart desires, rather, an eternity in the presence of the beloved. Human beings were made to participate in love for all eternity. The earthly beloved, however, is to be but a sign which leads to the Infinite exchange of Love in the Trinity.

Bella desires not only communion with Edward, but to be like him, to be immortal. She sees him as her savior, the one who can bring her life. The exchange of life which she desires from Edward reverses the exchange found in a human being’s relationship with the Absolute Source of Life, God Himself. In order to have life with Edward, she must give up her soul and her mortal life. Their union will mean a surrendering of her humanity. She must allow herself to be bitten by Edward and consumed by that bite. In Christ, however, God became man so that man might become God without surrendering his humanity. Through the Incarnation, God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ, the human and divine were united and the divide which occurred as a result of Original Sin was healed. The human is united with the divine and given immortal life, but there remains a distinction within that unity. The earthly sign of this Heavenly unity is found in the sexual union of man and woman. John Paul wrote about the complemenarity of the sexes which is written into the male and female bodies. Their bodies allow them to become one flesh and yet retain their individual personhood in the union.
Original Solitude of Carlisle and Edward

In his original solitude, Adam was able to discover the desire he possessed for union with the Divine Creator. Every human being, as discussed above, can still share in the original solitude which both Adam and Eve experienced in coming to understand their unique position among the rest of creation. Carlisle, Edward’s “foster” father and the core of the Cullen family, and Edward both experience a type of original solitude. Carlisle is the oldest of the Cullen family and the one who first began to drink the blood of animals rather than humans. After being changed into a vampire and beginning his “vegetarian” lifestyle, Carlisle attempted to find companionship with other vampires, but found no one who would follow his lifestyle. In the end, he decided to change another human being. He chose to change Edward first because Edward was already dying of the influenza, which had also killed the rest of his family. Over the years, Carlisle’s family grew as he changed others who were on the brink of death, and was also joined by some who were already vampires, but were seeking a different way of life.

Interestingly, all of the members of the Cullen family are paired off at the beginning of Twilight except Edward: Carlisle and Esme, Emmet and Rosalie, Jaspar and Alice. They have all found mates, another to love for all eternity. Throughout the book, Edward comes to realize the desire he too has for union with another. At one point, Bella is upset because she feels inferior to the beauty of Rosalie, who was apparently first intended to be a mate for Edward. Edward,
however, insists that Rosalie, despite her beauty, does not hold the attraction which Bella does for him. Through his relationship with Bella, Edward finally sees what he has been missing during his immortal life thus far: “For almost ninety years I’ve walked among my kind, and yours...all the time thinking that I was complete in myself, not realizing what I was seeking. And not finding anything, because you weren’t alive yet.” Edward’s description of his revelation echoes the exclamation of Adam when he is presented with Eve: “This one at last is bone and my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23).

Through his encounter with Bella, with the complementary sex, Edward sees his own desires for union as if for the first time. Just as Adam was searching for an equal among the rest of creation, Edward was searching for someone to complete him, but until Bella was revealed to him, he did not even know exactly what he desired. He finds himself in Bella, through an encounter with who she is. Once he finds her, Edward will do anything to protect her. The other members of his family are also aware of the change in Edward and they understand his desires. His sister Alice explains to Bella, “It’s been almost a century that Edward’s been alone. Now he’s found you. You can’t see the changes we see, we who have been with him for so long. Do you think any of us want to look into his eyes for the next hundred years if he loses you?” Every human being is able to identify with Edward’s revelation.

---

and his desire to protect Bella because relationship with another is the key for every person to finding his or her own identity.\textsuperscript{114}

\textit{Progression of Love}

Despite the revelation about the human heart which Edward and Bella’s relationship exhibits, in the end, their relationship falls short of the original plan for human love. Written during the earlier days of his priesthood, when John Paul was still Karol Wojtyla, the book, \textit{Love and Responsibility} details the progression of love, or the movements of love, through which human love must pass in order to reach its full potential within the divine plan.\textsuperscript{115} All of the movements of love are important because “they impel man and woman beyond themselves and toward the Absolute.”\textsuperscript{116} An analysis of these movements will provide key insights into the relationship of Edward and Bella.

Wojtyla starts with “[t]he most basic level of erotic love”\textsuperscript{117} which is sensuality. Sensuality sees the other as a source of enjoyment and is ultimately self-serving and self-centered. However, sensuality contains a dimension which promises something more. Through an experience of sensuality, one encounters “a promise of happiness, even a kind of ecstasy in the etymological sense of the word (which comes from the Greek \textit{ek-stasis}, meaning ‘to be outside oneself’).”\textsuperscript{118} The

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{114} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 43. \\
\textsuperscript{115} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 50. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 50. \\
\textsuperscript{117} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 50. \\
\textsuperscript{118} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 51. 
\end{flushleft}
happiness to which it points cannot be achieved through a purely sensual experience, and so sensuality leads the lover to the experience of feelings and emotions, the next movement of love.\textsuperscript{119}

In the world of feelings and emotions, sympathy is essential because in identifying with the world of another, the lover is pulled out of himself.\textsuperscript{120} Through a recognition of the beloved as a person, the beloved is no longer merely a source of pleasure or an object. Sympathy alone still does not reveal the full depth of love because feelings or sentiment remains focused “on the attraction emanating from the beloved as male or female.”\textsuperscript{121} Sentiment may allow for the recognition of the personhood of the other, but it cannot provide the proper means by which to value their personhood.\textsuperscript{122}

Only through an affirmation of the person of the beloved, the next movement of love, can feelings, which are subjective and fluctuating, be replaced by a genuine love for the person of the other. This movement of love affirms the value of the person for who they are.\textsuperscript{123} “Only when love has discovered and affirmed the person for what he or she is can the lover say yes forever.”\textsuperscript{124} The movement of the

\textsuperscript{119} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 51.
\textsuperscript{120} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 51.
\textsuperscript{121} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 52.
\textsuperscript{122} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 53.
\textsuperscript{123} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 53.
\textsuperscript{124} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 54.
affirmation of the person of the beloved takes into itself the previous movements of love and purifies them.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 55.}

Even the affirmation of the person does not complete the movements of love. The question remains: “How is it possible to pronounce an infinite yes to a finite being?”\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 57.} In order for this to happen in its proper order, the lover must recognize the infinite dignity of the beloved who comes from the Source of Divine Love, God Himself.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 57.}

Human dignity resolves the dilemma we’ve been struggling with here as follows: Since the beloved is God’s image, we can affirm him or her with an absolute yes; on the other hand, since our yes derives its force from the beloved’s relation to God, that affirmation does not turn the beloved into an idol but frees him or her from the crushing load of a false absolutization that injures the beloved’s dignity instead of exalting it.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 57.}

All of the movements of love are integrated in the movement of the lovers toward God as the source of his or her own dignity and as the source of the dignity of the beloved.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 57.}

The relationship between Edward and Bella contains within it the first three movements of love: sensuality, feelings and emotions and the affirmation of
personhood. The movements of love which Wojtyla presents reveal Edward and Bella as falling short of the final movement of love, the movement which holds the preceding three movements in their proper order. Their relationship reveals deep truths about the human heart, but in the final hour it fails to reveal the Creator as the Source of life and love. Edward and Bella will not be able to fully appreciate the infinite dignity of the other because they do not know the Source of their dignity. They will inevitably make an idol out of the other, and their love will be turned inward, rather than providing for them an openness to the Divine. The desire for eternal communion cannot be met by a finite being.

The words of Pope Benedict on the subject summarize and highlight the importance of the openness of love to the Divine: “[l]ove is indeed ecstasy, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards the authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.” Edward and Bella desire to make a gift of themselves to one another, an innate desire of every human being, but they cannot do so fully because they lack the recognition of the truth about their beginning. Their relationship holds up a decent ideal to the world, but human love can only reveal a certain percentage of the truth before it becomes distorted and turned in upon itself. The happiness which they desire cannot be found in earthly love.

---

130 Anderson, Called to Love, 58.
When Adam was given Eve in the Garden to be his helpmate, he was only able to love Eve, they were only able to experience original unity, because they were able to see one another as gifts from God. The essential points of TOB were each person was created for their own sake and man can only find himself through giving himself in love to another. The first aspect is missing in the relationship of Edward and Bella, and in every earthly relationship that is not ordered to the Divine. If a person is not first recognized as being imbued with dignity because they were created in the *imago Dei*, then the second essential aspect, the need of man to give of himself in love, cannot be fully satisfied. Man can only make a sincere and pure gift of himself when he sees the fullness of truth about his creation and about the creation of his beloved, otherwise, the love becomes self-centered and the beloved inevitably becomes an object.

The proper order is found in the creation story. The reception of man and woman by one another is drenched in the truth about the nature of gift. Adam receives Eve as gift from God. The first action of man, his primary disposition with regard to God, is to receive a gift from God. In doing so, in receiving Eve as a gift, Adam affirms both his personhood as well as her’s in the same moment. Through receiving another person, Adam comes to see his own personhood and in being received by Adam, Eve’s personhood is affirmed and she thus desires to make a gift of herself in return.
At the same time, the acceptance of the woman by the man and the very way of accepting her become, as it were, a first gift in such a way that the woman, in giving herself (from the very first moment, in which, in the mystery of creation, she has been ‘given’ by the Creator to the man), at the same time ‘discovers herself,’ thanks to the fact that she has been accepted and welcomed and thanks to the way in which she has been received by the man. She therefore finds herself in her own gift of self...when she has been accepted in the way in which the Creator willed her, namely, ‘for her own sake,’ through her humanity and femininity...\textsuperscript{131}

Both man and woman are able to find themselves, their true identity, through making a gift of themselves to one another. All of this, however, comes first and foremost as a gift from God.

Hints of this distortion are present already in the first book of the series. As soon as Edward and Bella begin their relationship, Bella starts to lose touch with the friends she had begun to make in school. In addition, at the end of the book, she is extremely willing to be turned into a vampire to be with Edward forever, even though that will most likely mean never seeing her family again. Love which is ordered to the Divine is ordered to life and to family. Even Edward, who affirms the personhood of Bella, cannot enter fully into love because he sees her as an end in itself. Edward and Bella live for one another. Edward tells Bella, “You are my life now,”\textsuperscript{132} and Bella echoes those same words: “You are my life now. You’re the only

\textsuperscript{131} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 17:4.
\textsuperscript{132} Meyer, \textit{Twilight}, 314.
thing it would hurt me to lose.”\textsuperscript{133} Within their relationship, a “false absolutization”\textsuperscript{134} has developed resulting in an idolizing of the beloved. Man was created to be united with Infinite Love for all eternity. When that destiny is not reached, he settles for an earthly love which will never satisfy his desires and which will place a burden on the beloved which he or she was not meant to bear.

The desire for immortality and an eternity with the beloved is a desire which is written into the human heart. God created man for union with the divine, to live forever in that union. Bella replaces that desire for the Absolute with her desire for Edward. Edward in many way images Christ, but Meyer’s story falls short in fully explaining and examining humanity’s desire for immortality. Christ alone can satisfy the human heart’s desire for immortality because he calls man to share in his own immortal life by opening to man the gateway to union with the Trinity through his death and Resurrection.

\textit{Grace Perfects Nature}

The goal in exposing the shortcomings of the relationship between Edward and Bella, which is so idolized by fans and by the culture in general, is not to condemn the idea of love which Meyer presents. The point is rather to call the idealized love which they show to a new, transcendent level, to a level which is truly worthy of the human person. The love they portray does not uphold the infinite value of the human person. It does, however, reveal that the human heart longs to

\textsuperscript{133} Meyer, \textit{Twilight}, 476.
\textsuperscript{134} Anderson, \textit{Called to Love}, 57.
be affirmed and to give itself to the beloved forever. What this reveals is that grace builds upon nature. John Paul’s TOB transcends the human notion of love, meaning that all the goodness of human love is taken and lifted up into the Divine. Human love is not destroyed through this revelation. TOB shows how from the beginning, man and woman were created within a Divine Plan. The bodies of man and woman themselves reveal the divine calling to participate in an Infinite Love.

Conclusion

In TOB, John Paul provides “an integral vision” of man.\textsuperscript{135} The vision of man upheld by the world and exhibited in the \textit{Twilight Saga} present only part of the truth about man. Without looking at the origin of man, “from the beginning,” and without considering the physical and spiritual components of man, the truth will never be fully presented.

We are, in fact, children of an age in which, due to the development of various disciplines, this integral vision of man can easily be rejected and replaced by many partial conceptions that dwell on one or another aspect of the \textit{compositum humanum} but do not reach man’s \textit{integrum} or leave it outside their field of vision.\textsuperscript{136}

Man must be understood with regard to the fullness of his being and should never settle for only a partial truth.

\textsuperscript{135} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 23:3.
\textsuperscript{136} John Paul II, \textit{Man and Woman He Created Them}, 23:3.
Man is not the origin of his own existence, nor is he the origin of the existence of any other human being. Only by returning to the “beginning,” to the Source of his existence, can he begin to answer the questions he raises about the meaning of his existence. In finding himself alone among the creatures of the earth with regard to the questioning of his existence, man discovers his true destiny does not lie solely in this world. Man finds his body is itself a revelation of his dignity and his destiny. Through his body he is able to make a gift of himself to another and to affirm the personhood of his beloved. Written into his body is the call to union. Christ Himself calls man to bear witness to his destiny for union, and to come to know who he is by examining the beginning, the stories of creation in Genesis which reveal how man was created in the image and likeness of God himself.

In particular, the creation of man as male and female denotes the specific way in which communion with another find its fullest expression in the earthly realm. The union of man and woman is the highest expression of human love because within that action, man comes closest to imitating the Divine Love of the Trinity, which is a dynamic love between a communion of persons. Since man was created in the imago Dei, the Image of God, it follows he was made to participate also in a communion of persons. Above all, man was created to love. Man is, therefore, oriented toward the divine and toward love from the moment of his creation. Only through an experience of love, through a making a gift of himself and through receiving fully the gift of another person, can man come to know his own identity. Taking into account the fact that every human being was created to love
and be loved, this truth necessarily finds expression in the actions of man in every generation and in every culture. In addition, certain truths about man come to the surface when examining a given culture.

The obsession with the *Twilight Saga* reveals that man is always oriented towards love and always desires to make a gift of himself to his beloved. Edward and Bella, despite any shortcomings in their relationship, aptly portray the desire of every human being to find themselves through a sincere gift of themselves. Man cannot avoid the destiny for which he was created.

The only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me. Therefore the poet brings his poem; the shepherd, his lamb; the farmer, corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; the girl, a handkerchief of her own sowing. This is right and pleasing, for it restores society in so far to its primary basis, when a man’s biography is conveyed in his gift.  

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prays to the Father, ‘that all might be one...as we are one’ (Jn 17:21-22) and thus offers vistas closed to human reason, indicates a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God’s sons in truth and love. this likeness shows that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self; cf. Luke 17:33.  

---

Works Cited


