

## ***Sinister Spirit***

*Tracing the Spirit of Antichrist Through Current Events*

By Timothy Zebell

## **Appendix C.2**

### Twilight

On June 2, 2003, Stephenie Meyer experienced a dream which would soon impact the entire world. Today Stephenie Meyer is the renowned author of the *Twilight* series, despite the fact that in 2003 she could hardly even qualify as an “author.” She had written only a few chapters of other stories which were never fully developed. In fact, since the birth of her son six years earlier, she had not written anything.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, according to Stephenie Meyer:

I woke up (on that June 2nd) from a very vivid dream. In my dream, 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.<sup>2</sup>

Feeling compelled to create a permanent record of this dream, Stephenie Meyer began to write what would become the novel *Twilight*. Stephenie later recalled, “All this time, Bella and Edward were, quite literally, voices in my head. They simply wouldn’t *shut up*. I’d stay up as late as I could stand trying to get all the stuff in my mind typed out, and then crawl, exhausted, into bed ... Eventually, I got a pen and notebook for beside my bed to jot notes down so I could get some freakin’ sleep.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite being an unpublished author, Stephenie Meyer received a **\$750,000** publishing deal for her first three *Twilight* books.<sup>4</sup> This impressive deal almost immediately triggered an explosive phenomenon. Within

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<sup>1</sup> Official Website of Stephenie Meyer, “The Story Behind Twilight.”

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Valby, “Stephenie Meyer.”

weeks of its release, *Twilight* reached number five on the *New York Times* bestseller list.<sup>5</sup> “Among its many accolades, *Twilight* was named an ‘ALA Top Ten Books for Young Adults,’ an [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) ‘Best Book of the Decade...So Far,’ and a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year. The highly-anticipated sequel, *New Moon*, was released in September 2006, and spent more than 25 weeks at the #1 position on the *New York Times* bestseller list.”<sup>6</sup> After the release of *Eclipse*, the first three *Twilight* books spent 143 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.<sup>7</sup> In 2008 and 2009, the four books of the series claimed the top four spots on the *USA Today’s* year-end bestseller list.<sup>8</sup> Stephenie Meyer was the first author to achieve this feat.<sup>9</sup> The series also won the 2009 Kid’s Choice Award for favorite book where it competed against the *Harry Potter* series.<sup>10</sup>

The *Twilight* series was made into five movies. When the first movie was released on November 21, 2008, it ranked number one at the box office earning \$70 million dollars on its opening weekend, making it the highest grossing opening weekend for a female director.<sup>11</sup>

According to *Statistic Brain*, the *Twilight* series is estimated to have earned \$5,736,100,000 through its books, DVDs, and merchandising sales as of November, 2013.<sup>12</sup> *Search Engine Journal* has even reported that *Twilight* boasts 42,398,571 Facebook fans and 641,616 followers on Twitter.<sup>13</sup>

The phenomenon of *Twilight* was not restricted to secular audiences. The series captivated Christians and unbelievers alike. In fact, *Twilight* was promoted by many Christians as being a positive influence for teenagers because it supports chastity. In an article for [EvangelicalOutpost.com](http://EvangelicalOutpost.com), David Nilson writes, “Edward Cullen is one of only a few role models who takes sexual purity seriously, and who actually embodies it in an attractive manner.”<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that Edward was not sexually pure because he valued marriage. Initially, Edward was afraid that he, being a vampire, would be unable to resist his desire to kill Bella and drink her blood. Also, Edward feared that he would hurt, or even kill Bella if they were to have intercourse because of his supernatural strength. Marcia Montenegro observes:

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<sup>5</sup> Official Website of Stephenie Meyer, “Bio.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Grossman, “Is a Mormon,” 49.

<sup>8</sup> Debarros, “Best Selling Books.”

<sup>9</sup> Minzesheimer, “Sellers basked in Stephenie Meyer’s ‘Twilight’ in 2008.”

<sup>10</sup> Nickelodeon. “All Winners.”

<sup>11</sup> Official Website of Stephenie Meyer, “Bio.”

<sup>12</sup> Statistic Brain, “Total Twilight Franchise Sales.”

<sup>13</sup> Fach, “#Twilight Saga.”

<sup>14</sup> David Nilson, “The Power of Twilight,” *The Evangelical Outpost*, July 1, 2009, Source: Swanson, “The Bruises of Bella Swan.”

Much has been made of the alleged message of *Twilight*, that it is one of abstinence and shows control over desire. In truth, Edward is controlling himself because he does not want to kill Bella; her life is truly in danger from a ferocious vampire attack from the one who loves her. Aside from that, a vibrant sensuality of attraction lies just beneath the surface. A TIME reporter who interviewed Meyer wrote, “It’s never quite clear whether Edward wants to sleep with Bella or rip her throat out or both, but he wants something, and he wants it bad, and you feel it all the more because he never gets it. That’s the power of the *Twilight* books: they’re squeaky, geeky clean on the surface, but right below it, they are absolutely, deliciously filthy.”<sup>15</sup>

Is this clean on the surface but deliciously filthy underneath courtship truly the kind of relationship that Christians hope to imitate? In every way, *Twilight* is not a particularly strong endorsement for sexually pure relationships.

Furthermore, despite Edward and Bella’s pre-marital abstinence in the *Twilight* series, it is difficult to claim that they were truly chaste. In an article titled “The Darkness of Twilight: A Christian Perspective,” Sue Bohlin writes, “[T]he *Twilight* books are a lust-filled series, so embedded with writing intended to arouse the emotions, that it is legitimately considered emotional pornography.”<sup>16</sup> At the very least, *Twilight* is erotic. It stimulates the imagination and sexual emotions through descriptive accounts. An influential blogger on Spes Unica reveals the foolishness of this pro-chastity argument in a post titled “What is ‘TWILIGHT’ saying to young women?”:

To claim that the *Twilight* saga is based on the virtue of chastity is like calling the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition pro-chastity because the girls are clothed. What the promoters are dwelling on is the fact that the couple don’t “go all the way” until after their wedding in the fourth book. While this is no doubt a good thing, promoters of the series do not give enough information for parents to make a genuine assessment of the material. First of all – the couple abstain from intercourse because Edward the vampire has super-human strength which could supposedly kill a human woman. This aspect of the story itself has an unseemly edge to it. Why do romance novels have photos of shirtless men with rippling muscles on the covers? The depiction of strength is meant to draw women in. But Edward is SO strong... well, it is a depiction of strength that is attracting women, and it is specifically erotic in tone. Grown women are wearing t-shirts that say “Edward broke my headboard” – a direct reference to the couple’s wedding night. Such phenomena give a sense of the misappropriation of the word “chastity” when speaking of this series. The abstinence practiced in the novels is based on fear, not on virtue – Edward’s fear, to be precise. Bella wants to risk it. So, it is not an exercise in valuing another person so much that you refuse to treat them as an object of use. Let’s be clear that abstinence is not

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<sup>15</sup> Grossman, “Is a Mormon,” 50.

<sup>16</sup> Bohlin, “The Darkness of Twilight.”

chastity. Just because intercourse does not take place does not mean a couple is basing their relationship on use. Bella gives detailed first person accounts of her “make out” encounters with Edward – everything from trying to unbutton clothing, to how loud her breathing is and how this or that feels... these detailed first person descriptions are designed to arouse young girls – like a gateway drug to full blown romance novels or vampire lore. How can books in which the author has written detailed first person descriptions of actions leading to arousal help readers to be chaste? The words on the page defy chastity. Anyone who claims that the books promote chastity has to explain how a young girl can read detailed first-person descriptions of “making out” as a tool to preserving her innocence. They also must deny the experience of the star of the movie who claims otherwise. There are pages and pages of text that will show why girls are being corrupted (or, perhaps, being led further down a path of corruption). “Making out” before marriage is not chaste. Common, yes. But an example of the Christian virtue of chastity? No. It is a mutual use – intemperate, unjust and uncharitable. Books which describe this in detailed accounts are not chaste and cannot be used to promote chastity. The fact that the books are not as graphic as other teen novels does not mean they are therefore innocent.<sup>17</sup>

Compare Biblical love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7<sup>18</sup> against the above blogger’s observation that the love of Bella and Edward in *Twilight* is “intemperate, unjust and uncharitable,” “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*” (KJV). Consider also that Bella repeatedly seeks to become a vampire and rejoices in Edward’s vampirism even after she is told that vampirism is evil. In other words, Bella seeks after what she knows to be evil. Furthermore, instead of rejoicing in the truth, she lies to everyone with whom she is closest in order to protect her relationship with Edward and his family. Even the love between Bella and Jacob—Bella’s close werewolf friend who has a crush on Bella—contradicts true Biblical love. To say the least, Jacob is easily provoked and filled with envy. He considers himself to be superior to the vampires, and therefore, better for Bella. In both relationships, the love portrayed in *Twilight* is directly opposed to Biblical love.

Even so, within Christian bookstores can be found such books as Elaine Heath’s *The Gospel According to Twilight: Women, Sex, and God*, Diane Schantin’s *Parables from Twilight: A Bible Study*, and Jane Wells’ *Glitter in the Sun: A Bible study searching for truth in the Twilight Saga*. Some churches have even hosted *Twilight* Bible studies.

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<sup>17</sup> “What is ‘TWILIGHT’ saying to young women?”

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (ESV): Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

These authors have recognized that there are intense spiritual themes woven throughout the plot of the *Twilight* series. However, they have ignored the author's true intent and have contorted these themes to force them into Biblical molds. Anything which is sufficiently allegorized can be made to support Biblical themes and principles. The true question is whether those themes were intended to be so allegorized, and whether it is more likely that those themes were always meant to contradict and pervert Scripture.

The *Twilight* series does not promote the same principles as found in Scripture. One of the overarching themes of the *Twilight* books is how wonderful it is to taste of the forbidden fruit. Stephenie Meyer is a Mormon who graduated from Brigham Young University.<sup>19</sup> Mormons believe that it was ultimately a good thing that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden because it began the process of man discovering his own divinity. This is why Brigham Young, the second most revered prophet within Mormonism, said, "The devil told [Eve] the truth [about godhood]... I do not blame Mother Eve. I would not have had her miss eating the forbidden fruit for anything in the world."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in *Doctrines of Salvation*, former president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Joseph Smith writes, "The fall of man came as a blessing in disguise... I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin... it is not always a sin to transgress a law... We can hardly look upon anything resulting in such benefits as a sin."<sup>21</sup> This doctrine undergirds the *Twilight* series.

The cover art of the book *Twilight*, depicts the pale hands and forearms of a woman holding a bright red apple. This is overlaid against an entirely black background. The imagery suggests that the apple holds the key to transforming the woman's bleak and ordinary world in much the same way as an illicit relationship with a vampire transforms Bella's bleak and ordinary world. If there is any doubt that the apple on the cover represents the forbidden fruit of Genesis, then one need only open the book to the page before the preface. Isolated on this page is a single verse from Genesis 2:17 which reads, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (KJV).

The overarching theme of the *Twilight* series directly challenges the theme of God's Word. Add to this that the kind of love that is portrayed and glorified in the series contradicts true Biblical love, and the question must be asked, "Is it truly appropriate for a Christian to associate himself with the *Twilight* phenomenon?"

A Christian who is honestly evaluating the *Twilight* series must question whether it is healthy to become emotionally attached to, and supportive of a relationship that is directly opposed to God's holiness, Biblical love, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. According to Galatians 5:16–17 and 22–23, this is a relationship which is at war with God's Holy Spirit, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of

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<sup>19</sup> Official Website of Stephenie Meyer, "Bio."

<sup>20</sup> Brigham Young, from the Pulpit of the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on June 8, 1873, *Deseret News*, June 18, 1873, Source: Schimmel, "Twilight, Harry Potter."

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, 113–115, Source: Schimmel, "Twilight, Harry Potter."

*the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*

Edward and Bella’s relationship has been presented as the epitome of passion and love. Is it healthy for a Christian to fantasize and long for a romantic relationship which is, in its essence, at war with God’s Holy Spirit?

If this clear contradiction of God’s Word is not a sufficient reason to avoid *Twilight*, consider how the themes in *Twilight* contradict Scripture’s warning against awakening love before its time. The Song of Solomon provides us with an example of how to have a God-honoring, passionate, and erotic relationship. Three times, the warning is given not to awaken and arouse the sexual passions of love before its proper time (Song 2:7;<sup>22</sup> 3:5;<sup>23</sup> 8:4<sup>24</sup>). That time is after the marriage—an institution that Bella repeatedly disparages in the *Twilight* series. At the end of chapter 3, Solomon marries his betrothed, and their love is awakened. Chapter 4 is a picture of the marriage bed. In verse 16, Solomon’s wife declares, “*Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.*”

*Twilight* does not guard women’s sexual passions. Instead, it exploits and fuels those passions. It creates a desire which, for many of its readers, cannot be satisfied. Considering that the target audience for these books begins at the age of nine, this is dangerous, and it is a brazen rejection of Scripture’s warning.

Is it any wonder that Edward and Bella’s relationship which ignores the cautionary guidelines of Scripture, which contradicts Biblical love, and which produces fruit that belongs to the sinful nature of the flesh is a decidedly dysfunctional relationship? Bella is emotionally dependent upon Edward. She has a desperate need to feel continually connected with him. In fact, in the book *Eclipse*, Bella’s mother observes, “I wish you could see how you move around him. ... The way you move—you orient yourself around him without even thinking about it. When he moves, even a little bit, you adjust your position at the same time. Like magnets...or gravity. You’re like a...satellite, or something. I’ve never seen anything like it.”<sup>25</sup> Such a relationship is inexorably unhealthy. It destroys all other relationships because others are viewed as a threat and as individuals

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<sup>22</sup> Song of Solomon 2:7: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

<sup>23</sup> Song of Solomon 3:5: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

<sup>24</sup> Song of Solomon 8:4: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

<sup>25</sup> Meyer, *Eclipse*, 67–68.

to compete against for the attention of the lover. It inevitably pushes away all others until there is none left but the two lovers.

On a spiritual level, emotionally dependent relationships look to the lover to satisfy one's needs and to provide a sense of belonging and purpose. The person's identity and purpose become defined by the lover. As such, the relationship is idolatrous. The human lover replaces Christ. Emotionally dependent relationships have no room for anyone else besides the lover—including Christ.

An inevitable consequence of such dysfunctional relationships is severe mood swings. When things go well in the relationship, life could not be better. However, the smallest relational hiccup becomes a monumental trial, and serious problems often result in deep depression. This is portrayed in the testimony of Bella in the book *New Moon*. Unfortunately, many of the *Twilight* fans missed the significance of this account, choosing instead to view it as intensely romantic. When Edward leaves Bella, she finds herself alone because she had reduced her social sphere primarily to one person, having abandoned family and friends alike in her pursuit of Edward. This may appear to be romantic when the two are together, but it is revealed to be incredibly dangerous and foolish when the relationship collapses. Bella is left with nobody to turn to. Consequently, she is crushed. She loses all sense of purpose in life and becomes suicidal. Is this a relationship worthy of imitation? Countless women have idealized Bella and Edward's relationship. In their longing for romance, they have ignored the warning signs and have excused the foolishness of this highly dysfunctional relationship. The question must be asked, "Is it healthy to idealize and fantasize about a dysfunctional relationship?"

We are called to love the Lord our God first and foremost. Jesus says in Mark 12:30, "*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" Romantic relationships should never supersede our love and devotion to God. We exist to love God and to please and honor Him. However, this is not the result of an emotionally dependent relationship. Why then are Christians promoting the dysfunctional love story found in *Twilight*? Moreover, why are Christians using this relationship as a model of our relationship with Christ?

Of course, someone will argue that *Twilight* is merely fantasy. As such, these issues and concerns are supposedly rendered irrelevant. We do not expect fantasy to match real life. It may be true that we know on an intellectual level that the events which transpire in fantasy cannot be found in real life. However, the reaction of the *Twilight* fan base reveals that Edward and Bella's relationship have altered many of the readers' expectations in their own relationships. For many, Edward has become the ideal boyfriend against which all men are compared. Similarly, readers are seeking emotional experiences which match those found in *Twilight*. As such, it is evident that the influence of *Twilight* transcends the boundaries of fantasy. To excuse the unbiblical and destructive principles found in *Twilight* because it is merely fantasy is to ignore the reality of the fruit that it is bearing in real life.

Moreover, fantasy is not harmless. For many, the fantasy of *Twilight* has created profound longings and desires. When these longings and desires are not based upon Biblical principles, James warns us that they often produce sinful actions. James 1:13–15 says, “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*” The Greek word for lust used in James is “epithumia” which means “a longing (especially for what is forbidden), lust (after), desire.” Anything, whether it is fiction or factual, which produces in us a yearning for something unbiblical is wrong. It should be avoided. It certainly should not be promoted.

As Christians, there should be little within the *Twilight* series to attract us. The series is an affront to what we believe and cherish. Furthermore, it promotes dangerous ideas by lauding a decidedly dysfunctional relationship. If truth be told, Christians would do best to avoid the allure of *Twilight*.