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Wohlberg

the trouble with
twilight

Why Today's Vampire
Craze is Hazardous
to Your Health

THE TROUBLE
WITH TWILIGHT

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BY STEVE WOHLBERG

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THE TROUBLE WITH TWILIGHT

Why Today's Vampire Craze Is
Hazardous to Your Health

STEVE WOHLBERG

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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.

P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310

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Reach us on the Internet: www.destinyimage.com.

ISBN 10: 0-7684-3237-5

ISBN 13: 978-0-7684-3237-4

Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-7684-3428-6

Large Print ISBN: 978-0-7684-3429-3

E-Book ISBN: 978-0-7684-9060-2

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For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 /14 13 12 11 10

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to our two-year-old daughter, Abigail Rose Wohlberg, whose sweet face and bright smile remind me of a heavenly innocence that humanity has lost, but which can be restored through our Savior's love.

Abby, Daddy loves you so much!

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FOREWORD

Vampires have seized the public imagination in our twenty-first century world, as never before, through such blockbusters as *The Twilight Saga*, and many other mesmerizing novels, movies, and television shows.

Believe it or not, there is a hidden, supernatural evil beneath this obsession that the public is wholly ignorant of.

Steve Wohlberg—a kindred soul with me on today's battlefield—is one of the sharpest culture watchers I know. When a genuine discerner sees a particularly potent

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deception looming on the horizon, something that can do real harm, he springs into action, even when it is costly and unpopular. His concern is for truth, and for humanity, not for his own public appearance. Steve is one of these...a genuine discerner.

In the case of the present media feeding frenzy over vampirism, both Steve and I jumped into action at the same time to address this potent issue in our own ways. For my part, I wrote a long article in our “Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal,” going back to my own childhood connections with the occult. For Steve’s part, he wrote this book.

What opened the door for me as a child is precisely what we are seeing now, an occult obsession with horror and the dark side.

One of the attractions that the realm of vampires, ghosts, and the supernatural held for me as a boy was that it was an attractive

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alternative to the bleak and boring materialistic naturalism of my parents, and of their sophisticated peers. The drama of the supernatural promised something beyond “this world.” The prospect of late night horrors and strange occurrences I found preferable to the Formica-thin alternative of a soulless and flat reality devoid of mystery. No doubt, the hunger I felt paralleled what the estranged youth of today feel in their attraction to the alternative world of Harry Potter and vampires. *Surely there is more than what I see around me*, countless kids are thinking. Public school leaves them with depleted knowledge and nothing to believe in.

My early interest in the supernatural was also echoed by an observation made by G.K. Chesterton regarding the deep inner void left by atheism: “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing—they believe in anything.”¹

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Look at the trail of crumbs. As a member of a rootless unchurched atheistic family living overseas, my occult curiosity was ever growing, starting with horror comics before age nine, then a Ouija board at age ten. By thirteen, I was reading Bram Stoker's classic, *Dracula*, and I could not put it down. You bet I was affected, all through my school years, my college years, and on to India where I was finally supernaturally rescued from a heavy toxic immersion into rank occultism.

Neither Steve nor I want you or your children to follow my course.

I repeat: vampires have arrived in a virtual feeding frenzy of public obsession. Steve Wohlberg is about to show you the hidden source beneath this frenzy, and the downward voyage into the abyss that is waiting to suck as many who will climb aboard.

As an alternative to the dismal darkness of vampires, a world that normally despises

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daylight, we offer you happiness and satisfying immortality through *knowing* “*the Savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14). How bright is His light!

He is Steve’s ultimate focus, and mine too.

—Tal Brooke

President of Spiritual Counterfeits Project
Author of *One World & Avatar of Night*

ENDNOTE

1. G.K. Chesterton, “The Oracle of the Dog” (1923).

Chapter 1

TWILIGHT FEVER

“I’m the world’s most dangerous predator. Everything about me invites you in. My voice, my face, even my smell... I’m designed to kill... I wanted to kill you. I’ve never wanted a human’s blood so much in my life... Your scent, it’s like a drug to me. You’re like my own personal brand of heroin.” (Twilight)

So says the handsome vampire, Edward Cullen, to his star-struck 17-year-old lover, Bella Swan, in the hit movie *Twilight*, now the rage of teenagers the world over. What is *Twilight* about anyway? Is it simply

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harmless entertainment, fantasy, and fiction, or does something sinister lurk behind the scenes?

You're about to find out.

It all started one dark night—June 1, 2003, to be exact—when a virtually unknown Arizona stay-at-home mom named Stephenie Meyer had a strange dream. On her official Web site, Meyer testifies,

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

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time restraining himself from killing her immediately.¹

This unusual dream was so compelling that when Meyer awoke “she wrote like a woman struck by lightning.”² Perching herself before her computer, she feverishly typed out what she had just “seen” in her dream. Based on Meyer’s own report, the entire experience had a mysterious, almost supernatural quality to it. After being obsessively driven to type page after page, she later reflected:

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...only to have another conversation start in my head. I hated to lose anything by forgetting, so I’d get up and head back down to the computer.³

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Meyer admits that, at this point in her life, she was a novice writer with no experience in getting a book published. When the essential story, based on her dream, was mostly completed, she did a Google search to learn what to do next. Eventually, she sent 15 copies of her manuscript to potential interests and, to her utter amazement, quickly landed a \$750,000 contract with Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers, one of the largest young adult publishers in America. With increased drive, Meyer kept typing, typing, and typing until her tantalizing 4-part sequence of fictitious vampire romances was fully formed.

The entire series is called *The Twilight Saga*, and at this moment, it's bigger than *Harry Potter*. The titles of all four books are:

Twilight (Book One)

New Moon (Book Two)

Eclipse (Book Three)

Breaking Dawn (Book Four)

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Because each novel shot off the press as an immediate bestseller (the first three sat Number 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 137 weeks), Summit Entertainment took a chance and made Meyer's first book into a movie, to test the waters. They didn't have long to wait. During its opening weekend of November 21-23, 2008, *Twilight* grossed \$70.6 million after being viewed in 3,419 cinema theaters across America, mostly by teenage girls. Obviously, this was a big score. By April of 2009, the *Twilight* film racked in nearly \$380 million worldwide and over \$127 million in DVD sales. Yet, *Twilight* fever had just begun. By the time you read this, *New Moon* and *Eclipse* have already been unleashed into theaters worldwide. *Breaking Dawn* is pending. Chink...chink...chink. The dollars keep rolling in.

With translations into 38 languages so far (as of November 2009), *The Twilight Saga* has garnered rave reviews:

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New York Times Editor's Choice

Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

Amazon: "Best Book of the Decade...
So Far"

Teen People "Hot List" Pick American
Library Association

"Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults"
and "Top Ten Books for Reluctant Readers"

Needless to say, Stephenie Meyer (a married Mormon with three sons) is no longer your typical Arizona housewife. Catapulted to dizzying popularity and global stardom, she's been dubbed "the new queen of fantasy,"⁴ even rivaling *Harry Potter* author, J.K. Rowling. Meyer's vampire-romance craze now includes midnight release parties, vampire proms, national *Twilight* conferences, and Internet Web sites boasting 100 million hits! As with Pottermania, sales of *Twilight* t-shirts, lunch boxes,

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posters, pens, buttons, shoes, mugs, drinks, and candy have gone through the roof.

Twilight has become the juggernaut of this generation.

As already noted, *Twilight* swirls entirely around an unusual romance between Bella Swan (a shy, normal teenage girl) and Edward Cullen, a 108-year-old vampire frozen in a 17-year-old body. The setting is rural Forks, Washington (a real town), in the western part of the state. When Bella first spied Edward sitting at a table inside the cafeteria of Forks High School (a real school), she was irresistibly drawn to him. As their relationship develops, Bella discovers that her unusual new boyfriend belongs to a chic vampire family whose good-looking members live, not in coffins, or in a creepy shack surrounded by bats and a moat, but in a splendidly built, vaulted ceiling, contemporary home. Yes, the Cullens are all vampires, but “good” ones. They’re vegetarians too, that

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is, they've renounced human blood (although they are still tempted by its sight and scent) and subsist only on the blood of animals.

Vastly different from Bella Lugosi's stereotypical creatures of the night, the Cullens walk around like normal folks during daylight hours, hold jobs, and can handle some sunlight. Edward zips around in a silver Volvo S60R. They're expert baseball players, too. Fiercely loyal to their clan, they often act unselfishly, and above all, are tantalizingly supernatural. Edward reads minds, climbs trees faster than Spiderman, and exhibits superhuman strength that he often uses to protect Bella.

As the plot thickens, evil characters emerge. There are not only good vampires, but nasty ones too, who mercilessly hunt for human blood, including Bella's. Jacob Black, one of Bella's friends, is a member of the Quileute Indian tribe (a real western Washington tribe whose legends Meyer makes use

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of). He, and other members of his tribe, turn out to be “shape-shifters” capable of assuming the form of wolves (werewolves). As thrills build, blood flows. A coven of evil vampires slaughter humans, vampires battle vampires, werewolves kill vampires, werewolves fight werewolves, and so forth, all in the context of a Romeo-and-Juliet type of love affair between a mortal teenager and her immortal Prince Charming with sharp teeth.

In *Breaking Dawn* (Book Four), Bella finally marries Edward, and they have a daughter named Renesmee; but because giving birth to a half-vampire half-human baby is so traumatic, Bella almost dies. To save her from death, Edward finally sinks his teeth into her (for the first time) and turns her into a vampire to give her an immortal existence, which is what Bella always wanted him to do anyway. As the saga nears completion, Renesmee is targeted, hunted, and nearly executed by the mysterious Volturi (a

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secret vampire police force dedicated to hiding the existence of vampires from humans) because they see her as a threat. After being convinced that she really isn't, the Volturi leave her alone, and the family finally settles down in the quiet town of Forks, Washington, to live "happily ever after," literally. As vampires, they never die.

That's *Twilight* in a nutshell. It's a story of love, lust, vampires, werewolves, good, evil, mortality, immortality, and blood; yes definitely, *blood*, and the craving for it as the sweetest drink of all. If you're a *Twilighter*, hopefully you are thinking at this point, *Fair enough...so what's the problem? It's just fiction!*

There's a lot more to this subject than meets bloodshot eyes.

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The Fiction Effect

First of all, no fiction is *just fiction*, and this is certainly true of *Twilight*. Fantasy aside, fiction still communicates ideas, values, and messages, and these in turn, affect the day-to-day activities of readers and movie watchers. If you doubt this basic truth, simply read the first few paragraphs of this December 2009 article from The Canadian Press:

Twilight franchise takes bite out of bronzer as youth get ghostly

28/12/2009 4:35:00 PM

Sonya Bell, THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA — Love-struck fictional teenagers Bella Swan and Edward Cullen have cast their pale, brooding spell over cosmetics customers across Canada.

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Retail stores are reporting a surge of demand for vampire-influenced makeup on the heels of the popular *Twilight* series.

Jane McKay, a senior artist with MAC Cosmetics in Toronto, says younger customers bewitched by the pallid lovers aren't coming for bronzer anymore. They want lighter foundation and pale powder. MAC will be launching a Pale 'n Dandy trend this spring to respond to the demand.

"I definitely think (*Twilight*) is where it started," McKay says.

"They're really influenced. They're in love with Bella, and they love the story, and I think it's almost crossed over into their real lives."⁵

Get it? The Canadian Press has reported "a surge of demand for vampire-influenced

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makeup on the heels of the popular *Twilight* series.” Teens are changing their powder preferences, and observers realize that *Twilight* “is where it started.” “They’re really influenced,” says the senior artist of MAC Cosmetics, noting that *Twilight* fever has “crossed over” into the “real lives” of young people.

This is just one small example of The Fiction Effect. Yet the concerns of this book go far beyond “vampire-influenced makeup” and “pale powder” to more sinister ways young people might be influenced; or to quote the Canadian Press article, “bewitched.”

Throughout *The Twilight Saga*, both Edward and his family, and some werewolves too, are depicted as living absolutely awesome, exciting lives. One of the “coolest” things (to readers) is that they all have *special powers* beyond average mortals. In our real world, it is this lure of power, and the promise of it, that tempts real teenagers and

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adults today to explore the mysterious world of occultism.

They're doing it now, in record numbers.

TV series and Hollywood movies like *Bewitched*, *Charmed*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *The Craft*, *Practical Magic*, and *Harry Potter* have fueled interest in Wicca, magic, spells, and covens. Similarly, talk-to-the-dead productions like *Medium*, *Ghost Whisperer*, *White Noise*, and *The Sixth Sense* have not only generated hot interest in dialogue with the deceased, but professional mediums like John Edward, James Van Praagh, Sylvia Browne, and Allison Dubois (all *New York Times* bestselling authors) claim real abilities to help their clients do it.

How about vampirism and drinking blood? Believe it or not, just as sorcery shows have fueled interest in Wicca, potions, and covens, and just like ghostly movies are motivating millions to seek interaction with deceased relatives, even so is *The Twilight Saga* sparking interest in real vampirism.

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That's right, *real vampirism*. And *Twilight* isn't the only one. Shows like *True Blood* are doing it too—big time.

True Blood is a wildly popular HBO television series swirling around a passionate relationship between an attractive blond barmaid with telepathic powers (Sookie Stackhouse) and Vampire Bill who—Edward Cullen style—has reformed his diet to synthetic blood. Then there's The CW Television Network's *The Vampire Diaries* with its love affair between Elena, a gorgeous brunette, and the tall, dark, handsome Stefan—another vampire. In both *True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries*, once again, the traditional stereotype of dark creatures of morbid horror that subsist on human blood is given a facelift. The new vamps—Edward, Bill, and Stefan—aren't bad guys at all. Instead, they're often thoughtful, conscientious, and courageous. What's more, they all have thrilling love affairs with beautiful

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women totally enamored by their manly features and mysterious personalities.

Thus, Hollywood's latest breed of guys with fangs have become tantalizingly attractive to real women who would love to sink their teeth into such a date. *How awesome to have a vampire boyfriend!* many young ladies fantasize. Guys are dreaming too, *I'd love to be a vampire myself!*

You should be able to guess the next step.

Interest in real vampirism is exploding.

To this writer, such a trend is more serious than cosmetic preferences. Although to discerning observers, the trends of pale faces and interest in blood drinking seem to be connected, like two fangs inside the mouth of one rattlesnake.

ENDNOTES

1. Stephenie Meyer, "The Story Behind Twilight." Retrieved December 12, 2009 from

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2. Lev Grossman, "Stephenie Meyer: A New J.K. Rowling?" *Time* (April 24, 2008). Retrieved December 12, 2009, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1734838,00.html>.
3. Meyer, "The Story Behind Twilight."
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