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THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF
STEPHENIE MEYER'S VAMPIRE SAGA

D A V E R O B E R T S

MONARCH
B O O K S

Oxford, UK, & Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

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For all who are willing to go to Mars Hill (Acts 17).



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INTRODUCTION

YOU MAY PICK UP this book for any number of reasons.

Maybe you're a fan of the *Twilight* series and you're curious about the spiritual ideas that inform these stories.

It could be that you're a parent wanting to understand the books that have captured the imagination of your daughter or your son.

You might be a youth worker who wonders what has propelled the series to bestseller status and a 16 per cent share of all books sold in the USA in 2008. Perhaps you haven't read the books but you've seen one of the films and been drawn into the life of a sleepy town, with appalling weather, in Washington State.

INTRODUCTION

The book you are about to read has a point of view. It is not a detached overview. It would be better to think of it as a respectful engagement. It will ask some hard questions of the values, ethics, wisdom and spiritual nuances of this saga. It will praise what is praiseworthy, but not flinch from questioning.

My own view of life is informed by mainstream Christian orthodoxy. Those who write about culture from within that perspective may sometimes be guilty of standing at opposite poles. Some only have to see the words ‘sex’ or ‘occult’ and go on the war path, denouncing the books in the broadest of terms and discouraging young people from reading them. Alternatively, others are mortified at a Christian perspective that is constantly ‘against’ culture and seek to find something of truth, beauty and hope in every corner. This second perspective will often be seeking what are called ‘redemptive analogies’. These parables, pictures or metaphors within a storyline are seized upon as parallels to Christian truth and doorways to insight.

Tiptoeing boldly (if such a mixed metaphor is permitted) between these two perspectives is the book that you’re about to read. It will seek a bigger perspective on the writing of Stephenie Meyer than one that only examines storylines about sexuality or occult activity.

But it will question whether this story really speaks to the rebellion associated with vampire imagery and mythology – or is, in fact, a hymn to more conventional values associated with individualism, consumerism and elitism.

The little boy in the story who was willing to blurt out that the emperor had no clothes is my guide. I'm not sure that the glamorous rebels of the *Twilight Saga* have any real hope for us. Is the 'rebel sell', which packages rebellion for mass consumption, at work in this modern-day romance?

I hope you enjoy our exploration.

DAVE ROBERTS

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CHAPTER 1

THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT

IN AN AGE WHEN the art of reading is thought to be in decline, the success of a book series with over 2,450 pages and a character count exceeding 3.5 million may be a surprise to some.

The appetite of readers old and young for romance, drama and the thrill of the long-running saga remains undimmed, however. The success of the *Harry Potter* series was just one indicator. The advent of the Internet has also made it possible to build strong fan cultures around niche television series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *The West Wing*. At the heart of this fan culture activity is an identification with the characters in a storyline, and a desire to explore both the story and the point of view that lies behind it.

A young boy, Harry Potter, captured the imagination of many as he grew up with his audience. It seems fitting that the next mass-market mystical morality tale capturing the imaginations of children and young adults should feature a slightly awkward, self-conscious girl, teetering on the brink of womanhood.

While some may be tempted to dismiss these stories as *Mills & Boon* style romances for the young teen reader, at their heart they explore issues of identity, sexuality and spirituality. They reflect on material aspiration, prejudice and stereotyping, family breakdown, self-control and human dignity. They invoke the Bible and one of the characters speaks of the perspective of the Creator. They explore ancient myths and mystical practices that are entering the mainstream culture of the West.

Regardless of literary merit, the saga's cold, hard sales facts are staggering. The series is made up of five books. Four have been published, but an unpublished fragment – *Midnight Sun* – tells the story found in the original *Twilight* series from the perspective of Edward, the main male character in the books. The fragment is over 260 pages long and further fills in both the romantic and the spiritual roots of the story.

The series, which launched in 2005, has become a publishing phenomenon. With sales in excess of 70

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million by 2009 and translations into 38 languages, the *Twilight Saga* has emerged as a strong competitor for hearts and minds alongside the *Harry Potter* series and the controversial *Da Vinci Code*. While originally published for ‘young readers’, the saga has attracted a much wider audience, including women looking for a different take on romantic fiction.

If you have found the 2,450-page mountain too hard a climb, or if you have read the series but would value a plot overview, here is a swift summary. Feel free to skip it if you know the books well.