

Edwin B. Arnaudin. Mormon Vampires: The Twilight Saga and Religious Literacy. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2008. 102 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassel.

This study is a content analysis of Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Saga and a guide to Mormon Literacy. It examines the three current novels in the Saga and analyzes them in respect to central tenets of the Mormon faith.

As a result of this study, the limitations of Meyer's religion as seen through her writing are thoroughly explored, revealing the unique boundaries through which her beliefs force her to work. By abstaining from explicitly mentioning aspects of Mormon doctrine, Meyer nevertheless creates imaginative characters and scenarios, though the resulting texts still carry an undeniable and inescapable air of Latter-day Saint values.

Headings:

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints -- Juvenile fiction

Mormon Church -- Controversial literature

Vampires -- Fiction

Werewolves -- Fiction

Book of Mormon

Religious education -- United States

MORMON VAMPIRES:
THE TWILIGHT SAGA AND RELIGIOUS LITERACY

by
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2008

Approved by

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Literature Review.....	
Stephenie Meyer.....	6
Mormonism.....	8
Mormonism and Meyer.....	11
The Twilight Saga.....	17
Methodology.....	19
Results.....	
I.Discovery:“Milk Before Meat”.....	20
II. Mormon Life.....	
Agency.....	27
Sexuality and the Law of Chastity.....	37
Marriage.....	49
Family.....	52
Conversion.....	61
Harmful Language: Lying, Profanity, and Gossip.....	70
Diet and the Word of Wisdom.....	75
III. Potential Consequences: Persecution and Tolerance.....	78
Discussion: Religious Literacy and Mormon Literacy.....	89
Further Research and Conclusion.....	93

Works Cited.....	95
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Introduction

Fiction and religion have long shared a common bond. Authors have historically been influenced by their religious beliefs to the point that their writing clearly reflects a respective faith. Though certainly not limited to one particular religion, the effects of Christianity on fiction has arguably received the most critical attention with the prominent modern example of a Christian novelist being C.S. Lewis and his *Chronicles of Narnia*.

For Lewis, “the Christianity in his works is hardly escapable” (Hartt 21). A “devoted atheist” as a young man (Bridges 54), Lewis converted and as his “intellectual assent warmed into love...he was moved to share the good news, in prose and verse, fiction and non-fiction” (Bridges 55). The “public avowal” of his faith is seen most clearly through his plentiful non-fiction works, such as *Mere Christianity* and *What Christians Believe*, and when he delved into fiction, his religious beliefs followed (Hartt 21). As a result of his desire to spread his faith through the above array of writing outlets, he has become known as “one of the world’s best-known and best-loved Christians” (Bridges 55).

Conversely, the foremost contemporary anti-religious fiction is the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman. Like Lewis, the subtext of Pullman’s works is “the search for the divine,” but while the protagonists of Narnia

seek the divine in order to experience happiness and perfect love...in Pullman's trilogy they seek it in order to destroy it. The plots of *His Dark Materials* are

driven by the premise that God is evil—a celestial impostor who pretends to have created the universe and who so intensely hates flesh and blood that he wants people to live a repressed, joyless existence followed by hell, even for the righteous. Christian illusions about God are to blame for all the world's miseries; Christianity is “a very powerful and convincing mistake, that's all,” one character declares. The protagonists in the books strive to acquire ancient, mysterious objects they can use to bring about God's death. Along the way children are tortured and murdered, often with Church approval (Easterbrook).

The dual sides of the Christian argument have been manifest in these popular texts, bringing the debate of religion into the masses. Recently, however, a new novelist belonging to a different faith from that of the typical religion-inspired writers has achieved publishing success, offering an unparalleled challenge for her personal career.

Stephenie Meyer, a stay-at-home mother of three with a degree in English, published her first novel, *Twilight*, in 2005. The story of a teenage girl named Bella Swan who falls in love with Edward Cullen, a vampire subsisting on animal blood, was an immediate success, spawning sequels and an upcoming film adaptation. Collectively known as the Twilight Saga, the popular books have been hailed as the heir to the void created by the conclusion of the *Harry Potter* series, complete with a large following of devotees and celebrity status for Meyer, a lifelong Mormon¹.

This study is intended to be a critical analysis of the Twilight Saga and also a guide to Mormon literacy. The Mormon faith is distinct from traditional Christianity in numerous ways and it is these differences that thoroughly shape the lives of its believers, making them wholly unique. Due to these traits, Mormonism is a frequently

¹ The terms Mormon and LDS will be used interchangeably throughout this study as the common name for a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

misunderstood religion, traditionally garnering distrust from others despite the clean, responsible lifestyle of its Church members.

By gaining a better understanding of Mormonism, one can more completely understand the lives of its followers. Through learning the basic beliefs that, from a young age, are taught to Latter-day Saints, one is able to comprehend why every facet of a Mormon's existence should be shaped by one's obedience to the Church's tenets. Naturally, a Mormon's career and creation of new works likewise follows these disciplines as the beliefs are weaved into all that Mormons do. Such dedication to this way of life is exhibited in the novels of Meyer, perhaps the most well-known Mormon in contemporary literature.

Literature Review

Stephenie Meyer

Stephenie Meyer is a graduate of Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in English. Born in Connecticut in 1973, she is the mother of three sons and lives with them and her husband in Phoenix, Arizona. Prior to becoming an author, Meyer was a stay-at-home mom, reading five to six novels a week while raising her children.

Publisher's Weekly named her one of the "most promising new authors of 2005" and her first novel, *Twilight*, has received critical praise and has been translated into twenty languages. The series has been most popular among teenage girls, while also attracting young male readers ("Twilight").

Twilight was inspired by a dream Meyer had on June 2, 2003, an experience the author remembers vividly:

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 (stepheniemeyer.com).

Not wanting to lose the memorable characters and imagery, she began to write what she could recall. The sequence became Chapter 13 of *Twilight*, titled "Confessions," and Meyer wrote through to the end of the novel, then went back to the beginning "until the pieces matched up," fully connecting them three months later ("Twilight"). With the

assistance of her sister and some internet research on the publishing industry, Meyer signed a massive deal with Little, Brown and Company (“Twilight”).

Sequels *New Moon* and *Eclipse* were met with similar critical and fan popularity, with *Eclipse* selling an unexpectedly high 150,000 copies on its release date (Trachtenberg). In addition to maintaining a MySpace page, Meyer and her brother Seth regularly update her official Web site with news concerning the novels, film adaptation, book tours, publication dates, and merchandise (stepheniemeyer.com). The Twilight Lexicon has also gained attention from fans as another prime source for series information. The site offers detailed character bios, chapter discussions, mythology, and multiple discussion boards. Though not affiliated with Meyer, she has deemed the Twilight Lexicon “the brightest star in the Twilight online universe” (twilightlexicon.com).

The fourth book in the series, and the last to be told from Bella’s perspective, is titled *Breaking Dawn* and will be released in August 2008. Meyer has also announced *Midnight Sun*, which is to be Edward’s perspective of *Twilight*. Outside of the Twilight Saga, *The Host*, a science fiction novel and Meyer’s first work for adults, will be released in May 2008 with a first-print run of 500,000 copies (“Breaking Dawn”).

After an initial deal with MTV Films lapsed in April 2007, Maverick Films and Summit Entertainment bought the cinematic rights to *Twilight*. Kristen Stewart (*Into the Wild*, *Panic Room*) will play Bella and Robert Pattinson (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) has been cast as Edward. The film, directed by Catherine Hardwicke (*Thirteen*, *The Nativity Story*) with a screenplay by Melissa Rosenberg, is set for a December 12,

2008 release date, just in time for the annual Christmas rush of film releases. The studio, cast, and crew anticipate the first film to be a success, thereby warranting continued collaboration in cinematically furthering the series (“Twilight the Movie”).

Mormonism

While many definitions of Mormonism and the history of its believers are available, the one Stephen Prothero provides in his 2007 work *Religious Literacy* is up-to-date, concise, and accurate. In addition, since his text is intended to give readers a basic and truthful understanding of a variety of religious tenets, it is also unbiased²:

Mormonism. Religious movement founded in New York in the 1820s by Joseph Smith Jr. (1805-1844). According to Smith, an angel revealed to him the location of gold tablets buried in the fifth century in modern-day upstate New York. Smith found the tablets, used two seer stones to translate their “Reformed Egyptian” into English, and published the resulting Book of Mormon in 1830. In that book, which Mormons view as scripture, Jesus visits the New World after his resurrection and before his ascension, founding his true church among Native Americans.

Widely persecuted for their distinctive beliefs and practices (which came to include polygamy), Mormons moved westward from New York to Ohio and Missouri before settling in Illinois, where Smith was arrested, jailed, and then killed by a mob in 1844. Mormons later migrated under the direction of Brigham Young (1801-1877) to Utah, where they established something of a theocratic state. After the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the official name of the largest Mormon Church) renounced polygamy in 1890, Utah was admitted into the Union as the forty-fifth state.

Mormons recognize four scriptures: the Bible (“as far as it is translated correctly”), the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants. But they also believe in ongoing revelation, investing in their successive presidents the power of prophecy. In 1978 President Spencer Kimball announced a revelation that lifted a prior ban on African American men becoming

² Prothero’s dictionary of religious literacy is so committed to an honest presentation that he notes: “The reader should know that if I write that Joseph Smith Jr. found gold plates in the hills of New York in the 1820s I am not reporting the facts or even the facts as I understand them but rather the facts as Mormons believe them to be” (150).

priests. Today Mormons' distinctive practices include baptism for the dead and marriage for eternity, and their distinctive beliefs include the corporeality of God and the eternal progression of humans into godhood. Mormons also follow a health code called the Word of Wisdom, which prohibits the ingestion of tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine.

Mormonism was widely discussed in the United States during the 2002 Winter Olympics, held in the shadow of LDS international headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. Although once seen as un-American, Mormons are now viewed by many as quintessentially American. The LDS Church reports over 4 million members in the United States and 12 million worldwide and is one of the world's fastest growing religious movements. Some have predicted that Mormonism is well on its way to becoming the first great world religion since Islam. It has already become an American political force. Mormons were overrepresented relative to their total population in the 109th Congress, and in 2006 the governors of both Utah and Massachusetts were LDS members (203-4).

By following a path of clean living and strong faith-based values, including focuses on family and pre-marital sexual abstinence, Mormons are typically revered as model citizens. However, as a direct result of their questionable origin, unorthodox beliefs, and the reassuring precedent and continued prevalence of persecution, Mormons are frequently labeled as a cult. In his *Complete Handbook on Mormonism*, Ed Decker, an apostate Mormon who spent twenty years as a missionary for the Church, attempts to dispel LDS doctrine in order to separate it from the beliefs of Christianity, which he considers to be the true religion. Approaching all aspects of Mormonism, Decker provides insight that only former Church members can provide while accurately representing the thoughts of most apostate Mormons (Decker *i*).

In his analysis, Decker is also careful to include the thoughts of respected Christians to bolster his arguments, especially in entries with fewer supporting Biblical quotations. One such discussion concerns cults, in which Decker uses the definition of

Rev. Billy Graham, a “reasonably distant authority,” as opposed to an anti-Mormon description:

In general, I would say a cult is a group which follows religious ideas (usually taught by a strong leader) which are not in accordance with the Bible. Sometimes cults will have certain writings for which they claim supernatural authority in addition to the Bible. Often the leader of the cult will demand total, blind obedience to his word and may even separate children from parents.

While cults differ greatly with each other, they have in common one thing: they reject Jesus Christ and the Bible as their authorities and therefore reject faith in Jesus Christ as God’s way of salvation. Often, they attempt to disguise this by talking a great deal about Jesus. But frequently, the test of a cult is found in their answer to this question: How can I be saved? If the answer is anything other than trusting Jesus Christ, then the group may be a cult. This is particularly true if they say they alone have the truth and salvation is found by joining their group.

I believe the growth of cults is an indication of a deep spiritual hunger on the part of many people today. Many people have discovered that material things do not satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. Young people, especially are searching for meaning and purpose in life. Unfortunately, many of them have never really heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they are vulnerable to any false doctrine that comes along.

In God’s Word, we have all we need to know about God. When a person come to Christ, he no longer has any reason to be attracted to false religions (qtd. in Decker 159-60).

By this definition, Decker argues that Mormonism is a cult: “It has added to the Word of God with the *Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. It has belittled the Bible’s authority with its ‘holy priesthood’ and its doctrine that God must have a prophet in place to direct His Church. Additionally, Mormonism claims that full salvation is found only in it” (Decker 160). He further adds that Mormons are part of “a soft-core cult, with a happy facade,” as opposed to the “dark and sinister” sound of the word, a connotation to which content Mormons cannot personally relate (Decker 159).

Such an understanding of LDS tenets is common among apostates and general non-believers. The perspective has made unhindered integration into society a challenge for Mormons, while concurrently strengthening their church and home families through shared beliefs. It is this set of challenges that Meyer has faced due to her religion, presenting a unique situation for her career as a novelist.

Mormonism and Meyer

A “devout Mormon,” Meyer is not secretive about her faith (Horng). Brigham Young University, her alma mater, is run and operated by the Mormon Church (“About BYU”), and she concludes her “Unofficial Bio” on her Web site by adding:

I am also a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormon, as we are commonly called—for more info on what that means, see www.mormon.org) and that has a huge influence on who I am and my perspective on the world, and therefore what I write (though I have been asked more than once, “What’s a nice Mormon girl like you doing writing about vampires?”) (stepheniemeyer.com).

Meyer admits to her somewhat mirror-image protagonist Bella being “a good girl” because Meyer herself had similar teenage years and chooses to imagine teenagers in that same manner:

I grew up in a community where it was not the exception to be a good girl. It was sort of expected. And all of my friends were good girls too, and my boyfriends were good boys. Everybody was pretty nice. And that affects how I write my characters. There aren’t very many bad guys in my novels. Even the bad guys usually have a pretty good reason for the way they are, and some of them come around in the end. I don’t see the world as full of negatives (Kirschling).

Meyer experienced what she describes as a typical Mormon upbringing. She has five siblings and is the second-oldest in “an extremely close family” (Irwin). Growing up

Mormon, this “typical” life means that Meyer followed all of the rules and procedures required of a proper LDS member. Being taught from a young age to accept the LDS doctrine, she fulfilled the expected rituals, meetings, and beliefs. She belonged to the Young Women organization that helped and encouraged her with “intellectual and spiritual growth, physical fitness, speech, drama, music, dance, vocational and homemaking talents, outdoor and camping skills, and leadership development” (Cannon 1616). She stuck by the Young Women motto, “We stand for truth and righteousness,” and followed in 1980s and ‘90s Young Women President Ardeth Kapp’s focus on faith, divine nature, individual worship, knowledge, choice and accountability, good works, and integrity (Cannon 1619). She participated in family home evenings and other home-enriching traditions, further preparing her for adulthood. Then, upon graduation from high school, she followed through to the next expected step and attended Brigham Young University.

The values reinforced through tradition and adult interaction are also presented in “For the Strength of the Youth,” a set of guidelines that sum up the Mormon faith so that it is most applicable to a young adult audience. The information exists in its entirety on the official Church website and is additionally printed in pamphlet form so that LDS youth may carry it at all times and easily remember their core beliefs (“For the Strength”). Whether Meyer herself carried a copy of the pamphlet is unknown, but her devotion to the standards represented in the publication and reinforced elsewhere in her life is unquestionable.

Meyer met her future husband Pancho at the age of four, and after an adolescence in which all they shared were weekly church activities, they began dating when she was twenty and were married nine months later. Meyer confirms the common practice that “Mormons get married a lot faster,” largely due to their strict adherence to a law of chastity, which “does speed up relationships” (Irwin).

Continuing to belong to the Church, she is now daily reminded of her faith by furthering the values taught to her as a youth and putting them into practice as a likewise responsible adult with her husband and three sons. Meyers’ faith is “not a church that’s low on time commitments” as she attends three hours of church on Sundays and teaches a class for the 14-to-18 year-old kids in her ward, or congregation (Irwin). For her, the beliefs and values are eternal and have become the most important part of who she is. Her religious determination thus flows into her professional life as a writer and into the works that she creates. The *Articles of Faith* demands only creations that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (A of F 1:13). If she were to betray her faith in her writing, she would cease to comply with the strict adherence demanded by the Mormon Church. Therefore, even though the main content and characters of the *Twilight Saga* may not seem fitting for a Mormon to write, there remains a strong overarching of LDS beliefs.

Meyer concedes that her faith has influenced her work, particularly noting that her characters tend to think more about where they came from and where they are going than is typical: “Is there nothing if it all stops? They worry” (Trachtenberg). To her, these

spiritual inclusions are “unconscious” ones (Morris), adding that her novels “aren’t overly religious, but [her] characters, even the vampires, think about religion” (Minzesheimer) and that her books are about “life, not death — love, not lust” (Hornig). Additionally, Meyer’s “pet peeve about the [young adult] genre is that there seems to be an empty spot for novels where kids aren’t doing drugs and having sex,” and, in keeping with her beliefs, she is committed to refrain from including such details, thereby helping to fill that gap (Minzesheimer).

The importance of making one’s own decisions and its roots in Meyer’s faith is a topic that the author frequently addresses: “Mormon themes do come through in *Twilight*. Free agency — I see that in the Cullens. The vampires made this choice to be something more — that’s my belief, the importance of free will to being human” (Castellitto). “Having free agency to decide what you’re going to do with yourself is a gift. I think kids pick up on that — it doesn’t matter if you’re a vampire. You can choose what to do with your life” (Irwin). All of the above values trickle into the *Twilight* Saga, though they do so without ever explicitly mentioning the Mormon faith. Considering the underlying public perception of Mormonism as a cult, Meyer’s approach of subtly placing LDS beliefs throughout her text is a wise decision.

As an effect of belonging to an historically mysterious and persecuted religion, Meyer’s Mormonism is regularly noted by the press and readers alike, often mixed with a general unease for the faith felt by non-believers. The association and relevant opinions are facts that the author understands, though she finds the hyperbolizing of her Church in relation to her novels unnecessary: “I think it’s because Mormons are rarer in other parts

of the world. But I get more of, ‘What’s a Mormon girl doing writing about vampires?’ from the Mormon community than I do the outside. I was more worried about [friends at church] thinking I was doing something cheesy and lame” (Irwin). From Meyer’s experience, some of these Mormons, especially those who know her, are surprised by her choice of topics, questioning her subject matter “with a critical lilt to their voices” and adding “self-righteously, ‘I don’t read those kinds of books’” (Morris). She is quick to explain that her works are more than mere monster novels, though she still has Church friends “and extended family” who refuse to take her seriously (Morris).

Regardless of individual Church members’ opinions, Don Evans, spokesman for the Mormon Church in Phoenix, says the Church has no position on Meyer’s books: “Her works should not be judged by her religious affiliation. She could be Catholic, Baptist, or atheist. It shouldn’t matter” (Irwin).

Meyer’s Mormonism has become a point of interest primarily because she is not afraid to mention her faith. Jana Reiss from *Publisher’s Weekly*, a fellow Mormon, credits the curiosity to Meyer’s willingness to bring up her religion “in a way that other writers don’t” and Mormonism’s status as “an exoticized religious minority,” citing similarities with the general piqued response to Mormon politicians (Irwin). However, the concept of a Mormon in the public eye, including the realm of popular writing, is far from new. In speaking with Orson Scott Card, another well-known and religiously-vocal Mormon author, Meyer received advice on how to balance faith and fiction:

He said, as a prominent Mormon author, you’re never going to please everybody. You’re going to get people who will tell you your stories cross the line — how can you be a good Mormon and write this? Then there will be other people who

will say that you're limiting your art because you're letting your religion control what you write. So far, I haven't gotten it bad from either (Irwin).

As for the relation of Meyer's faith to her novels, the topic has critical precedence, and though the analysis was done by someone with Meyer's same beliefs, it has been deemed false by Meyer herself. Though the author is unnamed, a Mormon woman reviewed *Twilight* and analyzed its relation to the *Book of Mormon*, but Meyer insists that the critic was "dead wrong on every tie-in" (Irwin).

Though opinions concerning LDS faith in her works are widespread, Meyer sticks to the possibility of one day writing a Mormon novel, called *The Bad Girl* (Morris), but is content with the *Twilight* Saga and other projects for now. However, she is hesitant to publish such a work: "I have a novel I started that would be a Mormon comedy romance. I do wonder what it would be like, because I have these girls who will read anything I write, so I know they'll read it, and I can't imagine what their reaction would be. And what parents will think about their kids reading stuff that has quite a lot of Mormon doctrine in it" (Irwin). The prospect of fully exposing her faith in a book logically brings Meyer concern, as her exposure to the public perspective of Mormonism has yielded a range of results:

Most of the non-Mormons I've dealt with are from New York, and have very little idea what a "Mormon" is. This works to my advantage sometimes — they do things for me, out of respect for my religion, that they might not do for someone else. For example, I've told them that I don't work on Sundays, and they've gone out of their way to arrange events so that I can be home every Sunday. When my editor wanted premarital sex in my story, I explained that I won't write that, and she let it go. Of course, what they do know about Mormons is always the infamous stuff. Someone I work with in New York once asked me — in complete seriousness — how many wives my husband was allowed to have (Morris).

On *Twilight's* dust jacket, Meyer says, "I've always admired the ability of some authors to create situations of impossible fantasy, and then add characters that are so deeply human that their perspectives make the situation believable. I hope *Twilight* offers readers the same experience." Through her faithful adherence to the requirements of the Mormon faith, she has done just that, though with a noticeable LDS influence.

The Twilight Saga

Twilight introduces Bella Swan, a seventeen-year-old who goes to live with her divorced father in the tiny town of Forks, Washington. Soon after arriving, Bella becomes drawn to Edward Cullen, a spectacularly attractive young man at her school, and soon learns that he and his family are vampires, though ones that feed off of wild animal blood instead of humans'. Their love soon blossoms and they spend nearly all of their free time together. During one such instance, with Edward's family present, a group of traveling vampires senses Bella's human presence and a tracker vampire named James makes it his mission to drain Bella of her blood. The Cullens take Bella to Phoenix to avoid James' danger, but the tracker tricks Bella into coming to him. As James is set to murder her, Edward thwarts the evil vampire's plans, killing James in the process.

The series continues with *New Moon*, which finds a newly-knowledgeable Bella eager to be transformed into a vampire. After an accidental paper cut triggers a barely-halted blood frenzy among the Cullens, they deem it best for Bella's safety that they permanently depart Forks. The loss of her true love sends Bella into a multi-month depression that is only ended, though not entirely, by a powerful friendship she develops

with nearby Quileute Indian and family friend, Jacob Black. Soon, she discovers that Jacob and his reservation friends are secretly werewolves, the sworn enemy of the vampires, and that the werewolves have been attempting to stop a string of murders by Victoria, James' revenge-bent lover, who Bella believes is after her. Meanwhile, when Bella's recreational cliff-diving accident is perceived by future-seeing Alice Cullen as suicide, Edward feels responsible for Bella's "death." Guilt-stricken, Edward travels to Italy in order to publicly expose himself to humans in the vampire city Voltura, thereby guaranteeing his demise by the local world-revered coven, known as the Volturi. With Alice's help, she and Bella race to Italy and barely stop Edward from completing his suicidal plan, though not before the Volturi force the Cullens to transform Bella into one of them as punishment for her illegal knowledge of vampire life. After a Cullen family vote approves of Bella joining their clan, Edward convinces her to wait until high school graduation and agrees to be the one to bite her if she will first marry him.

In *Eclipse*, the series' third installment, Victoria is still after Bella and tensions flare between the vampires and werewolves. Ever ready to become Edward's immortal partner, Bella also experiences an increased sense of sexuality and a potential alternative in Jacob. Though Bella's wishes of reconciliation between her two enemy friends are never realized, the sides do unite in the battle against Victoria and her army of newborn vampires, who have drawn attention to themselves with a killing spree in Seattle. The allied supernatural defense is able to destroy Victoria and her vampires, and after fully understanding that she is not meant to be with Jacob, Bella accepts Edward's proposal of marriage, though she still remains a human.

Methodology

In order to best complete this study, a content analysis, “the study of recorded human communications” (Babbie 328), will be performed. The Mormon faith, being a complex and relatively new religion, is comprised of many facets, not all of which are relevant to this study. However, a core group of practices and beliefs hold special significance in the daily operations of Mormon life and it is the unified stance on these components that makes Mormonism unique from other systems of faith. Additionally, the prominent appearance of these facets in the Twilight Saga furthers the notion of these being the central elements of LDS beliefs. These distinct tenets, habits, and historical aspects of Mormonism are:

- “Milk Before Meat”
- Agency
- Sexuality and the Law of Chastity
- Marriage
- Family
- Conversion
- Harmful Language: Lying, Profanity, and Gossip
- Diet and the Word of Wisdom
- Persecution and Tolerance

Results

In order to best analyze Meyer's use of Mormonism in her novels, each selected tenet of Mormonism will be defined, followed by relevant examples in the Twilight Saga that follow the respective belief. The sources of these definitions are primarily LDS scholars and scripture, and are augmented by quotations from past Church leaders.

The featured Mormon beliefs are organized into three sections: Discovery (initial interactions with Mormons); Mormon Life (core components of Mormon existence); and Potential Consequences (reactions to Mormonism). This presentation is intended to be a logical progression of acquiring Mormon literacy and a potential example of one's exposure to LDS faith. Though not mirroring the scattered portrayal of beliefs in the Twilight Saga, the following structure culls inclusions from throughout Meyer's books to form a near-comprehensive analysis of each belief as seen in the Saga, and of each tenet's relationship to the other central tenets.

I. Discovery

Secrets (Milk Before Meat)

Definition

When Mormons spread their beliefs through the work of missionaries, there is a strict protocol that must be followed in order to best encourage conversion to the LDS faith. Only the basic tenets of Mormonism, which are the most appealing and universally acceptable, are shared with potential new members. Such a careful approach is taken in

order to prevent audiences from hearing a piece of information that is too advanced for one unacquainted with LDS life. This heavier knowledge, if not presented in a logical manner after one is familiar with Mormonism, has the potential to skew one's perspective of the faith. Behavior of this kind is encouraged throughout the Church and is known as "milk before meat" (Millet, "Milk").

The concept finds scriptural precedent in Jesus teaching that gospel prerequisites should be observed when teaching or learning sacred information (Matt. 7:6-7). After preaching on the profound truths associated with his own suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, notably humankind's need to repent, Jesus warns: "And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me. For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish" (D&C 19:21-22). When applied to the Mormon faith, it is understandable that one who knows very little about LDS doctrine will probably not understand or appreciate teachings concerning "temples, sealing powers, eternal life, or the potential godhood of man" (Millet, "Milk").

The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, "If we start right, it is easy to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it [will] be a hard matter to get right" (J. Smith, *TPJS* 343). Once a suitable foundation is laid, the "truth can then flow more freely" (Millet, "Milk"). The apostle Peter is said to have explained to Clement of Rome: "The teaching of all doctrine has a certain order, and there are some things which must be delivered first, others in the second place, and others in the third, and so all in their order; and if these things be delivered in their order, they become plain; but if they

be brought forward out of order, they will seem to be spoken against reason” (qtd. in Millet, “Milk”). And so, in order to

“grow in holiness, it is vital that [Mormons] grow steadily and surely, feeding regularly and consistently upon the fundamental and foundational doctrines of salvation. Too often members of the Church, supposing that they are deeper and stronger than they really are, make an effort to feast upon heavy meat—doctrinal matters that are clearly beyond the purview of what is taught by the Brethren today—well before they are ready to do so” (Millet, “Milk”).

Millet has also addressed ways to handle tough questions that missionaries face during their missions or after, offering that Mormons “are not obligated to answer everyone’s questions” and adds that the Church should “never provide meat when milk will do” (Millet, “BYU”).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

As a strategy to keep their identity safe and protect those around them, the Cullens practice a similar brand of progressive truth. After saving Bella’s life in an automobile accident, Edward’s vehement insistence that he saved her by natural means, coupled with looks of “disapproval and fury” from his family, reveals that he in fact has something to hide (Meyer, *Twilight* 58). The vampires desire for no human to know their secret, though it is clear from Edward’s superhuman efforts that Bella is somewhat aware. Edward’s front of denial includes a “defensive face,” words that sound like a “perfectly delivered line by a skilled actor,” and a voice that holds an “edge of derision” (Meyer, *Twilight* 65). After meeting Carlisle, Bella can tell that he too is “in on it,” whatever the secret may be (Meyer, *Twilight* 63).

Attempting to distance himself from the weak spot in his secretive armor that he has exposed, Edward sits as far away from Bella as possible in class and clenches his fists (Meyer, *Twilight* 70). He also makes an effort to remove himself entirely from her life so that she will be unable to discover his true identity, but his love for her draws him back into her existence. In choosing to remain with her and share a powerful love, he also decides to give her the truth in a “milk before meat” manner.

Edward slowly reveals his secrets to Bella in a measured process where each new revelation builds on the previous ones, making them less shocking and easier to comprehend. If Edward were to give her a piece of information too soon, she may take the piece out of context and he is under constant fear that she will hear one component that will send her running (Meyer, *Twilight* 339). Regardless, Bella is “excited by the idea of unraveling another of the unknowns” concerning his life (Meyer, *Twilight* 213). Edward is extremely worried of exposing his family and “everything Carlisle has built” for them (Meyer, *Twilight* 269) and is concerned that he may have put them all “in danger” (Meyer, *Twilight* 272). Esme encourages him to take whatever steps necessary “in order to stay,” and he complies (Meyer, *Twilight* 273). Once he reconciles his feelings of love and family and balances them with beliefs that he knows to be right, he rationalizes that “as long as [he is] going to hell, [he] might as well do it thoroughly,” and begins telling Bella the secrets of the vampiric life (Meyer, *Twilight* 87).

The initial revelation is that he and his family are vampires. Once that most elementary, though still weighty, detail is established, the rest of his truths are told as Bella becomes increasingly more prepared for each respective heavier fact, constantly

amassing a more mature body of knowledge. Edward can read minds (Meyer, *Twilight* 174); He “followed her scent” to Port Angeles (Meyer, *Twilight* 180); he is the only one of his family capable of reading minds (Meyer, *Twilight* 180); he “can’t go out in the sunlight,” but he will show Bella why sometime (Meyer, *Twilight* 189); he and his family hunt bear and mountain lion instead of humans (Meyer, *Twilight* 215) but Bella should never see them hunt due to the overwhelming possibility that they could lose control and attack her (Meyer, *Twilight* 225); he shows Bella what happens when his skin is touched by the sun, sparkling like diamonds (Meyer, *Twilight* 260); he showcases his superhuman speed with Bella clinging on his back (Meyer, *Twilight* 279); he reveals his true age, his story before and after becoming a vampire (Meyer, *Twilight* 287), how others were brought into his family, and their respective gifts (Meyer, *Twilight* 288-91); he notes that there are “very few ways [vampires] can be killed” (Meyer, *Twilight* 338); he says that they are not required to breathe (Meyer, *Twilight* 338); and he shares Carlisle’s story of transformation, much more impressive than his own (Meyer, *Twilight* 339-40).

Rosalie finds it difficult “to have someone on the outside know the truth” (Meyer, *Twilight* 327). The Volturi likewise disapprove of the Cullens exposing the vampiric secrets, insisting that Bella must perish or become a vampire since she “knows too much” (Meyer, *New Moon* 478). Edward, however, is ecstatic to be able to tell someone their hidden news. He was ready to feel “relieved” having Bella “know about everything” and “not needing to keep secrets” from her but did not expect to feel more than that and enjoys having her know his secrets (Meyer, *Twilight* 344). Bella had worried that he “might regret” telling her those things, and she is relieved to know that

that is not the case, though Edward is “still waiting for the running and the screaming” (Meyer, *Twilight* 344).

Alice similarly contributes meatier knowledge in line with Bella’s advancing maturity, revealing that the “only core restriction” for vampires is that they are required to keep their existence a secret, but if they fail to comply, the Volturi will intervene “before it can compromise” any other vampires (Meyer, *New Moon* 430). However, she also enlightens Bella on information that Edward did not intend her to know. Even after his relief in having Bella know supposedly everything about him, Edward still holds back some meat: the way to become a vampire. Alice is aware of the embargo on this knowledge, and yet she tells Bella anyway (Meyer, *Twilight* 414). Then, after being rescued in Phoenix, when Bella asks why Edward did not let James’ venom spread, making her transform to be like him, his face appears to turn to stone because the information is not something she was intended to know (Meyer, *Twilight* 473). The breakdown in adhering to “milk before meat” greatly pains Edward and Bella’s new unforeseen knowledge becomes a driving force in her decision-making for the rest of the series, something that Edward had hoped to avoid.

The secrets continue in *New Moon* with the discovery that young Quileute men turn into werewolves, and though secrecy is similarly valued in their situation, the truth is revealed regardless. Jacob’s father Billy tries to get Charlie off the scent by telling him distracting things, such as Bella is attempting to deceive her father and insisting that her and Jacob’s recent falling-out has to do with her falsely leading Jacob on in a romantic way (Meyer, *New Moon* 275). The pile of secrets leads Bella to believe that the Quileutes

are hiding something more serious than the likes of a simple cult and her suspicions are soon realized. Jacob wants to tell her about a secret that he is forbidden to reveal, but because Bella means so much to him, he tries to key her in by making her guess the details which he ironically unknowingly told her the first time they met (Meyer, *New Moon* 283). There is an “injunction” or “order” not to “spill the beans” about their true nature (Meyer, *New Moon* 329), but if she is able to guess correctly, he will be “off the hook” in terms of accountability (Meyer, *New Moon* 284), and she succeeds at his request (Meyer, *New Moon* 294).

Bella is allowed into the werewolf circle because Jacob trusts and loves her, but also because her knowledge of vampires makes her a powerful ally in the Quileutes’ fight against the menacing Victoria (Meyer, *New Moon* 320). However, not all of the pack is supportive of his decision. Paul censures Jacob for not following “the rules” and in turn putting Bella above the “whole tribe,” but she is eventually accepted by the entire reservation (Meyer, *New Moon* 324).

II. Mormon Life

Agency

Definition

The component of Mormon faith that affects all other aspects of life is agency. The term refers to the abilities of humans to “act for themselves” (2 Ne. 2:26) and their accountability for those actions. Practicing agency is a spiritual matter (D&C 29:35) which in its most basic form is the choice to accept God’s enlightenment and commandments or to resist and reject them by yielding to the temptations of the devil (D&C 93:13). Though the seductions of evil are terrible, they are also a necessity in order to be enticed by the Spirit of God (D&C 29:39) since a choice is not possible without an awareness of alternatives. Additionally, the decision to behave virtuously or to sin is historically perceived as the “devil could not compel mankind to do evil; all was voluntary” and “God would not exert any compulsory means” (J. Smith, *TPJS* 187).

Agency is essential to being human since no being can possess sensibility, rationality, and a capacity for happiness without it (2 Ne. 2:11-13; 23; D&C 93:30). It is the crucial gift from God that allows his children to be created in his image and therefore capable of maturing to be like him through their earthly decisions (Warner 27). The nature of agency also means that neutrality is not an option and that one must choose either “liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator” or “captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27-29; 10:23). As a result of opting to be virtuous, one gains intelligence, a sure sign of the glory of God, which manifests itself in each proper decision (Packard 692). Through choosing not to sin when

faced with the temptation to do so, one celebrates the life God has intended and further ensures the gifts of eternity that await diligent believers in the afterlife.

It is also through agency that a seemingly great self-contradiction emerges. In opting to serve God and honor his commandments, a person places himself firmly under the rule of the Lord's decrees. Though the requirements that must be met in order to belong to the Church appear to, in turn, limit the essence of agency, the believer actually becomes free through obeying Jesus, thereby experiencing the full realization of agency (Warner 27).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

Agency is the driving force behind who Bella is, which is defined by the decisions she makes. It allows her to make the correct choices in all aspects of life, and if her actions happen to be incorrect ones, she is able to comprehend her mistakes through experience so that she will choose with wisdom in the future. Bella's agency drives her to be remarkably responsible for a high schooler through her dedication to academics, household maintenance, general self-sufficiency, and selecting friends and a lover with similar ethics. Edward comments that Bella "doesn't seem seventeen" (Meyer, *Twilight* 105) and it is clear that she is no average young woman. Additionally, even when she begins to slide from any of her established values, Bella is constantly aware that her actions are wrong, immediately ruining them upon completion.

She even has her own motto on agency: "Making decisions was the painful part for me, the part I agonized over. But once the decision was made, I simply followed

through — usually with relief that the choice was made. Sometimes the relief was tainted by despair, like my decision to come to Forks. But it was still better than wrestling with the alternatives” (Meyer, *Twilight* 140). The theme of responsible decision-making is also evident in the town of Forks’ name and *Twilight*’s cover of hands holding a tempting apple. Both hint at the necessity of a choice and the consequences of one’s decisions, and Meyer has commented on the “perfect” name of the real-life town (stepheniemeyer.com). As for the apple, Meyer says:

The apple on the cover of *Twilight* represents "forbidden fruit." I used the scripture from Genesis (located just after the table of contents) because I loved the phrase "the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil." Isn't this exactly what Bella ends up with? A working knowledge of what good is, and what evil is. The nice thing about the apple is it has so many symbolic roots. You've got the apple in Snow White, one bite and you're frozen forever in a state of not-quite-death... Then you have Paris and the golden apple in Greek mythology—look how much trouble *that* started. Apples are quite the versatile fruit. In the end, I love the beautiful simplicity of the picture. To me it says: *choice* (*Twilight* FAQs).

Another choice is Bella’s commitment to academics and lifelong learning, which stands apart from her peers’ as an effect of her intelligent desire to succeed at school. Looking over the reading list for English, Bella finds the titles by “Brontë, Shakespeare, Chaucer, [and] Faulkner” to be “fairly basic” and she has “already read everything” (Meyer, *Twilight* 15); she rereads *Wuthering Heights* “for the fun of it” (Meyer, *Twilight* 34), picking up the “much-abused copy” again over a year later (Meyer, *Eclipse* 9), and a pop quiz on the novel is “straightforward” and “very easy” (Meyer, *Twilight* 38); she “outline[s] a rough draft” of her *Macbeth* essay (Meyer, *Twilight* 140) and enjoys a “quiet, productive” day from her dedication to homework over a weekend (Meyer, *Twilight* 141); she rechecks a few Trig problems that she is not sure of before school

begins (Meyer, *Twilight* 142), is knowledgeable of gemstones (Meyer, *Twilight* 229-30), listens to “a collection of Chopin’s noctures” (Meyer, *Twilight* 252), and knows *Romeo and Juliet* well enough to manipulate the characters’ actions into an allegory for her own life (Meyer, *New Moon* 375-6).

After Edward leaves, Bella becomes even more of a model citizen, excelling further at school and adhering to curfew and cooking more often (Meyer, *New Moon* 95). Calculus has nearly become simple (Meyer, *New Moon* 98) and *Animal Farm* is “an easy subject matter” in English (Meyer, *New Moon* 96). She views time as valuable and is disappointed at an instance when she has “lost the whole day” to sleeping, how such behavior is a “waste” and dislikes having to “squander [her] time with sleeping” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 424). Bella’s elevated dedication to wise decision-making is a direct effect of her agency, allowing her to select between the bevy of choices facing teenagers.

In addition to Edward’s beauty, a crucial element of Bella’s love for him is his similar quest for intelligence. While confident of her skills in a “simple” Biology lab (Meyer, *Twilight* 45), Bella finds an academic peer in Edward (Meyer, *Twilight* 46) and their intellectual superiority is confirmed by their teacher, Mr. Banner (Meyer, *Twilight* 47). Bella sees “without difficulty through the microscope” what Mr. Banner has to illustrate for the rest of the class on an overhead projector (Meyer, *Twilight* 51) and Edward later answers a question about the Krebs’s Cycle without paying attention (Meyer, *Twilight* 73). Edward and Bella later bond over “Clair de Lune” and knowing the works of Debussy (Meyer, *Twilight* 104-5), and she says Edward can “do everything” after witnessing his immense musical talent (Meyer, *Twilight* 325). He is similarly

knowledgeable of *Romeo and Juliet*, noticeably critical of Romeo's string of mistakes (Meyer, *New Moon* 17), and is an "excellent tutor" while helping Bella cram for finals (Meyer, *Eclipse* 318).

The commitment to excellence likewise runs in Edward's family, and the Cullens continue to explore academic pursuits in their time away from Forks: Carlisle works nights in Ithaca, NY, and "teaches part time at Cornell"; Esme restores "a seventeenth century house, a historical monument, in the forest north of the city"; Jasper is also at Cornell, "studying philosophy this time"; and Alice performs "personal research" on her human past (*New Moon* 400), including going through "all the old newspapers on microfiche" to find info on her past and family (Meyer, *New Moon* 401).

Jacob also fittingly possesses valuable traits that distinguish him from other teenagers; signs that he, too, employs his agency. Notably, he is a skilled mechanic, capable of rebuilding a Volkswagen Rabbit from scratch and repairing rusty motorcycles on his own. In the period where Edward removes himself from Bella's life, she finds another academic peer in Jacob, with whom she dedicatedly works on homework once a week (Meyer, *New Moon* 164). They make toasts to their combination of recklessness, through secretly working on the motorcycles, and responsibility (Meyer, *New Moon* 164). Jacob is also comfortable with "a compass and a grid patter" when they attempt to find their way to Bella's and Edward's secret meadow (Meyer, *New Moon* 196) and after only watching Jacob's orienteering once, Bella feels confident enough to do it herself (Meyer, *New moon* 232). She is "pretty sure" she knows enough not to get lost (Meyer, *New Moon* 232) and then "reasonably certain" that she is "following the right line of web"

(Meyer, *New Moon* 233). Bella and Jacob also have a running competition of age based on skill, maturity, and experience, and both want to win (Meyer, *New Moon* 146-7).

Bella's sense of responsibility also translates to taking charge of household duties and basic life skills, few of which are voluntarily followed by her fellow teenagers. Some of the first information about Bella to be revealed, other than she took it upon herself to move from Phoenix to be with Charlie for her best intentions, is that she had initially planned to buy herself an automobile with money she had saved up before Charlie got her a truck (Meyer, *Twilight* 7). Her skills of self-reliance have been honed by looking out for her "loving, erratic, harebrained mother" for whom she has paid the bills, kept food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and been someone to call for directions when she got lost (Meyer, *Twilight* 4).

For her behavior, Bella views herself as the "responsible one, the grownup" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 45) and these abilities come in handy while living with Charlie as he cannot "cook much besides fried eggs and bacon," influencing Bella's decision to request "kitchen detail for the duration of [her] stay" (Meyer, *Twilight* 31). While grocery shopping, she "[falls] into the pattern of the familiar task gladly" and once home, immediately "wrap[s] potatoes in foil and [sticks] them in the oven to bake, [and covers] a steak in marinade" (Meyer, *Twilight* 33). Thus starts a pattern of Bella cooking nutritious meals for her and Charlie and making sure her father is fed when she cannot be there to fix something fresh. Jacob gives her credit for "being a good cook" (Meyer, *New Moon* 167) and Emily is also a talented chef (Meyer, *New Moon* 332) who later makes "a cake that would have won over a harder man than Charlie" (Meyer, *New Moon* 343).

Preparing food is a necessary trait if one is to survive and Bella accepts her tasks with great pleasure. As for other duties, she takes charge of the laundry (Meyer, *Twilight* 244); consistently cleans the house, including scrubbing the toilet (Meyer, *New Moon* 167); is in charge of the family bookkeeping (Meyer, *New Moon* 147); and is generally aware when “a pile of things” that she has been neglecting in terms of home maintenance accumulates (Meyer, *New Moon* 402).

Furthermore, Bella is capable of looking out for herself, a clear portent of agency and resulting responsibility. When faced with a group of hostile young men in Port Angeles who appear bent on harming her, Bella is prepared to defend herself. She knows how to wear her purse “across [her] body, the way [one is] supposed to wear it so it [won’t] get snatched. [She knows] exactly where her pepper spray is,” but it is still unpacked in her duffle bag in Forks (Meyer, *Twilight* 158). She considers “‘accidentally’ dropping [her] bag and walking away. But a small, frightened voice in the back of [her] mind warn[s] [her] that they might be something worse than thieves” (Meyer, *Twilight* 159). Once cornered, she “[tries] to remember through [her] panic what little self-defense [she knows]. Heel of the hand thrust upward, hopefully breaking the nose or shoving it into the brain. Finger through the eye socket -- try to hook around and pop the eye out. And the standard knee to the groin, of course” (Meyer, *Twilight* 161). Later, in a water emergency, she is also aware of “the right way to avoid a riptide: swim parallel to the beach rather than struggling for the shore” (Meyer, *New Moon* 360).

In addition to being exceedingly talented, intelligent, and considerate, Bella is also extremely self-conscious as seen through her awareness of her shortcomings. Her

agency allows her to carefully consider situations from other perspectives, virtually shunning the damaging consequences of egotism. She also sympathizes with Charlie's situation, noting that "[i]t must be a hard thing, to be a father; living in fear that your daughter would meet a boy she liked, but also having to worry if she didn't" (Meyer, *Twilight* 227) and notices the "obvious difference in how teenage boys respond" to her in Forks as compared to Phoenix, though she has trouble determining what has changed on her end (Meyer, *Twilight* 54-5). The Cullens are similarly self-aware. Esme hopes Edward has refrained from "showing off," since it is "rude," but Bella insists that he has been "too modest" (Meyer, *Twilight* 325). Furthermore, when Bella and Jacob are on good terms, they hold hands and she does not protest even if the action is perceived as romantic by outsiders (Meyer, *New Moon* 343).

In *New Moon*, suffering from her detachment from Edward, Bella pursues a series of what she knows are dangerous undertakings in an impulse desire to help her forget her lost love. Through knowing the difference between right and wrong, her agency offers her the opportunity to behave properly, and when she refuses, she is nonetheless aware of her mistakes. The process begins with blowing her college savings on restoring a pair of dilapidated motorcycles through the mechanical skills of Jacob and throughout the departure from common sense, Bella is acutely aware that she is breaking the rules. After she cliff-jumps alone, during which she knows it is "the stupidest, most reckless" thing she has done (Meyer, *New Moon* 357), she summarizes it as a "brainless mistake" and a continuation of "the whole irresponsible Evel Knievel bit" of riding a motorcycle (Meyer, *New Moon* 371). In that way, she takes full responsibility for her actions, as she does for

disappearing during the time she was saving Edward in Italy, promising to do “all the chores and laundry and dishes,” willing to be grounded for any period of time, and even accepting expulsion from Charlie’s house (Meyer, *New Moon* 544).

Though most of the above choices come naturally to Bella, deciding her romantic future with either Edward or Jacob takes a heavy emotional toll on her. The selection of a spouse and even a significant other is a meaningful decision, full of consequences that make the choice a prime example of a need for agency. Therefore, Bella must use her dearest gift from God to assist her in making the best decision. She is faced with what she deems to be “two soul mates” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 599), and the anguish she experiences in struggling to choose the right option is evident in her increasingly tortured meditations. Bella truly loves Edward, but when he leaves for her own protection, she drifts into a chasm of depression and is only able to somewhat return to daily life through a tight friendship forged with Jacob. Jacob promises Bella that he will never let her down nor ever hurt her (Meyer, *New Moon* 218), but even though she loves him like family, Bella is unable to accept his romantic love because she is “broken beyond repair” in lovesickness for Edward (Meyer, *New Moon* 219). Once Edward returns, their relationship is rekindled, and though she is noticeably damaged yet claiming to be in eternal love, Jacob refuses to heed his attempts at winning Bella’s heart. The romantic conundrums facing Bella are thus the most challenging ones that she faces.

Bella’s panic at the possibility of pursuing a life-altering decision that she has not yet thought out to its conclusion is most clearly represented in her thoughts when Jacob

attempts to kiss her for the first time. Further complicating matters, Alice Cullen has just returned from her time away from Bella, reminding Bella of Edward's existence:

No! I hadn't made this decision yet. I didn't know if I could do this, and now I was out of time to think. But I would have been a fool if I thought rejecting him now would have no consequences.

I stared back at him. He was not *my* Jacob, but he could be. His face was familiar and beloved. In so many real ways, I did love him. He was my comfort, my safe harbor. Right now, I could choose to have him belong to me.

Alice was back for the moment, but that changed nothing. True love was forever lost. The prince was never coming back to kiss me awake from my enchanted sleep. I was not a princess, after all. So what was the fairy-tale protocol for *other* kisses? The mundane kind that didn't break any spells?

Maybe it would be easy—like holding his hand or having his arms around me. Maybe it would feel nice. Maybe it wouldn't feel like a betrayal. Besides, who was I betraying, anyway? Just myself.

Keeping his eyes on mine, Jacob began to bend his face toward me. And I was still absolutely undecided (Meyer, *New Moon* 411)

Perceiving plenty of necessary voids that Edward is unable to fill for Bella, Jacob later kisses her and attempts to use rational thought to persuade her that he is her most suitable option:

Just think about how it could be, Bella. You wouldn't have to change anything for me. You know Charlie would be happy if you picked me. I could protect you just as well as your vampire can — maybe better. And I would make you happy, Bella. There's so much I could give you that he can't. I'll bet he couldn't even kiss you like that -- because he would hurt you. I would never, never hurt you, Bella (Meyer, *Eclipse* 333).

Jacob finds it “pretty irresponsible” for Bella to give up on human life. He encourages her to “play the field a little” since she has “kissed just one person” and therefore does not know what she wants, though she claims she is acutely aware of her desires (Meyer, *Eclipse* 477).

Despite her raging conscience battles to help her decide the best for her future, Bella is never able to give Jacob a fair chance at her heart. All of her romantic love has been reserved for Edward and her insistence on remaining with him in the face of all alternatives earns her a label of stubbornness.

It is clear that Bella is remarkable responsibility for someone her age and chooses to surround herself with a select group of individuals who share her distinct values. Through all of her life, it is her agency that allows her to make the right decisions and, in turn, adhere to LDS beliefs.

Sexuality and the Law of Chastity

Definition

Sexual purity is one of the most important aspects of LDS life. Church members are required to refrain from any sexual relationships outside of marriage and any perverse or coercive sexual acts within marriage. Finding precedent in their sacred texts, Jesus condemns unchastity in thought and deed (Matt. 5:27-28; 3 Ne. 12:27-28); Paul warns that those who succumb to sexual sin will not “retain God in their knowledge” (Rom. 1:26-29); God “delights in the chastity of women” (Jacob 2:28, 31-35); Mormon is saddened by the behavior of soldiers who raped female prisoners, “depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue” (Moro. 9:9); and Alma taught his son Corian that sexual sin “is most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost” (Alma 39:5). The various sacred commandments and modern-day revelations are collectively known as the law of chastity (Christensen 265).

Premarital chastity, being a scriptural-based necessity, is stressed to all single people. In addition, LDS youth are taught not to engage in sexual activities that commonly precede sexual intercourse: “Among the most common sexual sins our young people commit are necking and petting. Not only do these improper relations often lead to fornication, pregnancy, and abortions—all ugly sins—but in and of themselves they are pernicious evils, and it is often difficult for youth to distinguish where one ends and another begins” (Kimball 65). Similarly, though many outside the Church consider masturbation to be normal, LDS leaders teach that the practice is wrong and one that “feeds base appetites and may lead to other sinful conduct” (Christensen 266). The ability to create life is a gift from God, making the dedication to sexual purity a desired requirement. However, procreation is also a heavenly requirement, intended to enrich marriages and create physical bodies for spirits to achieve divine purposes on Earth (Bradford 477).

Sexual infidelity has detrimental consequences for the individual and his family, causing jealousy, grief, anger, and distrust. Since unchastity violates baptismal and temple vows, Church members who fall into this sin are required to seek full repentance through confession to a Church leader and usually must seek forgiveness from those whom they have lured into sexual sin and, in the case of married offenders, spouses who have been betrayed by their actions. With extreme cases, a disciplinary council may be formed to assist the transgressor in his repentance. In considering the severity of the infraction and the spiritual maturity of the Church member, the council has the authority to excommunicate, disfellowship, place on probation, or exonerate the individual. To

reacquire the life lost through sexual sin, the person must then seek forgiveness from God by casting aside unchaste actions and thoughts through the aid of prayer (Christensen 266). God vows that he will not remember the sins of those who fully repent (D&C 58:42-43), but a lack of focus can cause the pressure of the former sin to return and more serious consequences to follow (D&C 82:7; 42:26). The primary example, as learned through modern-day revelations, is that adulterers who refuse to repent must be excommunicated by Church leaders. Adulterous desires are viewed as a denial of the Mormon faith, thereby disqualify offenders from the gifts of the Holy Spirit (D&C 42:23-26; 63:16). As a result, the fate of these guilty parties is the same of all apostate Mormons (Christensen 266).

LDS leaders have repeatedly spoken out in defense of the law of chastity. Prophet Heber J. Grant says that “[t]here is no true Latter-day Saint who would not rather bury a son or a daughter than to have him or her lose his or her chastity — realizing that chastity is of more value than anything else in all the world” (Grant 55). Prophet Spencer W. Kimball speaks of the

far-reaching...effect of loss of chastity. Once given or taken or stolen it can never be regained. Even in a forced contact such as rape or incest, the injured one is greatly outraged. If she has not cooperated and contributed to the foul deed, she is of course in a more favorable position. There is no condemnation when there is no voluntary participation. It is better to die in defending one's virtue than to live having lost it without a struggle (Kimball 196).

Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley tells a story of visiting with LDS soldiers serving in the Vietnam War. In speaking with a particular soldier, Hinckley inquired of the young man’s plans once he returned home and learned that they included marrying a beautiful girl. When Hinckley asked the soldier if he was worthy of such a mate, the soldier

replied, "I hope so, sir. It hasn't been easy to walk through this filth. It's been pretty lonely at times. But you know, I couldn't let my folks down. I know what my mother expects. I know what she's saying in her prayers. She'd rather have me come home dead than unclean" (Hinckley 710).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

In keeping with the dear commandment of her faith, Meyer does not "think teens need to read about gratuitous sex" (Trachtenberg). To show the importance of sexual purity, she makes the romance between Bella and Edward, and their use of agency to avoid sexual temptation, the central story line in the Twilight Saga.

From her first glimpse of Edward, Bella feels strangely drawn to him and is soon a part of his world. She feels strangely close enough to "babble brainlessly" (Meyer, *Twilight* 54) with him once he initiates talk and even before their romance begins, Bella feels the "agony of despair" and "pain" merely at the thought of having Edward ignore her (Meyer, *Twilight* 139). He revels in the easiness of being himself around her (Meyer, *Twilight* 262), remarking that she is just the right "scent" for him, a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence (Meyer, *Twilight* 268). Edward thought he was "complete" as he was and did not realize "what [he] was seeking" and "not finding anything" because Bella was not yet alive (Meyer, *Twilight* 304). Even the great beauty of Rosalie cannot compete with his attraction to Bella (Meyer, *Twilight* 304). Edward refers to Bella as his "life" (Meyer, *Twilight* 314) and she wants him around "forever" (Meyer, *Twilight* 318). The pair make various love-filled pronouncements to one another throughout the series, including Bella

loving Edward “more than everything else in the world combined,” which to him is good enough “for forever” (Meyer, *Twilight* 498).

The powerful draw requires likewise focused dedication to fight the temptation to bite her for her delicious blood. Aro of the Volturi is impressed by Edward’s self-control, which he claims is greater than Carlisle’s (Meyer, *New Moon* 472) because Edward has been able to “inure” himself against Bella’s “siren call, not just once but again and again” (Meyer, *New Moon* 473).

However, their relationship suffers multiple bumps, beginning with the Cullens’ decision to move away strictly for Bella’s sake. The anguish Bella experiences in the months that follow nearly destroys her and after Edward returns, she is permanently damaged personally, convinced that she cannot exist without Edward. She equates her loss to dying because “it had been more than just losing the truest of true loves, as if that were not enough to kill anyone. It was also losing a whole future, a whole family—the whole life” that she had chosen (Meyer, *New Moon* 398). Once Edward returns, he reestablishes his love of Bella in the past, present, and future, assuring her that he never stopped thinking about his love for her (Meyer, *New Moon* 510) and his feelings are reciprocated by Bella (Meyer, *New Moon* 511).

In proclaiming their love for one another, each avows that they cannot live without the other and that their love is the only thing that matters. The news consistently makes Bella swoon, her pulse race, and her heart threaten bursting through her chest, and Edward is always thankful for her loving reaction. They are a “package deal” that they deem to be unbreakable (Meyer, *New Moon* 545). To Bella, Edward is not the love of her

life because she is sure she will love him “for much longer than that,” making him the love of her “existence” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 143).

Bella’s many reasons for loving Edward are scattered throughout the Saga in various forms, but she tends to convey the most when she shares the least: “I love *him*. Not because he’s beautiful or because he’s *rich*! I’d much rather he weren’t either one. It would even out the gap between us just a little bit — because he’d still be the most loving and unselfish and brilliant and *decent* person I’ve ever met. Of course I love him. How hard is that to understand?” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 110).

Their relationship is filled with physical attraction and yet, despite the natural desires of two individuals to be together romantically, they refrain from breaking the law of chastity. The simplicity of touching and being touched by Edward, whether on her face or in a full embrace, are priorities for Bella and the physical contact is given and received with innocence. Often, merely hearing his breathing is “enough” for her (Meyer, *Twilight* 278).

Once their relationship progresses, Edward limits kissing and the extent of each kiss in order to protect Bella from the possibility of him losing control. Knowingly reducing the factors that are capable of causing him to snap in turn helps prevent the temptations from being pursued. Their first kisses in *Twilight* are short but meaningful (Meyer 282). Edward slowly brushes his lips along her jaw, from her ear to her chin, back and forth, making her tremble (Meyer, *Twilight* 285), and the behavior is characteristic of their future caressing. As Edward consciously keeps his physical passions to a minimum, Bella is forced on her end to respect “the need for maintaining a

safe distance between [her] skin and his razor-sharp, venom-coated teeth” (Meyer, *New Moon* 16), proving that a lapse in judgment on either side could result in deathly consequences, and in the few instances when the pair cross Edward’s “cautious lines,” he is typically the one to take control and stop the escalating situation (Meyer, *New Moon* 51).

Bella’s friends are also committed to limitations and exhibit qualities of respect in their relationships. Jessica tells Bella and her other female friends that she and Mike will hopefully “progress to the first-kiss stage” soon (Meyer, *Twilight* 152) and once Bella and Edward start spending time together, asks Bella if Edward has kissed her, verifying that such behavior and nothing more is normal in their group (Meyer, *Twilight* 203).

Bella and Edward are also alone many times, and by using their agency do not give in to temptation. In fact, the seduction to submit to repressed sexual desires in these situations of seclusion are omitted from their thoughts entirely, with one mammoth exception in *Eclipse*. The couple spend hours alone at Bella’s house after school while Charlie is still at work, though they choose to fill this time with homework, going no further than a loving embrace or a rare kiss (ex. Meyer, *Twilight* 282). With Edward in her room, she contemplates the ethics of his presence with Charlie in the house (Meyer, *Twilight* 297) and changes clothes in the bathroom instead of in front of him. Edward does not pressure her to stay and there is no obligation to put on a show (Meyer, *Twilight* 298). Even though Charlie “would have a stroke” if he knew that Edward frequently stays over, she does not feel too guilty about deceiving him since they are not doing anything inappropriate due to “Edward and his rules” (Meyer, *New Moon* 49-50).

Though Bella's hints of increased passion grows with time spent alongside Edward, she is consistently content to be in his presence, willing to abide by his mature demands in exchange for his love.

As their relationship progresses, so does their near non-existent sexuality, though in minor steps. The kisses become more passionate as Bella's tongue traces Edward's lips (Meyer, *Eclipse* 44) and she advances to the point of longing for true alone time with Edward, without Charlie listening downstairs, checking on her often or a "wide-awake vampires with their intrusively sensitive hearing" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 427).

These signs of increased sexual awareness are also detected by those near to Bella. In *Eclipse*, Charlie initiates an awkward, short sex talk with Bella. He wants to know that she and Edward are "being responsible," though he knows that neither he nor Bella really want to talk about the topic (Meyer 59). Bella insists that even though the "times have changed," Edward is "very old-fashioned," Charlie has "nothing to worry about," and she reveals that she is a "virgin, and [has] no immediate plans to change that status" (Meyer 59).

Relatively early in their relationship in *Twilight*, Bella and Edward speak about sex, though not by name. Bella wonders if they will "someday" have sex, referring to it as being "that...close," but Edward says that it would be too dangerous (Meyer 310). He fears the very real possibility that he could "break" her by accident since his emotions would be out of control in such a passionate situation, especially since he spends so much energy staying in control with her on a daily basis (Meyer 310). Edward casually asks if Bella has ever has sex by "trail[ing] off suggestively," after saying, "Have you ever..."

and she “flush[es],” saying, “Of course not” (Meyer 311). Edward knows from others’ thoughts that “love and lust don’t always keep the same company,” but Bella ensures him that they do for her, now that “they exist for [her] at all” (Meyer 311). The stance on that subject is recognized as “common” for both of them, but Bella curiously asks if he finds her “attractive, in *that* way”; he responds that while he “may not be human,” he is still “a man” (Meyer 311).

Yet as they progress, Bella sneakily attempts to broaden their limits, encouraging Edward to continue their passion after a kiss goes longer than anticipated and asking whether her blood or her body is more tempting to him (Meyer, *New Moon* 52). After being reunited after a multiple-day separation, Bella and Edward push their limits a little bit more. The instance begins with their usual, light kisses, (which are plenty powerful for Bella), then he traces his hand around her ribs, over her waist, along her hip and down her leg, around her knee, and then curls his hand around her calf and pulls her leg around his hip. Aware that such behavior is not what he usually allows, Bella feels “suddenly warm” despite Edward’s cold hands (Meyer, *Eclipse* 186). Bella is then conscious that her breathing is “too loud” and “almost embarrassing,” but the escalation of passion causes her to not “care quite enough to be ashamed” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 186). Her lips “[shape] themselves around his” and he “hover[s] over [her]” with their bodies pressed together; his tongue “lightly trace[s] the shape of [her] lips” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 187).

The mood is unintentionally elevated even further when Edward’s questions about why she has not used a bed he set up for her are interpreted as sexual innuendo by Bella. She questions if he has changed his mind about abstinence, wondering to herself if he has

“rethought all his careful rules” and if there is “more significance to this bed than [she’d] originally guessed” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 187). Consistent with his commitment to responsibility, Edward tells her not to be ridiculous, with “disapproval strong in his voice” and asks her not to “get carried away,” but she says, “Too late” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 187). She deems the bed unnecessary if they are “not going to get carried away” and he reiterates for “the hundredth time” that “it’s too dangerous” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 188). He is sorry to have led her to interpret “the wrong impression” and is sad to cause her unhappiness by his caution, but she says the heightened sensual experience was “very, very nice” and urges him to resume their passion (Meyer, *Eclipse* 188). He rejects the proposition as “probably a bad idea” since Bella is “not the only one who gets carried away,” though she disagrees (Meyer, *Eclipse* 188). Later, she says to him, “If you’re going to have a lapse in control, I can think of a better place for it,” and goes in for more kisses, but he restrains himself (Meyer, *Eclipse* 192). With the advent of her push for greater intimacy, he laments his unwavering role as “the responsible one” and when Bella jokes that she wants to “be in charge of responsibility for a few minutes...or hours,” he closes the exchange by leaving her for the night (Meyer, *Eclipse* 192).

The built-in debate over the moral consequences of premarital sex is furthered in the highlight of Meyer’s message of abstinence, a roughly 20-page section of *Eclipse* in which Edward and Bella have a lengthy discussion about intimacy and protecting one’s virtue. The passage begins with Bella’s concerns that without experiencing the passion of sexual intercourse before becoming a vampire, she will be forever disappointed that she lost the opportunity to discover a precious element of human life. Despite Edward’s

steady warnings of the dangers that such intimacy with him entails, Bella is convinced that nothing is impossible after her experiences over the last two years, and becomes set on losing her virginity. Her agency and conscious come into play when she suffers anxieties about requesting the act with the right words and eventually delivers a nervous but heartfelt plea. Upon being naturally rebuffed, she resorts to an attempt at removing both hers and Edward's shirts in hopes that her exposed flesh will tempt him past denial. However, Edward is unflinching in his commitment to virtue and reiterates his demands of marriage and then transformation, which will negate her intercourse-denying fragility, before he will allow sex. Bella continues her pleading for intimacy, agreeing to all of Edward's demands if he will honor her request, and upon attaining those promises, effectively making them engaged for marriage, he agrees to have intercourse with her in her human form after they are husband and wife. He then expands on his reasoning for insisting on marriage before sex, placing Bella's virtue as his top priority and pledging to the importance of upholding this crucial detail to ensure her future in heaven. He has witnessed her attempts at forgoing the requirement of chastity and will do everything possible to protect her eternity (Meyer 436-55).

The sequence's descriptions of passion are the most sensuous of the entire Saga. Tactile body parts, caresses, and kisses are depicted with urgency and beauty, but also danger and despair. By portraying the elevated intimacy in such realistic terms, Meyer successfully conveys the existence of these desires and the suddenness at which they may emerge, hinting at the pleasures that await those in love, though ultimately only if the law of chastity is honored through marriage.

After her attempted seduction, Bella tries once more to tempt Edward by pleading for sex in a tent with the effects of a snowstorm lingering outside. Her attempt is properly denied by Edward because he is, in Bella's words, "bizarrely moral for a vampire" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 536).

The final scenes in *Eclipse* also deal with sexual purity. Edward, upset that his way "is always wrong," suddenly wants to do things Bella's way, meaning the her transformation to vampiredom (Meyer 617). His declaration also means having sex, which he tries to expedite at that moment. Bella is tempted to give in to his sudden rush of passion ("I love you. I want you. Right now," she internalizes), but manages to resist (Meyer 619). She is determined "to do this right," which after careful contemplation of her life in regards to spending it with Edward or Jacob, coincides with her beliefs (Meyer 619). That means, in her words, above all else,

[r]esponsibility. Everything in the right order. I will not leave Charlie and Renee without the best resolution I can give them. I won't deny Alice her fun, if I'm having a wedding anyway. And I *will* tie myself to you in every human way, before I ask you to make me immortal. I'm following all the rules, Edward. Your soul is far, far too important to me to take chances with. You're not going to budge me on this (Meyer 619-20).

Edward makes one last effort, saying he bets he could sway her mind, but she tells him that he will refrain since following the law of chastity and marrying him is what she truly needs (620). She starts her new way of responsibility by putting on the engagement ring, that will stay on her finger "conceivably for the rest of eternity," and going to tell Charlie the engagement news. Thus, the last words of Edward and Bella's story to date leaves the reader with Bella's newfound full acceptance of chastity and her willingness to embrace married life.

Marriage

Definition

While traditional wedding services are intended for time only, LDS temple marriages in which a couple is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is an unending union for time and eternity (Duke 858). Brigham Young refers to eternal marriage as “the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation — of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity” (195). Selecting a proper mate is considered a serious matter, not only for spending earthly life and eternity with the person, but also because marrying outside of the Church is a frequent cause of apostasy (Scharffs 59). However, if Mormon beliefs are followed throughout life, the reward is a never-ceasing spiritual life after death, consisting of living a life equal to God and continuing to have children, known as spirit children, with one’s spouse (Ricks 465). The great bounties of life that Mormons wish to attain are only truly realized through marriage, an expectation of all Church members since celibacy is “foreign to LDS life” (Inouye 260), and because the key aspects of family and eternity rest on marriage, it is a decision to be made wisely.

Analysis of Twilight Saga

Serving as role models, the Cullens are committed to happiness through marriage. The concept that all members of their family will be united with another in love is a foregone conclusion, to the point that after Carlisle created Edward as a companion, he then transformed additional vampires in order to have a mate for himself and made

further decisions of conversion in hopes of giving the others spouses (Meyer, *Twilight* 289). His plans have worked flawlessly, with all of his “children” in joyful unions except for Edward, who has spent a century alone before finding a soul mate in Bella. Likewise marriage-minded, Esme is ecstatic for Edward finding love, though she, according to Edward, “wouldn’t care if [Bella] had a third eye and webbed feet” (Meyer, *Twilight* 327) and later expresses her relief that Edward “found” Bella since he has “been the odd man out for far too long,” and it has “hurt” her to “see him alone” (Meyer, *Twilight* 368). Bella is not initially marriage-minded, but as her love for Edward grows, the concept soon becomes a reality.

Marriage is first discussed in *New Moon* when Bella wishes for Edward to be the one that bites her. For that to happen, his one condition is that they first get married. Bella is not quick to agree, since her parents’ divorce has put marriage low on her “list of priorities” (Meyer 540). Edward knows that she is not “afraid of the commitment” (Meyer 540) and asks her to “compare the level of commitment between a marital union” and forfeiting her soul “in exchange for an eternity as a vampire,” hinting that she is “not brave enough” to marry him when she falters at a response (Meyer 541). He is ready to take her to a Las Vegas chapel immediately, but she refuses primarily due to her mother’s “intense opinions on getting married” before turning thirty (Meyer 541).

Bella is not opposed to marrying Edward, but as for doing so immediately, she has clear reasons:

I’m not *that girl*, Edward. The one who gets married right out of high school like some small-town hick who got knocked up by her boyfriend! Do you know what people would think? Do you realize what century this is? People don’t just get married at eighteen! Not smart people, not

responsible, mature people! I wasn't going to be that girl! That's not who I am... (Meyer, *Eclipse* 275-6).

For her, “*marriage* and *eternity* are not mutually exclusive or mutually inclusive concepts,” and she suggests that they keep with current social customs and wait (Meyer, *Eclipse* 277).

On the werewolf side, Jacob introduces the concept of imprinting, part of the Quileute genetics when a young man sees a particular woman for the first time and from that moment, there is no other woman for him. The experience is a precursor for marriage and regardless of the age of girl who imprints the young man, he will from then on be a steady force of support in her life, making marriage to him a natural decision when the time is right. Jacob's friend Quil has recently been imprinted with a two-year-old, a concept that Bella finds extremely confusing, but Jacob explains the love and purity that is involved:

I've seen what it's like, through his eyes. There's nothing *romantic* about it at all, not for Quil, not now. It's so hard to describe. It's not like love at first sight, really. It's more like...gravity moves. When you see *her*, suddenly it's not the earth holding you here anymore. She does. And nothing matters more than her. And you would do anything for her, be anything for her.... You become whatever she needs you to be, whether that's a protector, or a lover, or a friend, or a brother.

Quil will be the best, kindest big brother any kid ever had. There isn't a toddler on the planet that will be more carefully looked after than that little girl will be. And then, when she's older and needs a friend, he'll be more understanding, trustworthy, and reliable than anyone else she knows. And then, when she's grown up, they'll be as happy as Emily and Sam (Meyer, *Eclipse* 176).

When Bella asks if the two-year-old, Claire, has a choice in being with Quil, Jacob says, “Of course. But why wouldn't she choose him, in the end? He'll be her perfect match. Like he was designed for her alone” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 176). After seeing imprinting in

person with Kim and Jared's mutual affection, in addition to Sam's adoration for Emily, Bella compares the feeling to "a blind man seeing the sun for the first time" and "a collector finding an undiscovered Da Vinci, and "a mother looking into the face of her newborn child" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 242). Full of such wondrous love, imprinting is also an immensely strong bond almost certainly leading to marriage, and though the Quileutes believe in a spirit-world afterlife, there is no mention whether they have faith in marriage as an eternal Mormon-like union.

Family

Definition

The basic unit of the Church of LDS is the family, which is only possible through marriage. In the preface to David O. McKay's *Family Home Evening Manual*, he states that the "home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfill its essential functions" (qtd. in Bradford 486). Out of all the social organizations created by God for human beings, family is the only one intended to continue into the next life (Bradford 486).

LDS believe that before coming to Earth, everyone lived with Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother and was individually loved and taught by them as a member of their eternal family (Bradford 487). Human birth joins the spirit with a physical body so that through the union they can "receive a fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33). Therefore, the concept of a family existed before mankind and continues to endure after death of the body.

Since a family is not possible without marriage, the joining of a man and a woman “allows people to fulfill their divine potentials,” and once they have “been sealed together in a temple [and] are united spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically, taking full responsibility for nurturing each other, they are truly married” (Bradford 487). It is said that “whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto Man” (D&C 49:15).

At the advent of their temple sealing, both husband and wife enter “an order of the priesthood [known as] the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” (D&C 131:1-4). The couple’s faithfulness to their temple marriage in doing all things with the guidance of the Holy Spirit will result in a continued life together in God’s celestial kingdom for all eternity (Bradford 487). Mormons consider it

a joy and a responsibility for parents to bring heavenly spirits into this world. Through the sexual experience, husbands and wives enrich their marriage and create physical bodies for spirits to come to earth to achieve divine purposes. Church members are taught not to postpone or refuse to have children for selfish or materialistic reasons. On questions such as how many children a couple will have, the spacing of children, and birth control, Latter-Day Saints are instructed to use their agency, selecting a course as husband and wife in accordance with divine principles and seeking confirmation from the Holy Spirit (Bradford 488).

Though the use of agency is natural in determining the number of children to conceive, Mormons family units are typically larger in size than that of the general population (Thomas 489).

Parents are responsible for teaching their children the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all beliefs of Mormonism. Through the required home environment of love (D&C 42:45), LDS families establish love not only for those within and outside their physical family, but also for a mutually-loving heavenly parents, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit, to

which humans have always been family. Those worthy family members who follow God's commandments have faith that they will be reunited and exist with ancestors and descendants in eternal life, including all of the riches of eternity (Bradford 488).

In order to strengthen the values already practiced in temple services, at home, and throughout life, family home evenings are observed to encourage spiritual training and social activity. Usually held on Monday evenings, the events were encouraged by the First Presidency of the Church, which in 1915 stated:

We advise and urge the inauguration of a "Home Evening" throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord... This "Home Evening" should be devoted to prayer, singing hymns, songs, instrumental music, scripture-reading, family topics and specific instruction on the principles of the Gospel, and on the ethical problems of life, as well as the duties and obligation of children to parents, the home, the Church, society, and the Nation (qtd. in Mitchell 495).

Through successful, regular implementation of the family home evening, parents help fulfill their duty to prepare their children for responsible living now and when they themselves are married adults with families of their own. The cyclical process is designed to continually produce obedient Mormons, who in reward for their efforts will receive life to that of God's (Mitchell 496).

In the event that the heads of the family unit face irresolvable differences and determine that the best action is to be apart, divorce is a disapproved but permitted option. The Church allows divorce (the legal undoing of a marriage bond), annulment (a statement proclaiming a marriage illegal or invalid) in civil marriages, and "cancellation of sealing" in temple marriages. Remarrying is considered adultery (Luke 16: 18; Matt. 5.31-21; 3 Ne. 12:31-32) and only the Church President has the authority to cancel a

temple-sealed marriage. Worthy members who are granted cancellation are allowed to remarry, though the marriage is for time only since eternal marriage has been forfeited by breaking God's commandment (Goodman 391).

However, the effects of divorce are often detrimental to the harmony, joy, and success of the family. Divorced Church members' children sometimes report feelings of isolation or lack of acceptance because of the overwhelming majority of two-parent families in the Church. In these instances, Church leaders encourage all members to be sensitive to the needs of people in such difficult circumstances, and in offering help and appropriate compassion, the Church is able to somewhat alleviate the pains of a lack of family by filling a number of those voids (Goodman 393).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

Bella is the daughter of divorced parents, but that status has not prevented her from being taught the value of a loving, lasting marriage. Her mother Renee is remarried to a minor-league professional baseball player named Phil and Bella's father Charlie is the Chief of Police in Forks, Washington (Meyer, *Twilight* 5). Her parents "jumped too quickly into an early marriage (Meyer, *Twilight* 141) and "[ran] away" when Renee was "just two years older than [Bella is] now" (Meyer, *Twilight* 142) to a ceremony in Las Vegas (Meyer, *Twilight* 11). The decision is viewed as Renee's "most life-altering mistake" and despite calling Bella the "best gift her life has ever given her," she has drilled it into her daughter that "smart people" take marriage seriously and that those with

maturity get a college degree and start a career before getting “deeply involved in a relationship” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 45-6).

Bella has grown accustomed to her nontraditional life, living in Phoenix with her mother and Phil before moving to Forks primarily to accommodate Renee’s need to travel with her new husband. With Charlie, Bella is under the parental care that Renee can no longer fully provide, though Charlie’s presence is only a slight improvement. Bella comments that living with Charlie is “like having [her] own place” (Meyer, *Twilight* 54) but she is grateful that he “doesn’t hover” (Meyer, *Twilight* 9). Breakfast with him is typically “a quiet event” (Meyer, *Twilight* 11), however, Charlie occasionally surprises Bella with acts of love. She is emotionally moved by his unexpected parental move of putting snow chains on her truck (Meyer, *Twilight* 55), though the very fact that she is so affected by the gesture confirms that such behavior is uncharacteristic of him.

Charlie is most comfortable fishing and watching television, which he does whenever he can instead of spending time with his daughter, though he “seem[s] happy...to be doing something together” when they both watch a “mindless sitcom” (Meyer, *Twilight* 149). He also acknowledges that he leaves Bella home alone too much (Meyer, *Twilight* 240), but she says that he is doing a “great job” and does not mind being alone because she is “too much like him” (Meyer, *Twilight* 241). After seeing what Edward’s abandonment of Bella did to her mentally and emotionally, Charlie turns into a hard-nosed protective father upon Edward’s return. Rallying to support his child on all fronts, Charlie treats Edward with disdain, effectively grounding Bella while grudgingly allowing Edward into his house after school under his supervision and being

exponentially more watchful of their actions than he has ever been. Though his family is a non-traditional one, Charlie is determined to protect the interests of his daughter by being a responsible parent.

Renee approves of Edward's niceness and good looks upon meeting him (Meyer, *Twilight* 468) and recognizes that he is in love with her daughter (Meyer, *Twilight* 467), but worries that Bella is too young (Meyer, *Twilight* 468). However, the conversation is the first time since Bella was 8 years old that her mom sounds like "a parental authority" (Meyer, *Twilight* 468). Renee is supportive of their relationship, labeling their serious love and noticeable interactive harmony as "different" compared to what she is accustomed (Meyer, *Eclipse* 67).

Despite the varying degrees of parental guidance, when faced with peril, Bella is consistently committed to her parents' safety, a token of her attraction to family. Her thoughts immediately shift to the possibility that evildoers may hurt Charlie and/or Renee in order to get to herself. Once, her easily-perceived loyalty to family is manipulated by her foes as James takes advantage of Bella's love for her mother to lure Bella into a trap that never actually involves Renee. Bella even goes so far as to deceive the Cullens in order to do what she thinks is protecting her mother, though her agency makes her ever aware that the action is a "betrayal" to those that trust her (Meyer, *Twilight* 438).

Bella loathes the concept of hurting her parents, and when she is seemingly forced to cause them anguish for their own safety, the one experiencing the most pain is her. Bella's fake tantrum with Charlie, full of cruel lies in order to create a distraction for her to escape to Phoenix, causes her great personal torment, though it is deemed a necessity

in order to protect her father. When she appears certain that she wants to become a vampire, Edward asks her what the change would mean for her parents. It takes her “minutes” to think about a response before reaching “no true answer” (Meyer, *Twilight* 475). She claims that “that’s not an issue either,” and that her mom “has always made the choices that work for her” and therefore would want Bella to “do the same” (Meyer, *Twilight* 475). As for Charlie, he is “resilient” and “used to being on his own,” and she “can’t take care of them forever” because she has her “own life to live” (Meyer, *Twilight* 475).

Bella understands that leaving her parents behind is a “permanent separation” and acknowledges that the plans she is making are worst-case scenarios and the most severe limitations with which she can live (Meyer, *New Moon* 59). Bella knows that she will “lose” people that she loves if she becomes a vampire, and that concept is “always the hardest part” for her (Meyer, *New Moon* 536). Additionally, once she resolves to become a vampire, the same torment of possibly harming her biological parents is extended to the Cullens, her new family. After Edward’s thwarted plans to be destroyed by the Volturi, she pleads with him not to go to extremes in shouldering the blame for her actions since she refuses to be the cause of an occurrence that would hurt his parents (Meyer, *New Moon* 507). Regardless to which family she claims allegiance, Bella cannot stand to have them suffer, especially if she is able to prevent such outcomes through the use of agency.

Juxtaposed with Bella’s disjointed upbringing yet unquenchable parental love, the series’ most prominent example of family is the Cullens, in whose harmony Bella solidifies her desire to join them after falling in love with Edward. Though a

nontraditional one, in that they are vampires added to the group at various times and circumstances, the Cullens always refer to themselves as a family. Despite the family's range of ages and time spent as a vampire, Carlisle and Esme are considered the parents and the rest are their children, a tight band of brothers and sisters. Due to Edward's mind-reading and Alice's ability to see the future, there are no secrets in the Cullen family, though their love suggests that honesty would be a priority regardless of supernatural powers (Meyer, *Twilight* 316). The parenting and general family life is a success as Edward has "profound...respect" for his "father figure" (Meyer, *Twilight* 288) and his siblings report similar happiness and reverence. Their commitment to unity is noticed by Charlie, who comments that the Cullens "stick together the way a family should," most strongly exhibited through their "camping trips every other weekend" (Meyer, *Twilight* 37). Another group activity in which they partake is playing a superhuman version of baseball during thunderstorms when the thunder claps can conceal the mammoth sound of the ball making contact with the bat (Meyer, *Twilight* 367-71). Though not structured in the manner of a Mormon family home evening, the bonds and love expressed through their shared events carry an equivalent significance.

The values of their home rubs off on Edward as he is likewise interested in Bella's family situation (Meyer, *Twilight* 48) and senses her related sufferings for her lack of unified parents (Meyer, *Twilight* 49). He is committed to the preservation of family, pleading with Bella not to let him be the cause of any arguments with Charlie and consistently asks her to think of her parents' well-being in her decisions, especially in becoming a vampire. Furthermore, to encourage honesty and acceptance, Edward asks

Bella to introduce him to Charlie as her boyfriend in hopes of avoiding one preventable secret (Meyer, *Twilight* 317).

Despite the attraction to Edward's near-ideal family, the differences between Bella's and Edward's backgrounds make her fearful of meeting his model family. She worries about not being accepted for being human and them resenting that she knows they are vampires (Meyer, *Twilight* 316). For the most part, her worries are unfounded. Esme and Carlisle are very cordial to Bella upon their introduction and in addition to Alice's unwavering admiration for Bella, are consistent in their attitude toward her (Meyer, *Twilight* 323). As for the other siblings, Emmett thinks Edward is a "lunatic" for being with a human, but "doesn't have a problem" with Bella and is "trying to reason with Rosalie," his own spouse (Meyer, *Twilight* 326-7). The most abrasive toward Bella, Rosalie eventually apologizes to her for causing her pain with the Volturi (Meyer, *New Moon* 497) and makes further amends in *Eclipse*, tangentially becoming her friend. The family quickly becomes enamored with Bella, and as a sign of their relationship and commitment to good, clean fun, the Cullen women have a slumber party for her that includes fine Italian food, Bella's "favorite movies," and a pedicure provided by Alice (Meyer, *Eclipse* 147). Combined with their commitment to abstinence from human blood, the Cullens exhibit qualities of the warmest of successful families.

Based on this well-rounded reception, it is Bella's utmost wish to join the Cullens as one of them. At the family vote to determine her future, Bella asks Edward if he wants her to join his family. He wishes for exactly that, though only in human form (Meyer, *New Moon* 533). Rosalie has no aversions to adding Bella as a sister, but votes no for

unresolved personal reasons (Meyer, *New Moon* 534). Carlisle approves because it is “the only way that makes sense” since Edward has “chosen not to live without her,” not leaving his father figure a choice in the matter (Meyer, *New Moon* 534). Everyone else votes the affirmative. Alice reaffirms the family’s commitment to Bella, saying, “If someone wants one of us, they’re going to have to go through the rest of us to get to her” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 350). Another key reason why Bella wants the conversion to be expedited is so that Edward will never be forced to choose between her and his family (Meyer, *Eclipse* 435). By joining his family, that choice will cease to exist.

For the Quileutes, individual family units are strong, but the most significant unity is found in the reservation as a whole and especially in Sam’s group of young werewolves. When each of the young men undergo their transformations, the pain and confusion experienced during the process are aided by the comforting voices of the experienced pack members. Sam was the first to go through the transition, and after enduring the torment himself, Jacob has elevated reverence for Sam surviving the ordeal without anyone’s help (Meyer, *New Moon* 319).

Despite the differences, Bella witnesses appealing family values in both groups and wishes to partake in their harmony. However, in order to do so fully, especially with the Cullens, she must be willing to adopt a new lifestyle.

Conversion

Definition

LDS missionaries and members of the Church make certain that all prospective members are aware of and understand the responsibilities that being a Mormon entails.

The preferred choice of action is to give the interested party, called an “investigator” for his investigation or study of the Church, a series of lessons that cover standardized LDS topics. In these sessions, called “discussions” for their informal, conversational tone and casual home setting, missionaries normally share personal experiences and feelings for the topics being discussed and encourage investigators to ask similar questions based on their own reactions to LDS teachings (Charney 759).

The basic topics presented in the discussions include the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Plan of Salvation, keeping the commandments, living a Christlike life, the life and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the coming-forth of the *Book of Mormon*, the Restoration of the Priesthood, and the importance of following the prophets living today (Charney 759).

As a way of further testing of being in the Church, investigators are requested to make various commitments during this trial period, which lasts anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on the individual. Investigators are encouraged and challenged to pray and study LDS scripture daily, most notably the *Book of Mormon*, and are also asked to commence living a Mormon lifestyle. In beginning this transformation, the basic focuses include exhibiting Christlike attitudes and behaviors at all times; attending Church meetings; abstaining from substances that are harmful to the body (as outlined in the Word of Wisdom); starting to tithe; living a chaste and moral life; and working to serve the needy (Charney 759).

However, becoming a member of the Church implies more than simply accepting a new set of religious beliefs:

For many new members, it means adopting a new lifestyle quite different from the one to which they were accustomed. For nearly all new members, it also means that they become part of a new social network of friends and acquaintances. In some cases, the new Church member is rejected and ostracized by family and former friends. This social transition is made easier if the new convert has previously developed friends and acquaintances among members of the Church (K. Smith 322).

The subsequent step for investigators is to partake in an interview conducted by an authorized representative of the Church. During this meeting, the candidate is asked for a heartfelt testimony of the Church's fundamental doctrine and is required to state his intention to now and forever keep God's commandments. If the interviewer deems that the candidate is both willing and worthy of Church membership, then the person is approved to become baptized, a covenant required to join the Church (Charney 759). As described in the Doctrine and Covenants:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church (D&C 20:37).

The baptismal ceremony symbolizes the cleansing of sins and a rebirth and new life on earth that will lead to eternal life with God. The candidate is confirmed into the Church by a laying on of hands by one with Melchizedek Priesthood status (the highest power in the physical Church), his membership is announced, and he receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is a joyous occasion and the beginning of a life of spiritual growth gained through obedience to God's laws and actively serving the Church. (Charney 760). The steps are many, but necessary in order to best guarantee that a convert is

knowledgeable of Church practices and entirely willing to bind themselves to LDS life for eternity.

Mormons also believe that when a non-Mormon is baptized into the Church, the convert's Gentile blood is cleansed from their body and they are given a new internal makeup. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the Holy Ghost "purge[s] out the old blood" to turn the Gentile into a "seed of Abraham" and that such a "new creation" is a necessary part of the transformation (*History of the Church*, v.3, 380). The Prophet Brigham Young confirms that "[Smith taught] that the Gentile blood was actually cleansed out of their veins, and the blood of Jacob made to circulate in them; and the revolution and change in the system were so great that it caused the beholder to think they were going into fits" (Young, v.2, 269).

Though the pledges made in joining the church are eternal, LDS are technically capable of leaving the Church. However, the consequences of a believer deciding to shun these beliefs are so great that doing so is rendered practically impossible.

The most severe sin in LDS theology is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. In comparison, speaking against Jesus Christ in ignorance is forgivable upon repentance, but to knowingly deny the Holy Ghost's influence after accepting it is unpardonable (Matt. 12:31-2; Jacob 7:19; Alma 39:6) and the consequences for doing so are unavoidable. The punishment for such knowing denial against the Church's beliefs is being doomed to the hell of the second spiritual death (J. Smith, *TPJS* 361), joining the Sons of Perdition (D&C 76:43), and being severed from Christ's redeeming grace. To commit what is known as the unpardonable sin, a person

must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him.... he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened to him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it (Smith 358).

As a result of the denial, he “remain[s] as though there were no atonement, except that [he] shall be resurrected from the dead” (Alma 11:41). The person is then known as an “apostate” and at personal request may have his name removed from Church records (Scharffs 59).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

In the Cullens, Bella sees something to which she very much desires a sense of belonging. Her overarching reason for seeking membership is to be with Edward in the way that is best for both of them and his family, but there are other benefits. Bella is captivated by the Cullens’ “perfect, ultrawhite teeth” (Meyer, *Twilight* 50), muscular, athletic builds for the men and “statuesque” swimsuit model looks for the women (Meyer, *Twilight* 18), and faces of devastating, inhuman beauty (Meyer, *Twilight* 19). Before their romance fully begins, Bella self-describes Edward as “[i]nteresting....and brilliant....and mysterious....and perfect....and beautiful....and possibly able to life full-sized vans with one hand” (Meyer, *Twilight* 79). Upon becoming a vampire, she will acquire similar physical attributes and the thought of being Edward’s equal in looks holds great appeal for her.

Knowing the dangers of associating with Bella, Edward initially attempts to feign her interest in him by behaving rigidly (Meyer, *Twilight* 24), trying to switch out of all of

their shared classes (Meyer, *Twilight* 27), and then entirely removing himself from her life despite an uncontrollable attraction to her. However, the possibility of disappearing is all but ruled out after he instinctively saves her from being killed in an automobile accident. After his dedicated attempts to keep their lives permanently separate, Edward gives up trying to stay away from Bella, inviting her to sit alone with him at a cafeteria table, and in doing so, inviting her into his life (Meyer, *Twilight* 88).

He counsels her to stay away from him, insisting that he is “not a good friend” for her (Meyer, *Twilight* 88), but neither are able to comply. To avoid the pain that will surely result from their association, he insists that he does not want to hear that Bella is attracted to him. She reiterates that what he is has no pull on her love for him, saying that it is “too late” for her to change her mind, a statement that greatly angers him (Meyer, *Twilight* 190). She worries that they will never be able to have another intimate conversation, and after an afternoon together, she begs to be told more in order to merely “hear his voice again” (Meyer, *Twilight* 187). Edward’s siblings “don’t understand” why he cannot leave Bella alone (Meyer, *Twilight* 244), but she is “not like anyone else [he’s] ever known” and “fascinates” him in comparison to every other “predictable” human (Meyer, *Twilight* 245).

Upon learning exactly how to become a vampire, Bella thinks that she is ready and that it “should be nothing” after surviving James’ venom, claiming that she can handle the pain and that the problem of enduring is hers alone (Meyer, *Twilight* 474). Edward’s response, tinged with the experience of the conversion, is that she is pushing “bravery to the point where it becomes insanity” (Meyer, *Twilight* 475). After gaining the

knowledge of conversion, Bella frequently states her intention to be bitten, often at an impulse. Instead, the Cullens wisely refuse to indulge Bella's rash requests, knowing the severity of her desire and that it is not one to be made at a moment's notice.

After tying the Cullens to her fate by making them accountable for her conversion, as required by the Volturi under penalty of death to them all if they fail to comply, she puts her future to a vote by the entire family, fully willing to accept whatever judgment the experienced clan passes. Upon being approved, Bella wants to be bitten immediately by Alice, who is ill prepared to follow through. Carlisle, who has trained himself for centuries to resist the appeal of blood, would have no danger of losing control. Despite the majority agreement in favor of her conversion, Edward is still able to convince them to postpone the ceremony until at least after her high school graduation (Meyer, *New Moon* 536).

The Cullens want Bella to be absolutely sure of her decision before she follows through. There is no turning back because the vampire transformation is not reversible. In the same way, LDS take precise and progressive steps to ensure that a potential convert is entirely ready for membership in the Church. Though leaving the Church is fundamentally possible, the repercussions make rejection not worth the effort. However, the Cullens continually remind Bella that conversion to the vampire way is irreversible and it is the severity of the decision that forces their collective conscience to frequently bring up the subject matter.

An additional striking similarity is that of each respective conversion's relation to blood. Despite Edward's insistence that she not know, Bella eventually catches Alice off guard and convinces her to tell how one becomes a vampire:

It takes a few days for the transformation to be complete, depending on how much venom is in the bloodstream, how close the venom enters to the heart. As long as the heart keeps beating, the poison spreads, healing, changing the body as it moves through it. Eventually the heart stops, and the conversion is finished. But all that time, every minute of it, a victim would be wishing for death (Meyer, *Twilight* 414).

With the exception of the heart stoppage and inclusion of pain, the perceived blood change of a newly-baptized Mormon is almost identical to that of a human freshly bitten by one of Meyer's vampires.

Individually, the Cullens share their stories of conversion and offer their respective perspectives on the matter. Their information is intended to provide Bella with the most complete perspective of vampire life, of which a significant component are meditations on the precious human life that Bella is so willing to abandon, so that she is capable of making the most well-informed decision.

The story most relevant to Bella's is Rosalie's, who was in a similar situation of being on the cusp of a bright future. Her feelings are heartfelt and make a significant impact on Bella: "You already have *everything*. You have a whole life ahead of you — everything I want. And you're going to just *throw it away*. Can't you see that I'd trade everything I have to be you? You have the choice that I didn't have, and you're choosing *wrong!*" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 166). Rosalie's greatest regret is that even though she has found happiness with Emmett, they will never "sit on a porch somewhere," each of them "gray-haired" and surrounded by their grandchildren" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 167). She cautions Bella

that she is too young to know what she will want in ten or fifteen years and stresses that “[o]nce it’s done, it can’t be undone” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 167).

Eventually, Bella begins to look at the decision without being blinded by her love for Edward. She mentally goes back and forth between being ready or not and the concept of the transformation as a looming deadline makes her reconsider her options. She realizes that being a human is all she knows and Edward’s persistent insistence that she not feel forced into making the decision makes her contemplate the conversion even more (Meyer, *Eclipse* 273). With the aid of the Cullens’ experience, Bella’s agency guides her to make an informed decision about her future and she agrees to postpone her conversion, at least temporarily.

Each of the Cullens vividly remembers their respective individual changes and they tell Bella all about the process so that she is fully aware of what to expect. Once the process is complete, Bella’s outward appearance will have changed to match the awe-inspiring perfect beauty of the Cullens (and all other vampires), she will no longer require breath to live, and her diet will consist of purely blood as opposed to human foods. In addition, her inner composition will be changed, morphing her blood into that of a vampire, finalizing the conversion and truly distancing Bella from her previous human life.

The decision to join either the Mormon Church or an eternity as a vampire is not to be taken lightly. In each case, a new lifestyle awaits and it is one that is commonly met with a break from one’s former life, habits, friends, and family. The following

aspects of LDS life are all requirements to be a faithful member of the Church, though as with the above values, Meyer's characters successfully adhere to the rules.

Harmful Language: Lying, Profanity, and Gossip

Definition

For Mormons, choice of language is key to portraying a positive image. Church members are told to select words that “build and uplift” their neighbors since “[p]ropane, vulgar, or crude language and inappropriate or off-color jokes are offensive to the Lord,” capable of harming one's spirit and degrading the speaker (“Strength of the Youth”). Cursings are “the opposite of blessings” and because “thought is expressed in language, vulgar and blasphemous language corrupts its user by establishing vulgar or profane thought patterns” (Howard 352). Mormons are urged not to “lower [themselves] to use such language or jokes, even if people around [them] do,” which includes any misuse of the name of God or Jesus Christ, as outlined in the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Employing “clean language to express [one's] feelings” sets a positive example for others while helping to further the way that God has laid out (“Strength of the Youth”).

A related topic is gossip, another form of “harmful language” (Strength of the Youth). Saying bad things about individuals who are not present or betraying their trust by telling secrets about them are forms of gossiping. Such behavior “causes hurt and pain for other people,” and to obey the Lord's commandment to love one another, others must be spoken about in a kind and positive manner (“Strength of the Youth”).

Lying is additionally addressed in “For the Strength of the Youth,” by stressing honesty for its ability to bring “peace and self-respect” to one’s self and to “build a foundation for friendship and trust” with others. Dishonesty can be detrimental to both parties and “[l]ying damages [one’s] spirit” as does “stealing or shoplifting” and “cheating in school,” which finds Biblical support in the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:7). LDS youth are encouraged not to “rationalize that wrong is right. Being honest includes having the courage to do what [one] know[s] to be right” (“Strength of the Youth”)

Analysis of Twilight Saga

The Twilight Saga complies with these standards. Though it is not entirely clean, Meyer “use[s] such words as 'damn' or 'hell,' explaining that 'if it's in the Bible [she lets] it go’” (Trachtenberg). Even then, Meyer’s acceptable profanity is sparsely used, almost exclusively when a character is irate and only three times as a casual expression. Emmett says “Damn” in an almost awe-struck way when commenting on the surprisingly large Quileute wolf pack (Meyer, *Eclipse* 391) and Bella uses the same word when describing the cliff she jumped off (Meyer, *New Moon* 497) and the engagement ring Edward plans to give her (Meyer, *Eclipse* 457). Each instance still carries a tone of frustration or surprise as opposed to vulgarity without reason. As substitutes for these and other offensive words, “dang,” “darn,” “crap,” and even “holy crap,” are uttered and Bella occasionally uses “Holy crow” as a euphemism.

When more serious vulgar language is used, Meyer refers to it as a whole instead of by name. In *New Moon*, Jacob “cuss[es] under his breath” (Meyer 414) and soon after “hiss[es] out a stream of profanities” while Bella feels “a vague disapproval,” calling his “new friends,” from whom he clearly learned the language, “a bad influence” (Meyer 414). Charlie talks about Jacob cussing with great energy and how he “[doesn’t] know where he picked up that vocabulary, but [Charlie] hopes he hasn’t been using that kind of language around [Bella]” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 586). Jacob also “insult[s] someone’s mother and [takes] the Lord’s name in vain” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 586) and his “cussing” is loud enough to overpower the sounds of howling wolves (Meyer, *Eclipse* 588).

Bella is similarly conscious of her friends who gossip and disapproves of such actions. When Bella first sees and inquires about the Cullens, Jessica tells her that Emmett and Rosalie, and Jasper and Alice are respective pairs of lovers and that they live together in the same house. The news is delivered in a “voice [that holds] all the shock and condemnation of the small town,” to which Bella thinks critically of, though she admits that even in a major city, such as her former home of Phoenix, the news “would cause gossip” (Meyer, *Twilight* 20-1). When Edward beckons for Bella to sit with him, Jessica responds to his actions “with insulting astonishment in her voice” (Meyer, *Twilight* 87). Jessica has “never seen [Edward] sit with anyone but his family before” and sees deviation from that behavior as “weird” (Meyer, *Twilight* 111). From these comments, Bella takes Jessica to be one “hoping to hear something that would make a good story for her to pass on,” furthering her disapproval of gossip (Meyer, *Twilight* 111).

In prime examples of the malicious nature of gossip, Lauren speaks unpleasantly to Mike about Bella's recent activity with the Cullens without knowing that Bella is behind them (Meyer, *Twilight* 111-12). Lauren then uses an "insolent tone," narrows her eyes, and speaks "condescendingly" while speaking with the Quileutes (Meyer, *Twilight* 121). Later in the series, Bella is frustrated with thoughts of potential gossip directed at her for getting married early (Meyer, *Eclipse* 455), but she admits that she "would probably be gossiping just as condescendingly as the rest of [her friends] if it was someone else getting married this summer" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 456).

Charlie is likewise frustrated by the townspeople who have a problem with the Cullens (Meyer, *Twilight* 36) though Bella is not happy with he and Billy when they "gossip like old women" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 14). However, Bella is occasionally sucked into mild forms of gossiping with the sole hope of fitting in with her school friends, but while participating in this detrimental talk, agency allows her to realize that she is not behaving in her true way and merely wearing a mask to appear normal. When she exhibits uncharacteristic behavior "murmuring in sympathy and gasping in horror as called for" to sound interested in Jessica's dating life, it is evident that she is uncomfortable exchanging her values for the desire to be accepted (Meyer, *New Moon* 104).

Each time that gossip is mentioned, it is done so in a negative light in keeping with LDS beliefs. However, hurtful conversation has its advantage since in rejecting its influence, Bella is motivated to seek positive relationships with others, seen most clearly when she rejoices in the happiness found with the Cullens, Jacob Black, and her school

friend Angela. The individuals with whom Bella chooses to spend her time must meet her high standards. She does not “relate well to people [her] own age” nor to “people, period,” including her mother, with whom she is “closer to than anyone else on the planet” (Meyer, *Twilight* 10).

After the frustrations of Jessica and Lauren’s spitefulness, Bella finds Angela to be a “restful” exception to the other girls (Meyer, *Twilight* 118). Bella also finds Jacob “very easy to talk with” (Meyer, *Twilight* 120), is surprised at his maturity for his young age (Meyer, *Twilight* 122), and identifies him as someone she can “easily be friends with” (Meyer, *Twilight* 127). When she gets to know him better in *New Moon*, she comments that he is “simply a perpetually happy person” whose happiness is like that of an “earthbound sun,” warming everyone near him (Meyer 145). Spending time with him is powerful enough to partially pull Bella out of her post-Edward depression and the love of friendship permanently binds her to Jacob.

In conjunction with Bella’s mental wars over making the right decisions through use of her agency, she is also conscious of being honest. Whenever she says something that is not true, Bella admits within the narration that she is lying. She additionally notes when she is putting on a facade for others and many of her acquaintances are able to detect her false speech by frequently calling her out for being a poor distorter of truth. She is also conscious when her “enthusiasm sound[s] false” (Meyer, *Twilight* 146). Other characters are also critical of deception. Edward admits that he had to lie to Bella that he did not love her in order for him to leave, and adds that he is “a good liar” out of necessity for protecting his identity (Meyer, *New Moon* 509). As a result of the

consequences of his actions, he is extremely sorry for hurting Bella and calls his lie that was intended to save her a “worthless effort” (Meyer, *New Moon* 509) and “the blackest kind of blasphemy” (Meyer, *New Moon* 510).

Diet and The Word of Wisdom

Definition

Section 89 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* features a revelation known as the Word of Wisdom, of whose commandments outwardly distinguish active LDS more than any other practice. The decree limits the use of alcohol to sacramental wine and hard liquor for washing the body, deems tobacco good for only treating bruises and sick cattle, and labels hot drinks, later defined by Joseph Smith’s brother Hiram as coffee and tea, not for “the body or belly” (Lyon 1584). The use of meat, of “beasts and of fowls in the air,” is allowed, but suggested to only be used in winter or during famine, while grains, namely wheat, should be the center of the human diet alongside in-season fruits and vegetables (D&C 89:12-13).

Though they are chilled beverages, the invention of “cola drinks in the early 1900s” quickly were discouraged by the Church because they contained “caffeine, a harmful substance believed to make coffee and tea unacceptable. While no official Church position has been stated, leaders have counseled members to avoid caffeine and other addictive chemicals” (Lyon 1585). Limitations are also extended to drugs, including “marijuana and cocaine and the abuse of prescription drugs,” and the numerous “deleterious effects” of cigarette smoking are likewise covered by the revelation. While it is the banned substances that receive the most attention as opposed to the benefits of

the stressed allowed foods, the Word of Wisdom's intentions are nonetheless viewed as beneficial in that its primary purpose is to promote proper health and thus honor the "concept of the sanctity of the body" (Lyon 1585).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

Soda is occasionally imbibed by Bella and friends, and Edward orders a series of Cokes for her (Meyer, *Twilight* 168-9), but it is never stated whether or not the beverages contain caffeine. The only time the chemical is mentioned is when Bella orders a Coke on an airplane so that she can stay awake with Edward and he disapproves of her order based on her "low tolerance for caffeine" (Meyer, *New Moon* 494). In the series' lone form of drug abuse, albeit minor, Bella "deliberately" takes unnecessary cold medicine" that puts her into slumber "for a good eight hours, and though she "normally wouldn't condone that type of behavior," she worries about being "loopy from sleep deprivation on top of everything else" for her first day of spending time outside of school with Edward (Meyer, *Twilight* 251-2). In each instance, agency comes into play and a conscious knowledge of the dangers of certain substances are recalled.

Alcohol is mentioned in a negative light throughout the series, though its inclusion is minimal. A bar that Bella is strangely drawn to is described as a raucous place that she is not meant for and she knows not to accept an offer for a drink from a friendly young man outside (Meyer, *New Moon* 114). Alcohol is also the source of Rosalie's near-death situation that prompts Carlisle turning her into a vampire. Her fiance told her that he was not fond of champagne, but she discovers that he prefers

“something much stronger” when his drunk friends rape, beat, and leave her “in the road to die” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 159-160).

In her depictions of life, Meyer is careful not to betray her faith by including even minute details that violate the Word of Wisdom. Her characters lead clean lives free of illegal substances and treat their bodies with a high level of respect. The choice of diet she portrays are true to LDS living and, as a result, honor the Mormon faith.

III. Potential Consequences

Persecution and Tolerance

Definition

Due to the beliefs that define their faith, Mormons have regularly faced ostracism from society. LDS do not claim “greater suffering than many others who have been persecuted for their religious beliefs through the ages,” but persecution has been rampant throughout their existence. Instances in Kirtland, Ohio, and in the area of Nauvoo, Illinois, where Joseph Smith was assassinated in nearby Carthage, included “threats, murder, rape, mayhem, property damage, and revilement” (Hawkins 1076). Other examples include being forced to flee the “isolation and safety of the Great Basin in the American West, to which the main body of the Church fled beginning in 1846-1847,” anti-polygamy legislation, and continued hostilities in the United States and abroad (Hawkins 1076).

Despite the great suffering elsewhere, none of the cases are of greater magnitude than the Missouri Conflict and Governor Lilburn W. Boggs’ Extermination Order. Mormons in Missouri in the 1830s drew frequent ire from local citizens for their beliefs that eventually erupted in violence. Fear of the Mormons also attracting enough support to take control of the local government influenced the Missourians’ anger which resulted in LDS settlers being forced from their homes despite an attempt at defense. Joseph Smith’s arrival in the state and his subsequent arrest and interment at Richmond Jail and then Liberty Jail are well-known to LDS, as is Brigham Young’s leadership of approximately 12,000 Mormons out of Missouri into Illinois. Smith and others spent five

months in jail on numerous charges resulting from violence due to their defense of the raids, including murder, treason, and arson. The imprisonment “evoked a legacy of strength and revelations from heaven” and while being transported to another prison, Smith and his brother were allowed to escape (Parkin 927-32).

LDS believe that “righteously enduring persecution can bring blessings in both this life and the next” (Hawkins 1076) and the long history of LDS persecution that has been ingrained into Meyer’s memory as a Mormon and her subsequent identification with such a past has a clear influence on her writing. Her message is one of tolerance that can be achieved through taking time to learn the true nature of a misunderstood group of people. She is also aware that equality among persons is understood by LDS as essential to divine love, which explains and justifies all other ethical virtues and principles (Matt. 22:37-40). If people love as God requires, they can form a Zion society of equality, a virtual paradise of tolerance and harmony (Sorensen 463).

Analysis of Twilight Saga

Vampires are the epitome of a persecuted people. Mythic monsters of old, their legends have been distorted for centuries with the overwhelming majority judging them to be evil creatures. Yet when Bella meets Edward, she quickly falls in love with him without a discriminatory care for what he really is. Instead of menacing, shadow-dwelling drinkers of blood, she sees him and his family for what they are: kind, loving, tolerant people attempting to escape the negative connotations of their race by coexisting with humans and contributing to society. By taking time to befriend them and understand

their way of life, she accepts them as humans, worthy of respect and love from all others, and in bonding with them, she sheds all possible preconceptions to the point that she intends to live with the Cullens as one of them forever.

In order to comprehend a potentially misrepresented group, the truths and assumptions must be separated from one another. Fittingly, the stereotypes that frequently blur facts about vampires and hamper the group's acceptance in society are addressed in the informed, respect-filled dialogue that defines Bella's and Edward's relationship. Motivated by a search for truth after hearing Jacob's legends of the "cold ones," Bella performs some light internet research on vampires. While reading about the different varieties of vampires, she finds a description of the *Stregoni benefici*, "the one myth among hundreds that claimed the existence of good vampires" and a potential precedent for the Cullens' lifestyle (Meyer, *Twilight* 135). She later admits to this research, much of which sounded childish, biased, and uninformed. "Nothing fit. Most of it was kind of silly," she tells Edward (Meyer, *Twilight* 184). To honor her quest for truth, Edward reveals to Bella the realities of vampire life.

Being unable to come out during the daytime, sleeping in coffins, and being burned by the sun are dispelled by Edward as myths (Meyer, *Twilight* 185-6) and he casually asks Bella if she wants to know if he drinks blood (Meyer, *Twilight* 186). Bella also asks if Edward will "turn into a bat" and he jokes that he has never heard that jab before (Meyer, *Twilight* 279), yet she seriously wonders if Edward would show up on a developed camera film (Meyer, *New Moon* 25). The need to stay in dark places, due to vampires' shimmering skin, is rationalized as the probable source of many of the above

myths (Meyer, *Twilight* 291), and when giving Bella a tour of his family's house, Edward jokes that the place lacks stereotypical vampire items: "No coffins, no piled skulls in the corners; I don't even think we have cobwebs...what a disappointment this must be for you" (Meyer, *Twilight* 329). The exploration of stereotypes echoes Meyer's own experience of ignorant outsiders assuming that polygamy is still practiced by Mormons. In each case, truth wins out over false pretenses, encouraging a more complete understanding.

Alice reveals that "some of the superstitions about things like crosses and garlic" came from the legend of Father Marcus, a "martyred" Christian missionary, though actually an influential vampire, and his successful means of crafting vampire myth (Meyer, *New Moon* 441). As a result of his efforts, the celebration of namesake St. Marcus Day includes a surplus of the "vampiric" color red and children wearing plastic vampire fangs, furthering the legends (Meyer, *New Moon* 448). Despite the combination of reality and misunderstanding, Edward is steadfast that he does not "want to be a monster" (Meyer, *Twilight* 187) and insists that "most human desires" are present in vampires, "just hidden behind more powerful desires" (Meyer, *Twilight* 310). Fortunately for Edward, such an example of one who leads a life of honor despite having to overcome great personal obstacles lives in his own house.

Carlisle's crusade for peace as a doctor who saves human lives is born out of his minister father, an "intolerant man" who "led hunts for witches, werewolves...and vampires" (Meyer, *Twilight* 331). As a young man, Carlisle was put in charge of the raids but was a disappointment because "he was not quick to accuse, to see demons where they

did not exist,” and after being bitten himself, went into hiding since he knew his father would destroy anything that became infected by the monsters (Meyer, *Twilight* 331). After a brief stint with “more civilized” vampires in Italy (Meyer, *Twilight* 340), he fully realizes that he is different in being unable to comfortably fit in with human-eaters, and goes to the New World to find “others like himself” who can subsist on other animal blood sources (Meyer, *Twilight* 341). There, he finds that he can “interact with unsuspecting humans” and eventually creates a companion in Edward (Meyer, *Twilight* 341). Later, to protect the reputation he has fought to build, Carlisle asks for visiting vampires James, Laurent, and Victoria to “refrain from hunting in this immediate area” since they “have to stay conspicuous” (Meyer, *Twilight* 378). Laurent protests the Cullens associating with Bella by noting her humanity as an obvious difference, and admits that for this and their many other behavioral differences, they “have a lot to learn about each other” (Meyer, *Twilight* 379).

Yet despite the exceptional parental example, Edward reflects on his period of “rebellious adolescence” when he “resented” Carlisle for “curbing” appetite away from human blood and set off on his own for a while (Meyer, *Twilight* 342). He thought that he could “be exempt from the...depression...that accompanies a conscience” (Meyer, *Twilight* 343) by using his mind-reading gift to “pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil” and gives example of preying on a murderer stalking a young girl. However, he was unable to escape the “monster” that he had become and could not justify killing humans. He then returned to Carlisle and Esme who welcomed him back “like the prodigal.” which he believes is more than he deserved (Meyer, *Twilight* 343). The crisis

of accountability eventually became too much for Edward, and through using his agency, he was able to make the best decision for his life, even if it required a temporary removal to see what was right.

Even before knowing his struggles for acceptance, Bella tells Edward that it “doesn’t matter” what he is, and he is so unaccustomed to such respectful treatment that he is accepting yet incredulous of her claim (Meyer, *Twilight* 184). She is special to him because she did not “shy away” from the Cullens unlike “most humans” who are “repelled” by their “alienness” (Meyer, *Twilight* 275). Edward did not expect her “to come so close” (Meyer, *Twilight* 275), yet he is elated that she is willing to love a family that dares to live “differently” from the rest of their kind (Meyer, *Twilight* 290).

However, Bella is extremely worried that because of her involvement in their lives, the Cullens will have to “leave” and “hide forever” on her account and she does not want that on her conscience. Edward asks her to “calm down,” noting that they have “been there before” in terms of running (Meyer, *Twilight* 381), hinting that even with the exception of her grace, they never fully expect to escape persecution and are prepared to start anew elsewhere if necessary.

Stemming from Bella’s example, others who take time to interact with the family also find them charming. Carlisle has a strong reputation as a talented and caring doctor that earns him respect at the hospital and Bella’s parents also quickly take to him. Renee likes Carlisle, Edward, and “the lovely girl” Alice just after meeting them (Meyer, *Twilight* 465) and Charlie immediately takes to Alice, trusting her as a positive female example capable of ensuring his daughter’s safety. With Bella’s help, the Cullens

progress a great deal from their isolated lunches in the cafeteria (Meyer, *Twilight* 18) to hosting a graduation party for nearly the entire senior class.

Despite the number of individuals who welcome the Cullens into their own lives, many are not as receptive. In exchange for her time with Edward, Bella gets general “dirty look[s]” and is “eyed...scornfully” by her friends (Meyer, *Twilight* 113). At school, Edward, Bella, and Alice sit on “the extreme southern end of the table” at lunch in the cafeteria and Bella’s other friends sit “on the other side of an invisible line” that “dissolve[s]” when the Cullens are absent (Meyer, *New Moon* 14). The separation eventually dissolves into an “us and them” split at the cafeteria table with Bella’s friends over the Cullens with only Angela, Ben and Mike taking a pro-Cullen stance (Meyer, *Eclipse* 11). The separation is desired on the Cullens’ end in hopes of protecting the locals from their dangers, but it is here that Bella initially wishes for a united group of friends. While the Cullens face this wanted isolation from the townspeople and are unfazed by the minor shunning, nothing compares to the hatred they receive from the Indians of the Quileute reservation.

From the first time Edward’s family’s name is mentioned on the reservation, Sam Uley says “The Cullens don’t come here” in a “tone that [closes] the subject” (Meyer, *Twilight* 121). Bella is “taken aback” by what he says, picking up that his tone “[implies] something more -- that they [aren’t] allowed; they [are] prohibited” (Meyer, *Twilight* 121). His manner “[leaves] a strange impression on [Bella], and [she tries] to ignore it without success” (Meyer, *Twilight* 121). Jacob also admits that the Cullens are “not supposed to come onto the reservation” (Meyer, *Twilight* 123). His tale of the “cold

ones,” now known as vampires, and the treaty made to keep them off the reservation hints at the Cullens’ true nature and explains the Quileute’s hostile tone toward them (Meyer, *Twilight* 124). The story gives Bella goosebumps, confirming that she has preexisting ideas concerning the Cullens (Meyer, *Twilight* 126).

Billy Black does not like the Cullens because he is, in Jacob’s words, a “superstitious old man” (Meyer, *Twilight* 237) and Charlie previously “chewed [Billy] out” about his Cullen hatred (Meyer, *Twilight* 239). Jacob is also paid \$20 by his father to go to prom and ask Bella to “please” break up with Edward and send a warning that the Quileutes will be “watching” (Meyer, *Twilight* 492). Jacob is embarrassed to have to tell her that, but Billy had also agreed to buy him the remaining parts he needs to finish his car. However, after transforming into a werewolf and fully experiencing the loathing that his brethren feel towards the vampires, his viewpoints align with Billy’s, a hatred so strong that the Quileutes celebrate the Cullens’ departure from the surrounding lands by lighting bonfires on the reservation (Meyer, *New Moon* 81).

The disparity goes so far that the Quileutes are revealed to be “made for” killing vampires (Meyer, *New Moon* 311) and that the knowledge of how to kill vampires “has been passed down from father to son for generations” within the reservation (Meyer, *New Moon* 354). A treaty was established with Carlisle when he first came to the area 70 years prior (Meyer, *Eclipse* 30) when Jacob’s great-grandfather Ephraim Black believed Carlisle’s claims that he was part of a different kind of vampires (Meyer, *Eclipse* 181), though the agreement is a fragile one. The werewolves break the treaty with vampires if they attack a Cullen on vampire turf and the vampires break it if they “bite a human”

(Meyer, *New Moon* 330). Hate is evident in each group's discussions of the other as the Quileutes have derogatory names for the Cullens ("bloodsucker," "leech," "parasite"), the vampires have their own insults for the werewolves ("dog," "mongrel"), and neither group enjoys the other's smell (Meyer, *New Moon* 409).

In an interesting twist, there is also temporary misunderstanding and persecution within the Quileute reservation. Jacob and his teenage friends are wary of Sam's group of young men, referring to them as a "cult" and, after a string of peers join Sam's gang, are fearful of being next (Meyer, *New Moon* 261). The Quileute parents, especially those on the tribe council, are cryptic about the collection of youngsters but consider Sam a blessing for the reservation (Meyer, *New Moon* 261). Once it is clear that Jacob has been initiated into the "cult," Bella is infuriated and tries her hardest to return him to his former sunny demeanor. In keeping with the series' theme, appearances are not what they initially seem, and the reality of Sam and the gang's positive intentions are soon revealed to Bella.

Similar to her initial stereotypical perspective of vampires, Bella does not "know anything about werewolves" and thinks of them as "something closer to the movies--big hairy half-men creatures or something" (Meyer, *New Moon* 298). She mistakenly thinks that they are murderers, preying on innocent hikers, but Jacob corrects her that they are in fact attempting to protect the outdoorsmen from malicious vampires (Meyer, *New Moon* 309). She also asks if Jacob is required to "turn into a wolf" during full moons. He "roll[s] his eyes" and notes that "Hollywood's version doesn't get much right" (Meyer, *New Moon* 312).

Though the werewolves are not initially accepting of Bella, tensions between her and the Quileutes begin to subside when Emily jokingly refers to Bella as “the vampire girl” and Bella in turn calls her “the wolf girl” (Meyer, *New Moon* 322). After meeting Sam and Emily, Bella remarks how nice they are and that her fears “[m]ust have all been a misunderstanding” (Meyer, *New Moon* 339). Getting to know the werewolves on a personal level creates an epiphany in Bella that the two warring groups are wasting their time as enemies and have the potential to get along. As a result, she seeks to build the society of equality stressed by the Mormon faith.

In Bella’s attempts to ease tensions between the ancient enemies, she strives to make Jacob see that Alice is a good person, though he insists that she cannot be friends with both he and the vampires. He does, however, promise to love Bella no matter “what” she loves (Meyer, *New Moon* 409). Though the werewolves and vampires find the other’s odor to be repulsive, they “both smell fine” to Bella (Meyer, *New Moon* 410). Upon accepting her self-appointed peacemaking mission, Bella consistently tells each side that their warring and hate is unnecessary, only to be rebuffed each time by her respective audience. They stick to a defense that the ill feelings are simply “the way things are,” but Bella refuses to believe them (Meyer, *New Moon* 410). Bella goes so far in stating her neutrality in “all of this *enemies* nonsense” that she calls herself “Switzerland” and “refuse[s] to be affected by territorial disputes between mythical creatures” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 143). She does not “care who’s a werewolf and who’s a vampire” and says that “[i]f Angela turns out to be a witch, she can join the party, too” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 143). She is so fixated on harmony between werewolves and

vampires that she fights the repellant nature of magnets to force them “to coexist side-by-side,” and becoming frustrated with metal’s inflexibility (Meyer, *Eclipse* 96), understanding this action to be a sign of her desire for peace. During times when Bella witnesses both Edward’s and Jacob’s mutual ire in their joint company, she wants to make them “shake hands and be friends – [to] be Edward and Jacob rather than *vampire* and *werewolf*” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 319).

When news from both groups reveals that Victoria has danced along the treaty boundary line with each party on their respective side unwilling and unable to cross, it becomes clear that in order to eliminate the menace and protect Bella, the two enemies will have to work together. Miraculously, the vampires and werewolves agree to “coordinate” against the attacking vampires in order to keep Bella safe (Meyer, *Eclipse* 380). Jasper has “never considered working together” and realizes that the teamwork “has to be a first” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 381). Edward calls the collaboration “an experiment,” unsure if they will be able to “cooperate” and does not want Bella “in the middle of that” if the chemistry breaks down (Meyer, *Eclipse* 384). Bella calls the vampires Jacob’s “enemy allies” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 405) and the sides share a “smile of true comradeship” when talking of luring the young vampires with Bella’s “false trail” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 407), but Jacob is still disgusted by them. Edward and Jacob are shocked that “it’s come to this” with “[t]rusting werewolves” and “[f]ighting *with* vampires instead of against them,” though the werewolves “still get to fight against some of them” (Meyer, *Eclipse* 409). Their joint efforts eventually lead to the destruction of Bella’s pursuer, but the two sides are never fully reconciled.

Discussion

Religious Literacy and Mormon Literacy

True to Meyer's claim, the Twilight Saga includes only a handful of explicit religious references. Edward speaks of a "force" that has created polar opposites and creation/evolution, and he cannot accept evolution (Meyer, *Twilight* 308). Carlisle has never seen anything to make him doubt "whether God exists in some form or the other," not even his vampiric "reflection in the mirror" (Meyer, *New Moon* 36). Bella's life is "fairly devoid of belief" and though her father considers himself a Lutheran out of tradition, he spends Sundays worshipping "by the river with a fishing pole in hand" (Meyer, *New Moon* 36). Her mother occasionally tries out a church, but spends little time developing her interests, letting it fall by the side as a "fad," no more important than "tennis, pottery, yoga, and French classes" (Meyer, *New Moon* 36). Edward believes in God, heaven, and hell, but not in an afterlife for vampires, convinced that they have forfeited their souls. For all of Edward's "strength, his goodness, the brightness that shines out of him," it "only fuels that hope, that faith, more than ever" in Bella that they do have souls (Meyer, *New Moon* 37). However, if Bella were to be given a vampire life, with Edward's beliefs for their kind and his inability to live without her, she would in turn be risking his soul. Bella claims that the choice is hers. but Carlisle says that because of her binding love, the decision is also Edward's (Meyer, *New Moon* 38).

But through a brief, seemingly meaningless exchange of dialogue concerning religion, Meyer reveals her central struggle as a writer. Carlisle hopes that in exchange for his good deeds, which are the opposite of all other human-killing vampires, he and his family will “get some measure of credit for trying” (Meyer, *New Moon* 36). Bella finds his pursuits to be noble and thinks that anyone, “deity included,” would be impressed by Carlisle (Meyer, *New Moon* 37). He openly admits that religious talk “sounds a little bizarre, coming from a vampire” (Meyer, *New Moon* 36) and it is that phrase that summarizes Meyer’s entire series. Carlisle has his own tried set of religious beliefs, and despite who he is physically, nothing can prevent him from abiding by what he trusts is true. In this statement, Meyer is perhaps addressing the members of her Church who disapprove of her subject matter for seemingly betraying their religion or the non-Mormons who question the role of her beliefs in her works. Whatever the intent, the phrase encompasses Meyer’s need to follow the requirements of her faith and how regardless of characters and settings, she will ceaselessly abide by the tenets of Mormonism in all of her actions, including writing, but concurrently producing novels that make no precise reference to Mormonism.

Meyer is aware of the public’s perception of her Church and knows that quoting Mormon scripture or delving into absolute LDS life by name in her books is likely to draw harsh criticism from non-Mormon readers, yet including such content is not required of her by her religion. Rather than project her faith in such explicit language, Meyer instead surrounds her characters with the life that she knows, creating stories without intention of spreading her values, yet she cannot help but do so. Consequently,

she has peppered her writing with LDS values that are commonplace in her existence, the “milk” that is shared with most responsible, loving people. Meyer’s writing has become popular because audiences are not being served clear-cut religion, but readers also do not understand what it is they are actually receiving. The attention to themes of abstinence and other aspects of clean living receive slight media and audience attention, albeit cloaked well beneath a vampire story, but readers are not aware of how deep the rabbit hole goes. Mormonism, the mysterious religion that has eluded general public comprehension since its existence, continues to baffle non-believers, resulting in a population uninformed of one of the world’s fastest-growing faiths. Only with a knowledge of religious literacy, and more specifically Mormon literacy, can the series be interpreted for what it really is.

Though Meyer admits to allowing her faith to somewhat influence her writing, her claims of having not yet written a Mormon novel are unfounded. The truth is that by remaining a faithful member of the LDS Church, she cannot help but write Mormon novels. Her values and beliefs are ingrained in every aspect of her life, including her fiction. Betraying any of her Church teachings in her writing is unacceptable, and therefore, though the *Book of Mormon* and other Church doctrine are never mentioned by name, she has created characters and situations that adhere to LDS tenets.

Meyer does acknowledge that her favorite *Book of Mormon* story as a child was from the book of Alma in which about 2,000 stripling warriors under attack remain unharmed due to a blood oath taken by their parents to abstain from fighting after their conversion to Christianity. Meyer views the Quileute Indians as her stripling warriors,

the equivalent of “sons who have taken on the responsibility of taking care of their families,” claiming that it is a “deliberate” reference to the *Book of Mormon* (Irwin).

However, the above lone cited example is buried so deep in LDS scripture that only those familiar with the story or who have read the *Book of Mormon* would understand the reference within the Twilight Saga. As found in this study’s analysis of Mormonism in Meyer’s books, the actual references are subtle ones that may be fathomed through a basic understanding of Mormon faith, and they are indisputably widespread.

In Meyer’s advice from Orson Scott Card, she affirms that Mormonism is capable of shaping her writing boundaries, but acknowledges that she has yet to be encumbered by accusations of crossing them or of staying too far within. Without question, Meyer actually is letting her religion limit her art, but readers do not seem to mind. Though there is the great possibility that upon learning of the Mormon values in the Twilight Saga, readers, including fans, with preconceived anti-Mormon opinions will revile Meyer for subjecting them to her beliefs, but such a result is not the intention of this study. The purpose is for readers to achieve an understanding of Mormonism and to comprehend the unique situation that Meyer faces as a Mormon author in abiding by her faith while creating compelling novels that appeal to believers and non-believers. To her credit, Meyer should be lauded for crafting such a creative world without betraying her religion. The resulting novels are a true testament to her persistent faith and her unwillingness to compromise, in turn revealing model Mormon behavior.

Further Research and Conclusion

Though it is impossible to pinpoint a specific Twilight Saga individual or group as Mormon, it is clear that core LDS values and antitheses are spread throughout the characters. It will be interesting to see what Meyer adds to Bella and Edward's story with the addition of continuing novels and how her non-Saga works will fare, but one aspect is certain: every bit of her writing will adhere to the specific beliefs of her Mormon faith. Each subsequent Meyer work can be analyzed in relation to LDS tenets, and though the story details will vary, the faithful relaying of Church beliefs will be constant.

Perhaps one of the more appealing methods to learn of another faith is to read an analysis of popular works that pertain to certain beliefs, such as this study. Doing so has the ability to foster habits of critical reading and a greater religious awareness in popular culture and culture as a whole. The above research on Mormonism as it relates to the Twilight Saga is far from a complete view of LDS beliefs, though it provides a basic look at the religion. The resources by which to learn more about Mormonism are plentiful and many of the LDS sources used for this study are exceedingly informative and easy to use. These select materials stand as exemplary sources for investigating the Mormon faith and gaining valuable literacy on the religion. However, it is hoped that the above findings may also serve as an appropriate overview and, in some instances, "meat" offerings for inquiring minds.

With the ever-growing popularity of the expanding Twilight Saga, the upcoming film adaptation of *Twilight*, and Meyer's crossover into adult fiction, readers and the general public should be aware of the true nature of Meyer's work. She is working in a unique literary medium that, though previously treaded by the likes of Card, has never achieved such popularity. Her novels are truly Mormon novels and could not be anything else.

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