

The Shack Exposed:

A Theological House of Horrors!

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*“That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun.”*

Ecclesiastes 1:9

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Introduction

Over the past decade, a new world order has slowly but steadily taken shape around us. We have witnessed so many of the fundamental building blocks of this end-game world system being maneuvered into place – eschatological events that early in my own lifetime were only insightful speculation (based upon Scripture) by pioneers of the Christian, end-time genre such as Hal Lindsey of *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

The center of this New World Order is globalism. It is a three-pronged spear:

- **Economic** – A global economic community of businesses and trade
- **Social** – A global network of governments and states
- **Religious** – A global, ecumenical community of faith

Specific to this book’s subject matter, this global religion will be (or, more correctly, is becoming) an ecumenical counterfeit faith which combines the New Age concepts of the Eastern religions with Christian mysticism – producing a satanic synthesis of human religions.

In its final, syncretistic form, which will be present during the Tribulation, it will represent the final culmination of the false world religious system that was first set in motion eons ago in ancient Babylon...there truly is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

While many today see this cleverly marketed spiritualism as new, fresh and exciting, it is not. It is just that for much of our

nation's history, it simply was not on the "radar" of most "religious" Americans.

There were always a few renegades who believed, practiced and taught the concepts and beliefs common to it; however, they were always on the fringe of society and often considered "flakes." Even in the 1960's (through the liberal, hippie movement), this counterfeit spirituality remained, for the most part, on the fringe.

However, since the 1970's, these spiritual ideas have cunningly slithered out of the shadows and have now become as accepted as the foundational doctrines of biblical Christianity.

Doubt this reality?

Christine Wicker wrote in 2009¹, "What Americans are doing today is separating spirituality from religion, with many people disavowing organized practice altogether while privately maintaining some form of worship. The old terms – 'atheist' and 'agnostic' – are no longer catch-alls for everyone outside traditional belief. In fact, 24% of respondents put themselves into a whole new category: 'spiritual but not religious.'" (Wicker)

Furthermore, these members (knowingly or unknowingly) of the New World Religion, an alarming one quarter of all the respondents to the poll, have "combined diverse beliefs and practices into a personal faith that fits no standard definition." (Wicker)

Even if we dismiss the 12% of the PARADE poll respondents who believed no religion is valid, only **12% believed their faith was the only true faith**, leaving a whopping 59% who believed *all religions were valid*.

¹ Based upon an exclusive PARADE Spirituality Poll in October of 2009 (PARADE Spirituality Poll)

Furthermore, only 43% of the respondents believed that after death we go to heaven or hell – an astounding 40% simply believe our souls or spirits merely live on or that nothing at all happens (there is no afterlife).

This new spirituality is no longer focused on an external, transcendent God, but on our own immanent, inner “God.”

Regarding this transformation to a New Age concept of inner divinity, George Gallup noted in 2003, “As described in *The Next American Spirituality*, which Tim Jones and I wrote, the pendulum may be swinging away from what is *beyond* us to what is *within* us. In the 1999 survey, we asked, ‘Do you think of spirituality more in a personal and individual sense or more in terms of organized religion and church doctrine?’ Almost **three-quarters** opted for the ‘personal and individual’ response...As further evidence of the focus on *self* in spirituality, many people today appear to be practicing a ‘do-it-yourself’ faith – taking pieces from various traditions and building their own kind of ‘patchwork’ faith.” (Gallup)

This New Age Spirituality prides itself on being all-inclusive, all-loving and non-judgmental. It promotes the concept of universal reconciliation in which all paths lead to God.

A 2005 Newsweek/Beliefnet poll found that 79% of Americans believe that a good person who isn’t part of their faith could go to heaven or attain salvation. Now, in case your thinking *most of these people were probably non-Christian*, **68% of evangelical Protestants agreed**...along with an overwhelming 83% of non-evangelical Protestants and nearly all, some 91% to be exact, of Catholics. (Newsweek/Beliefnet Spirituality Poll)

I present all this to you because not only does William Young’s *The Shack* presents this New Age/New Spirituality, it does it to

the extreme. It's simply not a matter of just one or two minor doctrinal errors – both the sum of its parts and all the individual parts themselves are heretical. And most concerning is that this best-seller has sold millions of copies to “Christians” under the banner of allegorical Christian fiction.

“But it's just good, harmless entertainment,” some folks claim.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines allegorical as “having hidden spiritual meaning that transcends the literal sense of the text.”

Allegorical fiction is absolutely distinct from all other genres of fiction (for example, mysteries, thrillers, romance, etc.) in that, rather than simply seeking to entertain, it alone seeks to impart a deeper meaning or truth – in this case, “Christian” truth.

Allegories are symbolic works that are intentionally, by design, used to teach a deeper moral (as with fables) or spiritual truth (as with parables). At their very core, their overriding, primary purpose is to educate. The goal is to deliver a message of “truth.” The chosen method of delivering this truth is through fictional entertainment.

After all, who wants to pick-up a volume on systematic theology when they can pick up an entertaining “novel” like *The Shack*?

Make no mistake – allegorical fiction (and therefore, *The Shack*) seeks to impart a message to its reader. Those who claim *The Shack* is just good “entertainment” are ignorantly missing the point. They are oblivious to the underlying (and powerful) reason for and purpose of Young's book – to subtly shape your perceptions and, by so doing, your beliefs.

Now, in order for true believers to effectively defend themselves and their faith, they must know two things: the enemy and the true faith.

Very few Christians understand the basics of world religions or the basics of the Christian faith (doctrines). Because we have done a rather poor job of teaching both comparative religions and Christian doctrines, we have generations of “Christians” who can neither identify enemies of the faith, whether external or internal, nor refute their attacks on the faith.

To a sadly large extent, Christians have become a merry band of spiritualizers who simply shoot from the hip and, as a result, find themselves tossed about by every new wave of fresh and exciting spirituality (Ephesians 4:14). For far too many, it has become a debilitating addiction – an endless quest for the next “hit” of spiritual Zen.

While our Christian focus should be firmly placed on God and glorifying Him, a co-requisite of doing just this is *knowing* Him, through His Word, and defending that knowledge of the truth.

The key components required to “contend earnestly” (Jude 3) for the faith are properly understanding our faith and recognizing threats to it, whether outside the walls or within.

Of the two, obviously, understanding our faith is by far the most important. For, even if we fail to immediately recognize a threat, it will eventually become apparent if we have an apt, solid knowledge of our faith and we can then effectively repel it. However, having a suitable ability to recognize the threat also holds intrinsic value because it affects our reaction time and our reaction time greatly impacts the casualty rates – both in terms of those lost (who succumb to the lie and fall-away from the faith)

and in terms of the amount of damage sustained to the thoughts and beliefs of those remaining within the faith.

The more rapidly we can recognize potential spiritual threats and the more well-armed (with the Word of God) we are to attack them, the less impact they will have on ourselves and others – including more susceptible nominal Christians and the most susceptible of all...unbelievers (especially “seekers”).

If, in these last days, we are going to defend the faith and be able, as a community of the faithful, to stand against the coming One World Religion as a witness for God and truth, we must be able to effectively recognize the threats and ably refute them. And if we cannot recognize, resist and refute false spirituality ourselves, then how can we hope to (1) protect our brothers and sisters in the faith or (2) rescue the lost?

“But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, **build yourselves up in your most holy faith** and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. **Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.**” Jude 17-23 (NIV)

We simply cannot effectively protect the flock and carry out the Great Commission if we do not understand the basic doctrines of the faith or recognize threats to it – whether external or internal.

And this all brings us back to Young’s allegorical message to the people of God, *The Shack*. Here is a perfect, even blatantly

obvious, example of a clear and present danger to those of the faith. Blending Eastern religion, ancient religious systems, New Age concepts and Christian mysticism, Young presents a patently counterfeit theology of God and faith.

Young's view is a little of a lot of things but what it is **NOT** is Christian or biblical.

While it is not difficult to refute his views, it is often hard to precisely put a finger on him. As you will see, this is a multifaceted undertaking due to the enormous scope and complexity of the theological heresies presented by Young in *The Shack*. The breadth, width and depth of the issues and doctrines involved are breathtaking and often overlap in an endless spider-web of false, New Age/New Spirituality teachings.

The task is further complicated by the fact that Young is often sketchy and unorganized in his presentation and frequently blurs together many strands, or streams, of error in a type of theological "patchwork" quilt. When you add to this the endless rabbit trails that one must navigate in order to gain the background information needed to understand both where he is coming from and where he is leading to, it becomes challenging to even know where to start or how to effectively organize the results so as to maximize the educational value of the information being presented.

What you will find on the following pages is my best effort to adequately present an accurate theological examination of *The Shack*. While it is quite thorough, it is neither an exhaustive evaluation nor is it perfectly organized – I have simply tried to bring a vast amount of information together in one place in a way that can at least be read, studied and absorbed. In the future, it is my hope to further refine both the content and structure of this defense of the faith against the New Age/New Spirituality

message presented in *The Shack*. For now, it is what it is and far better than nothing.

Be forewarned, this is not a one-read book; but rather, may require a complete initial reading, followed by adequate time for thought, prayer and further study of the Scriptures – and will most likely need to be referred back to numerous times in order to truly grasp and fully understand the colossal threat *The Shack* and the beliefs behind it pose to the one, true faith, once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

The following pages serve as a synthesis of my own personal analysis/research and the wealth of analysis/research published by others that exists (though in scattered pieces) in the Christian community today. These others represent some of the faithful few who are standing guard and manning the walls for us all and I have tried my best to give proper credit to them wherever possible.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1

Some Background Facts

The editor and co-owner of The Shack's publishing company (Windblown Media), Wayne Jacobsen, spent 16 months helping to re-write the first draft of the book. So what do we know about this man?

He is a staunch supporter and promoter of both the emerging church and contemplative spirituality books and authors.

On his own website, LifeStream.org, he lists the “must read” books that have “most shaped” his spiritual journey including: Brennan Manning, Philip Yancey, Larry Crabb, Dallas Willard, Mike Yaconeli and Jim Palmer - all hardcore proponents of postmodern, spiritual ideas including the “emerging church” and “contemplative spirituality.”

Eugene Peterson (*The Message*) is also an enthusiastic endorser of *The Shack*...his endorsement is proudly displayed right under the author's name on the front cover. What do we know about Peterson?

Peterson's paraphrase of the Bible, *The Message*, has numerous questionable “translations.” One of the biggest is his translation of “on earth, as in heaven” in the Lord's Prayer to “as above, so below” (Matthew 6:9-13).²

This is an esoteric saying that has been an occult centerpiece for nearly 1,500 years. It is believed by occultists to be the key to all

² Peterson also adds the phrase “Reveal who you are” in verse 9 which, I must admit, I'm at a total loss to explain where it comes from. This concept simply does not exist in the original Greek manuscripts or any other translation I know of. It has a very Gnostic feel to it – like some secret wisdom (*sophia* in Greek) that will be revealed to the true mystic seeker.

magic and mysteries. It means that God is not only transcendent (i.e. “out there”) but is also immanent (i.e. “in everyone and everything”).

I say this with all sincerity, there is simply no way Peterson could not have known of and understood the extensive occult use of this phrase.

Editors of the *New Age Journal* have defined the phrase in their book, writing, “‘As above, so below, as below, so above.’ This maxim implies that the transcendent God beyond the physical universe and the immanent God within ourselves are one.”

The phrase is prominently featured in Rhonda Byrne’s book *The Secret*. It was even the introductory quote at the beginning of the book. On page 164, she defines the phrase in a practical sense by telling readers, “You are God in a physical body.”

“The significance of this phrase is that it is believed to hold the key to all mysteries. All systems of magic [mysticism] are claimed to function by this formula. ‘That which is above is the same as that which is below’...macrocosmos is the same as microcosmos. The universe is the same as God, God is the same as man, man is the same as the cell, the cell is the same as the atom, the atom is the same as...and so on, ad infinitum. This message theorizes that man is the counterpart of God on earth; as God is man’s counterpart in heaven. Therefore, it is a statement of ancient belief that man’s actions on earth parallel the actions of God in heaven.” (As Above, So Below)

The phrase seems to originate from the Emerald Tablet which is claimed to originate from Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary Hellenistic combination of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth. In it, Hermes claims to have obtained the

knowledge of the three parts of the wisdom of the whole universe (alchemy, astrology, and theurgy)³.

Regarding the Tablet, Dennis Hauck writes, “The Emerald Tablet is one of the most revered documents in the Western World, and its Egyptian author, Hermes Trismegistus, has become synonymous with ancient wisdom. His tablet contains an extremely succinct summary of what Aldous Huxley dubbed the ‘Perennial Philosophy,’ a **timeless science of soul** that keeps popping up despite centuries of effort to suppress it. The basic idea is that **there exists a divine or archetypal level of mind that determines physical reality, and individuals can access that realm through direct knowledge of God**...The teachings of Hermes -- the Hermetic tradition -- is one of the oldest spiritual traditions in the world, and while no direct evidence links the Emerald Tablet to Eastern religions, it **shares uncanny similarities in concepts and terminology with Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism**...and many of the most heretical beliefs of the Gnostics are also openly expressed in it. Like the authors of the tablet, the Gnostics believed that **direct knowledge of reality could be attained through psychological discipline and meditative exercises**. They also shared a common view of the universe in which “**All Is One**,” a pattern of creation and decay symbolized by the Ouroboros (**the snake eating its own tail** [you will see this again shortly]).” (Hauck)

Hauck goes on to state, “Part of the problem trying to figure out the origins of the Emerald Tablet comes from the many legends that cloud its history. In one of the earliest of these fabled scenarios, Hermes was a son of Adam and wrote the tablet to

³ Alchemy here refers to “an investigation into the spiritual makeup or life of matter and material existence through an application of the mysteries of birth, death and resurrection” (Eliade 149, 155-157). Theurgy pertains to black magic and divine magic [witchcraft].

show mankind how to redeem itself from his father's sins in the Garden of Eden. Jewish mystics identify the tablet's author with Seth, who was the second son of Adam. They credit him with writing the Emerald Tablet, which was taken aboard the ark by Noah. After the Flood, Noah supposedly hid the tablet in a cave near Hebron, where it was later discovered by Sarah, wife of Abraham. Another version describes Hermes giving the tablet to Miriam, daughter of Moses, for safekeeping. She allegedly put it in the Ark of the Covenant, where it remains to this day. Occult historians generally agree that the tablet was found in a secret chamber under the pyramid of Cheops around 1350 BC. Another interesting legend describes Hermes as a philosopher traveling in Ceylon in the fifth century BC. He found the Emerald Tablet hidden in a cave, and after studying it, learned how to "travel in both heaven and earth." This Hermes spent the rest of his life wandering throughout Asia and the Middle East teaching and healing. Oddly, the **Hindu** sacred book *Mahanirvanatantra* states that Hermes was the same person as **Buddha**, and each is referred to as the "Son of the Moon" in other **Hindu** religious texts." (Hauck)

In case you are thinking this stuff couldn't possibly be in the "main-stream," the phrase, along with other common mystic themes and symbolism, is also one of the centerpieces of Dan Brown's (author of *The Davinci Code*) best-selling, mystic-thriller *The Lost Symbol*:

- "...is a well-known symbol of the Ancient Mysteries, and it appears all over the world in ancient art...It's a symbol of man's mystical connection to God.' **As above, so below**. The madman's bizarre choice of words was starting to feel more relevant now." (Brown 87)
- "Eerily, the manipulation Langdon was about to perform was one that seemed to have been suggested by Peter's

captor already when he spoke the ancient Hermetic adage. **As above, so below.**” (Brown 114)

- “Abruptly, Mal’akh drew his gaze upward, past the double-headed phoenix on his chest, past the collage of ancient sigils adorning his face, and directly to the top of his head. He tipped his head toward the mirror, barely able to see the circle of bare flesh that waited there. This location on the body was sacred. Known as the fontanel, it was the one area of the human skull that remained open at birth. An oculus to the brain. Although this physiological portal closes within a matter of months, it remains a symbolic vestige of the lost connection between the outer and inner worlds [the highest *chakra* as we will see late]. Mal’akh studied the sacred patch of virginal skin, which was enclosed by the crownlike circle of an *ouroboros* – a **mystical snake devouring its own tail.**” (Brown 269)
- “Her field of choice – Noetic Science – had been virtually unknown when she first heard of it, but in recent years it had started opening new doors of understanding into the **power of the human mind. Our untapped potential is truly shocking.**” (Brown 22)
- “...our thoughts actually interacted with the physical world, whether or not we knew it, effecting change all the way down to the subatomic realm. Mind over matter...Human thought can literally transform the physical world.” (Brown 56)
- “The overall thesis was simple: We have barely scratched the surface of our mental and spiritual capabilities.” (Brown 55)
- “The mind had the ability to alter the state of matter itself, and, more important, the mind had the power to encourage the physical world to move in a specific

direction. We are the masters of our own universe.” (Brown 57)

- “Entanglement [referring to the quantum physics theory of entanglement] was at the core of primeval beliefs. Its names are as old as history itself...Dharmakaya, Tao, Brahman. In fact, man’s oldest spiritual quest was to perceive his own entanglement, to sense his own interconnection with all things. He has always wanted to become ‘one’ with the universe...to achieve the state of ‘**at-one-ment.**’ (Brown 58) [we will discuss this concept of *quantum spirituality* a little later]
- “Katherine scanned the alphabetical list of his artwork...Seeing all the biblical titles, Katherine recalled that Durer practiced something called **Mystic Christianity – a fusion of early Christianity, alchemy, astrology, and science.**” (Brown 257)
- “The question was not whether God had imbued man with great powers...but rather **how we liberate those powers.**” (Brown 314)
- “‘The cross,’ Landon said, ‘was not a Christian symbol until the fourth century. Long before that, it was used by the **Egyptians** to represent the intersection of two dimensions – the human and the celestial. **As above, so below.** It was a visual representation of the juncture **where man and God become one.**’” (Brown 320)

I realize that was a lot of quotes and you may be wondering what it all has to do with *The Shack*? I want you to understand that these ideas, beliefs and themes (including “as above, so below,” Eastern/Christian mysticism, spiritual transformation, at-one-ment, darkness and so many others) are no longer concepts held only by small groups of nut-cases who operate in seclusion, well off the beaten path – they are mainstream and they permeate not

only Young's book but can be directly found in the ideas and teachings of those he studies and those who endorse and support him.

New Age leader Benjamin Crème reveals that the New World Religion will be based upon this “As above, so below” foundation teaching of *immanence* (that God is in everyone and everything):

“But eventually a new world religion will be inaugurated which will be a fusion and syntheses of the approach of the East and the approach of the West. The Christ will bring together, not simply Christianity and Buddhism, but the concept of God transcendent – outside of His creation – and also the concept of God immanent in all creation – in man and all creation.” (Crème 88)

Robert Schuller embraced this New Age/New Spirituality concept of immanence in his Hour of Power sermon on November, 9, 2003:

“You know in theology – pardon me for using a couple of big words – but in theology the God we believe in, this God of Abraham, is a transcendent God. But He is also an **immanent** God. Transcendent means up there, out there, above all. But God is also an **immanent** God – **immanence** of God and the transcendence of God – but then you have a balanced perspective of God. The **immanence** of God means *here, in me, around me, in society, in the world, this God here, in the humanities, in the science, in the arts, sociology, in politics* – the **immanence** of God...Yes, God is alive and **He is in every single human being!**”

Remember, Schuller claims to have mentored thousands of pastors including Bill Hybels and Rick Warren.

Speaking of Papa Rick, on page 88 of his book, *Purpose Driven Life*, he writes, “He rules everything and is everywhere and is in everything.” Furthermore, this is taught in his Foundations class at his Saddleback Church.

Is it no surprise then that Young uses the person of “Jesus” in his book to introduce this same foundational teaching of this New Age/New Spirituality:

“God, who is the *ground of all being*, dwells in, around and through all things...” (p. 112)

We will examine the phrase “ground of all being” in more depth in a moment.

Dr. Harry Ironside, pastor of Chicago’s Moody Memorial Church from 1930-1948, emphasized that truth mixed with error results in “all error” – a direct refutation of the Emergent Church teaching to find “truth” wherever it may be found – including in books like *The Shack*:

“Error is like leaven, of which we read, ‘A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump!’ (Galatians 5:9) Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.” (Ironside)

Warren Smith writes, “*The Shack* has touched the hearts and emotions of many people. While there are many examples of the author’s unbiblical liberality, introducing the heretical New Age teaching that ‘God dwells in, and around, and through all things’ is in itself enough to completely undermine any value the book

might otherwise have for faithful believers. To allow yourself to get carried away by this story, while disregarding the book's New Age/New Spirituality leaven, is to fall prey to the 'truth-and-error' mixture that pervades *The Shack*...before Christians buy one more copy of this book, they need to come to terms with what this author is ultimately teaching and what it is they are passing along to their friends and fellow believers." (Smith)

While I am not a fan of the Calvary Chapel Movement, it is interesting to note that when Young was preparing to speak at a Calvary Chapel church in California, Calvary Distribution (the resource and book distributor for the Calvary Chapel Movement) released the following statement (and good for them):

“Due to the popularity of this book and the positive endorsements it has received from the Christian community, we felt that it would be prudent to explain why, as those who hold fast to the word/nature of God as inerrant, we will not be endorsing this book. Some of our concerns include:

- The minimizing of the word of God: *The Shack* errs in the presumption that God desires to be freed from His word as expressed by the characters, yet, the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 138:2 "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name."
- The redefining of the nature of God: the book implies a theology of modalism which is defined as the non Trinitarian belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God, as perceived by the believer, rather than three distinct persons in God Himself.
- The book's conversational tone is intended to catch the reader off guard with overt casualness. There is a personalized-trademarked version of God that requires the least bit of commitment; seeker-friendly experience over truth; an air of anti-authority for the spiritually lazy

consumer. The double-speak and theology that is embedded in this book with its underlying condescension, protesting agenda, and liberal theology are genetic markers of the emergent church.

We recognize the enormous popularity of *The Shack* but are wary of the overlying theological implications and the presentation of the person of God within this book.”

The First Person of Young's Trinity

Young names his “God the Father” character *Elousia*. This appears to be a joining of “El,” the Hebrew name for God the Creator, and “ousia,” Greek for “being” or “existence.” The importance of “creativity” and the verb “to create” will become apparent latter.

Young appears to have borrowed heavily from the writings of theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) when he refers to God as “the Ground of Being.” (p. 112)

Tillich wrote, “God is not a being alongside others or above others but God is Being-itself, or **the Ground of Being.**” (Newport 108) He also wrote, “God is not a being, not even the highest of all beings; he is being itself, or **the ground of being**, the internal power or force that causes everything to exist.” (Erickson 333)

This concept is reminiscent of “the force” in Star Wars and is complementary to the conception of deity amongst devotees of the New Age/New Spirituality movement. Could this be reflected in Jacobsen’s use of the term “Life Stream” for his ministry and “Windblown” for his publishing house?

John Newport also observed that in the “grounding” of God, Tillich “seems to synthesize the pantheistic element of immanence with the theistic element of transcendence in a way that leans toward pantheism.” (Newport 110)

I would argue that Newport was going way too easy on Tillich who, by the end of his life, appears even to the most unscrupulous eye to have completely abandoned any semblance

to historical Christianity, opting instead to be an out-right pantheist.

Pantheism simply refers to the theological notion that God is all and panentheism simply refers to the idea that God is in all. While there is some theological distinction between the two, they essentially go hand-in-hand. God is an impersonal Spirit or “Life Force” - immanent (in all) but not transcendent (above all).

C.S. Lewis expressed the error in the pantheistic idea that God is all when he wrote, “Pantheism is a creed not so much false as hopelessly behind the times. Once, before creation, it would have been true to say that everything was God. But God created: He caused things to be other than Himself that, being distinct, they might learn to love Him, and achieve union instead of mere sameness.” (Lewis 150-151)

Regarding Tillich’s book *Courage to Be*, Erickson writes that it “appears to have more in common with Hinduism than it does with historic Christianity.” (Erickson 334)

This is not surprising since Hinduism is highly characterized by both pantheistic and panentheistic concepts and thought. As you will see, this connection to Eastern mysticism is a recurring theme for Young and reflective of New Age spirituality.

Young clearly presents a Tillich-like idea of deity who describes “herself” as “the ground of being” that dwells “in, around, and through all things...” (p. 112)

This is unmistakably a panentheistic view of God and explains why, toward the end of his life, Tillich no longer prayed; choosing instead to only meditate. To him, there existed no personal, transcendent God to pray to! In his darkened mind, God was purely immanent, the “Ground of Being.” As we will

see, this is directly reflected in both Young's view of the Trinity which is modalistic in nature and his view of Jesus which is overwhelmingly humanistic in its essence.

As Larry DuBruyn has pointed out, Young's Elousia (God the Father) also bears an uncanny resemblance to the ancient understanding of the Black Madonna.

Comparative religion scholars [including (Moss) and (Benko)], especially those with neo-pagan pedigrees, believe The Black Madonnas (the European medieval paintings and sculptures of Mary depicted with dark or black skin) are descendants of the pre-Christian mother or earth goddess. And some, including (McKinney-Johnson) and (Redd), point to **Isis** as the key ancestor-goddess.

The Black Madonna is an important theme in *The Secret Life of Bees* by New Age proponent Sue Monk Kidd (also made into a movie). She inspires spiritual strength in Kidd's female characters and has been connected with "the solidarity of the divine mother with those who are oppressed." (Knight) It is also worth quickly noting that it is apparent, from her comments in her book *First Light*, that she shares the panentheistic view of God as expressed by Young in *The Shack*, writing, "God is the graffiti on the building." (p. 98)

How did Sue Monk Kidd, a Baptist Sunday School teacher become a devout Universalist and outspoken proponent of contemplative spirituality? As a result of a book by Thomas Merton that she received from a "Christian" friend, one that would change her perceptions, world view and belief system. She ultimately arrived at the mystical realization that "I am speaking of recognizing the hidden truth that we are one with all people. We are part of them and they are part of us...When we encounter another person...we should walk as if we were upon

holy ground. We should respond as if God dwells there.” (Yungen 134)

And who was Thomas Merton? Jackie Alnor writes, “...the latest craze in the church today, known as the Emergent Church/Conversation, is bringing a revival of mysticism into Evangelicalism. These EC leaders write books quoting the very mystics like Huxley who in the past sought God in all the wrong places. These books point Christians to the mystical practice of what is called contemplative/centering prayer that was popularized by one of Huxley’s contemporaries, the late Thomas Merton. Merton was a Roman Catholic Trappist monk and an anti-war peace activist during the Vietnam war. He was a prolific writer who coined the term “centering prayer” to describe the style of mind-emptying meditation that seeks to empty oneself and lose oneself into the void he interchangeably calls “the life of the spirit” and Nirvana. He held to the belief that all religions had the same basic truth and Christianity could not lay claim to the whole counsel of God.” (Alnor)

Furthermore, his deep-seated belief in the New Age/New Spirituality, pantheistic notion that we are all inherently divine (gods) is clearly reflected in his statement, “It is a *glorious destiny* to be **a member of the human race**,...now I realize what we all are...If only they [the people] could all see themselves *as they really are*...I suppose the big problem would be that we would **fall down and worship each other**.” (Merton)

The following indictment (I mean statement) is included in his biographical information on the back cover of Merton’s *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*: “Toward the end of his life he [Merton] played a significant role in introducing Eastern religions to the West.”

Kidd's biography (more than likely an auto-biography) on her personal website states, "Sue's first book, *God's Joyful Surprise*, describes the beginnings of her **spiritual search** [into contemplative spirituality]. Her second book, *When the Heart Waits*, reveals a deepening of Sue's voice and recounts her vivid **spiritual transformation** at mid life [both of these first two works were spiritual memoirs describing, in a steadily deepening manner, her experiences in contemplative Christianity]. Turning her explorations to **feminist theology**, she published *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, a memoir that had a groundbreaking effect within religious circles. (About Sue Monk Kidd)

This not only demonstrates the power of books like *The Shack* but also the responsibility we have as children of God to know what we are reading, who wrote it and the background behind it. No one is immune to the threat of apostasy...not even a life-long Baptist Sunday School teacher, wife and mother like Kidd.

In an interview for FaithfulReader.com, Kidd explains, "I've been compelled to write about the workings of my soul, to record my ponderings about God and my search for meaning in things great and miniscule. 'I cannot see my soul, but know 'tis there,' wrote Emily Dickinson. Some part of me has always felt the truth of that, has experienced moments of quickening when the knowledge of a mysterious, unseen inner life flames up. **Meister Eckhart**, a theologian from centuries back, called this combustion the 'god-spark.' **Thomas Merton**, the well-known Trappist monk, referred to God's presence in the soul as the *point vierge*. This French phrase refers to the 'virgin point' that comes just before dawn --- those ripening moments before the first ray of light flares into the darkness. Whatever name we give this hidden incandescence, this 'Firstlight,' I believe it exists in all of us." (Kidd, Author Talk)

Who was Meister Eckhart whom Kidd so reverently quotes? He was a German theologian, philosopher and mystic who is regarded by many as one of the most influential 14th century Christian Neoplatonists who wrote extensively on metaphysics and spiritual psychology. There are a great many parallels between Eckhart and Buddhism, including his soteriology (beliefs on salvation).

Arthur Schopenhauer (a German philosopher), in his most influential work *The World as Will and Representation*⁴, wrote of Eckhart, “If we turn from the forms, produced by external circumstances, and go to the root of things, we shall find that Sakyamuni [founder of Buddhism] and Meister Eckhart **teach the same thing**; only the former dared to express his ideas plainly and positively, whereas Eckhart is obliged to **clothe them in the garment of the Christian myth**, and to adapt his expressions thereto.” (Schopenhauer)

Explaining the role of the Black Madonna in her novel, Kidd herself writes:

“For a lot of years, I explored archetypal feminine images and stories from different cultures and religions, and particularly what happens to women when connections with these images are missing or devalued. One thing that became clear to me is that images of a divine mother are surprisingly important in the psychological wholeness of women, especially in the process of women taking up residence in their own authority. It was through this study that I became intrigued with the ways that [the Black Madonna] has quietly, even subversively, functioned as the feminine

⁴ Alternately translated in English as *The World as Will and Idea*. Original German is *De Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.

dimension of God in much of western religion. I read an essay by author Kathleen Norris in which she made the amazing statement that [the Black Madonna] is particularly suited to post-modernism.

As I began the novel, I wanted the driving impetus in Lily's life to be the search for home and for her mother. But clearly in the back of mind, I knew there was a less tangible, more symbolic search for home and mother that needed to take place: a coming *home* to herself and the discovery of the mother within. I knew Lily would have to find an undreamed of strength, and that she would do it the same way the powerful black women around her did it – through the empowerment of a divine feminine presence, in this case a Black [Madonna].

I first became aware of the Black Madonna in my late thirties through the writings of Jungian analyst, Marion Woodman. It was a revelation to me that hundreds of very old Black Madonnas exist in Europe and elsewhere, and that their darkness is a legacy of ancient black goddesses. I think of the Black Madonna as the White Madonna *before* the church scrubbed the really interesting stuff out of her. I began to study the Black Madonna, and to travel to her pilgrimage sites, especially in France. I discovered that many of her stories and history reveal a Mary who is openly defiant in the face of oppression. In Poland, South and Central America, and other places, she has been a symbol of revolution. I decided I would create a Black Madonna for the novel, who had existed during slavery in the South, and that she would be a symbol of freedom and consolation.” (Kidd)

Sue Monk Kidd acknowledges having been impacted and influenced by Henry David Thoreau (a transcendentalist and naturalist who was one of the first American proponents of Darwinism and is considered to be one of the sources of today's environmentalist movement), Kate Chaplin (a forerunner to today's feminist authors), Thomas Merton (already mentioned above – proponent for interfaith understanding), Martha Burke (an American political psychologist and feminine activist who received notoriety for attacking the PGA's Masters Tournament for allowing it to be hosted at the male-only Augusta National Golf Club and served as past Chair for the National Council of Women's Organizations) and Carl Jung (psychiatrist and pioneer in dream analysis who spent extensive time exploring Eastern philosophy, alchemy and astrology and originally proposed the concept of "collective unconscious").

She has been favorably quoted by David Jeremiah (Turning Point ministry) in his book, *Life Wide Open: Unleashing the Power of a Passionate Life*, which he also declares in the introduction, "A Small handful among us have discovered what the rest of us would pay dearly to know: How can we bring real, living excitement into this life?...This book is a map to the life of passion and purpose, the life wide open..."

Who are these small "handful" of *enlightened* ones?

Well, in his book, Jeremiah favorable quotes from Rick Warren (*Purpose Driven Life*), contemplative, feminine spiritualist Sue Monk Kidd, contemplative spiritualist Calvin Miller (*Into the Depths of God*), Buddhist sympathizer Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*), emerging church leader Erwin McManus, contemplative spiritualist Michael Card, contemplative spiritualist Brother Lawrence (*Practicing the Presence of God*),

Christian mystic Saint John of the Cross (we'll talk about him later), Eugene Peterson (*The Message*) and mystic Jim Collins.

It is also interesting to note that her main character in *The Secret Life of Bees* is a 14-year-old girl named Lily (also the name of Kidd's dog). Could this be a reference to Lilith who, according to Jewish folklore and mythology (and found in the *Zohar*), was Adam's first wife (prior to Eve) who refused to be subservient to him? The Semitic root in Hebrew means "night" and is a recurring theme as we will see.

Furthermore, many trace the origins of this demonic woman to Babylonian demonology, specifically male and female evil spirits named Lilu and Lilithu.

Lilith also appears as a succubae, a female demon who seduces men, in Aleister Crowley's *De Arte Magica*. Lilith is also called the Isheth Zenunim (Woman of Harlotry) in Jewish folklore and some Biblical scholars relate her to the female form of the arch-demon Leviathan and the "Great Whore of Babylon" in Revelation.

What is clear is that she has become a symbol of female empowerment just like the Black Madonna. Deborah J. Grenn, in a paper on feminist theology that was published in *Feminist Theology*, wrote, "This paper offers a reinterpretation of the divine as embodied by the Semitic goddess Lilith, she who has been represented and misrepresented in a variety of sacred texts. Working with Lilith as both symbol and archetype, I will analyze texts in which she appears, tracing her historical development and metamorphosis from goddess to demon to symbol of independence and open sexuality. As part of this analysis, I will discuss how Lilith's demonization was designed to keep women alienated from their own 'original sources' of power and spiritual authority." (Grenn 36)

This is certainly right-up Kidd's alley and, just think, *The Secret Life of Bees* is now taught in high school classrooms across our country.

Getting back to the discussion of Isis [the Black Madonna], all of Egypt's mystery religion can be traced back to Babylon, Nimrod and the Babylonian mystery religion.

"The Babylonians, in their popular religion, supremely worshipped a Goddess Mother [Ishtar or Semiramis] and a Son [Tammuz], who were represented in pictures and in images as an **infant or child in his mother's arms** [sound like *The Shack*?]...From Babylon, this worship of the Mother and the Child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, the Mother and the Child were worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris [Osiris, the child, is most commonly called Horus]...It was to glorify Nimrod that the whole Chaldean system of iniquity was formed. He was known as Nin, 'the son,' and his wife Rhea, who was called Ammas, 'the Mother.' The name Rhea, as applied to Semiramis, had another meaning from what it had when applied to her, who was really the primeval goddess, the 'mother of gods and men.'" (Hislop 20)

The Bible not only identifies the origins of the Babylonian system upon which the Egyptian mystery religion is based, but it describes its demonic nature and catastrophic end. (Jeremiah 50-51, 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 17-18)

It appears there are many parallels between *The Shack* and the Black Madonna.⁵ And when examining this apparent link, who better to quote than Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox, a prominent New Age/New Spirituality guru and expert on the Black Madonna.

⁵ Larry DeBruyn, to my knowledge, was the first to identify these parallels in his article *THE SHACK, "Elousia" & the Black Madonna*, first published on his blog Herescope in July of 2008.

Fox, an excommunicated Catholic priest and panentheist, writes, “Today the Black Madonna is returning. She is coming, not going, and she is calling us to something new (and very ancient as well)... The Black Madonna archetype awakens in us and... she is so important for the twenty-first century... The Black Madonna invites us into the dark and therefore into our depths. This is what the mystics call the ‘inside’ of things, the essence of things. This is where Divinity lies. It is where the true self lies... Because she is a goddess, the Black Madonna resides in all beings. She is the divine presence inside of creation.” (Fox)

Parallel #1 - Darkness

Fox states, “The Black Madonna invites us into the dark and therefore into our depths. This is what the mystics call the ‘inside’ of things, the essence of things. This is where Divinity lies. It is where the true self lies. It is where illusions are broken apart and the truth lies.” (Fox)

The word “darkness” occurs habitually in *The Shack*...as though darkness is the archetypal to Mack’s Great Sadness.

This is especially noticeable in his appearance before “Sophia” (Chapter “Here Come Da Judge”) where darkness is the dominant theme and aura surrounding the whole experience.

“...with his hands outstretched in front of him, he ventured a couple of steps into the inky darkness and stopped.” (p. 151)

Young heaps up doses of literary excess to amplify the image of this darkness: “deep shadows,” “inky blackness,” “dim light,” and “darkened room.”

Furthermore, Fox teaches that the Black Madonna [Isis] “invites us to enter into our grief and name it and be there to learn what suffering has to teach us.” (Fox)

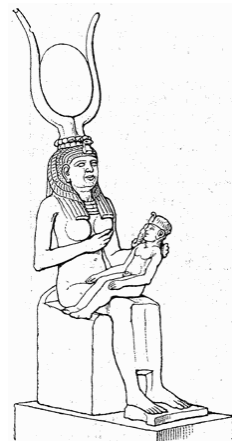
By entering the darkness, Young writes that Mack deals with his sadness.

However, **Scripture declares:** “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:5-7

Parallel #2 – Dark Night of the Soul

Fox writes, “The Black Madonna calls us to Grieve. The Black Madonna is the sorrowful mother, the mother who weeps tears for the suffering in the universe, the suffering in the world, the brokenness of our very vulnerable hearts.” He then goes on to write, “To grieve is to enter what John of the Cross in the sixteenth century called the ‘dark night of the soul.’ We are instructed not to run from this dark night but to stay there to learn what darkness has to teach us.” (Fox)

At the climactic moment where “Papa” (AKA “Elousia,” the Black Madonna, Isis) enfolds Mack into his/her arms and gently invites him to “Let it all out,” the story records that in that moment of emotional catharsis, Mack “closed his eyes as the tears poured out...He wept until he had cried out all the darkness, all the longing and all the loss, until there was nothing left.” (p. 226)



Common depiction of Egyptian Goddess Isis embracing her son Osiris in her arms

Just for the sake of a greater background knowledge, Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) was a major figure in the counter-

reformation and a Spanish mystic. The counter-reformation was a move by the Catholic Church to counter the advances made by the Reformers: *sola Scriptura* (Primacy of Scripture), *sola fide* (Justification by Faith Alone) and *sola gratia* (Justification by Grace Alone). This should be a clue right out of the gate that this John wasn't such a great guy!

Both his poetry and studies about the growth of the soul are considered the height (best-of-the-best) of mystic Spanish literature. One of his most popular poems was *Dark Night of the Soul*. Within it, John of the Cross narrates the mystical journey of the soul from body to union with "God."

The poem is a two-book work with the first book describing the "purification of the senses" and the second book describing the "purification of the spirit." In the second book, John of the Cross describes the 10 steps on the ladder of mystical love.

Now, in the Buddhist *vipassana* meditation, the practitioner passes through "Sixteen Stages of Insight" or *nanas* on their journey to Awakening. And wow, western Buddhist meditators and teachers, like Jack Engler, regularly compare this experience to that of St. John of the Cross' *Dark Night of the Soul*.

Furthermore, many see the *Dark Night of the Soul* as being reflective (or a type) of a common mystical stage or state, independent of a specific belief system. In other words, unlike Young's implied claim, this whole grieving in the dark (while being cuddled in the arms of Isis) process has absolutely nothing to do with biblical Christianity and everything to do with an overarching New Age spirituality based upon ancient mysticism.

Many "enlightened" ones use the term "map" to describe the sequence of mental states needed to achieve this out-of-body

“awakening.” And guess what! They consider the *Dark Night of the Soul* to be a “Christian” example of one!

Buddhist author and teacher, Daniel Ingram, writes, “The Christian maps [i.e. *Dark Night of the Soul*], the Sufi maps, the Buddhist maps of the Tibetans and the Theravada, and the maps of the Khabbalists and Hindus are all remarkably consistent in their fundamentals...These maps, Buddhist or otherwise, are talking about something inherent in how our minds progress in fundamental wisdom that has little to do with any tradition and lots to do with the mysteries of the human mind and body.” (Ingram)

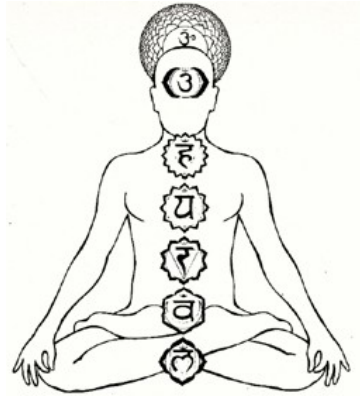
Parallel #3 – Kondulini Experience

Fox explains, “The Black Madonna calls us down to honor our lower charkas [sic]...The Black Madonna takes us down, down, down to the first charkas [sic] including our relationship to the whole (first chackra [sic], as I have explained elsewhere is about picking up the vibrations for sound from the whole cosmos), our sexuality (second chakra) and our anger and moral outrage (third chakra). European culture in the modern era especially has tried to flee from all these elements...in religion...The Black Madonna will not tolerate such flights from the earth, flights from the depths.” (Fox)

Now to those not acquainted with eastern religion, this admittedly sounds very hokey-pokey and like mumbo-jumbo. However, Yoga teaches that chakras are “vortices that penetrate the body and the body’s aura, through which various energies, including the universal life force [AKA “Ground of Being”], are received, transformed, and distributed.” (Guiley 86)

There are believed to be seven points (chakras) of entry for the energy, including:

- “The root (muladhara) [which] is located at the base of the spine and is the seat of Kundalini...”
- “The sacral (suadhisthana) [which] lies near the genitals and governs sexuality...”
- “The crown (sahasrana) [which] whirls just above the top of the head.” (Guiley 86-87) [compare this with Dan Brown’s mystically tattooed villain⁶]



The experience of the entrance of this energy into the body, which can happen spontaneously, is called *Kundalini* (Sanskrit for “snake” or “serpent power”).



Ouroboros engraving by Lucas Jennis in an alchemical emblem-book entitled *Lapide Philosophico* (1625)



Ouroboros drawing by Theodoros Pelecanos in an alchemical tract entitled *Synosius* (1478)

Ouroboros symbolism has been used to describe Kundalini energy. According to the second century *Upanishad*, Hindu religious texts, "The divine power, Kundalini, shines like the

⁶ The Lost Symbol, page 268.

stem of a young lotus; like a snake, **coiled round upon herself she holds her tail in her mouth** and lies resting half asleep as the base of the body" (1.82). This is the same image that Dan Brown's villain has tattooed around his *sahasrana* chakra (crown of his skull) in *The Lost Symbol*.

Kundalini describes the mystical experience that occurs when energy enters the body and arouses the "sleeping serpent" believed to lie coiled within the body.

This transient moment of arousal is defined to include: "physical sensations, clairaudience, visions, brilliant lights, ecstasy, bliss, and transcendence of self." (Guiley, Kundalini 319)

With all this in mind, let's look to see if Mack experienced Kundalini in *The Shack*...

Upon hearing the sensual Sophia ask him, during his journey into the darkness, "Do you understand why you're here?" Young writes that, "Mack could almost feel her words [clairaudience] rain down on his forehead [chakra] and melt into his spine [chakra], sending delicious tingles everywhere [ecstasy]. He shivered [physical sensation] and decided that he never wanted to speak again [transcendence of self]. He only wanted her to talk [bliss]..." (p. 153)

You be the judge. But if this was a Kundalini experience...it was spontaneous, in the darkness and via the voice of the goddess-like Sophia.

Parallel #4 – Imagination, Creativity and Diversity Oh My! [AKA Magical Consciousness]

Fox teaches that, "The Black Madonna calls us to our Divinity which is also our **Creativity**... [The Black Madonna] expects nothing less from us than **creativity**. Hers is a call to **create**, a

call to ignite the **imagination**...The Black Madonna calls us to **Diversity**. There is no **imagination** without **diversity** – **imagination** is about inviting **disparate elements** into soul and cultures so that new combinations can make love together and new beings can be **birthed**.”

First, we are not divine [gods] and, second, the call to diversity is the call to an all-inclusive New World Religion.

Scripture Declares: “You are salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16

Scripture Declares: “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” James 4:4

Scripture Declares: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult [confined] is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

God is unmistakably clear that the road to hell is paved by the call to diversity!

Furthermore, we will see (a little later) the significance of the emphatic call to “create” that permeates the New Age spirituality.

When goddess-like Sophia calls upon Mack to role-play as The Judge, she notes his pensiveness about assuming such an awesome responsibility and says, “Your **imagination**...is not serving you well at this moment.” (p. 100)

Furthermore, in the Front Matter of the book, Greg Abrecht informs the potential reader that, “You will be captivated by the **creativity** and **imagination** of the Shack, and before you know it, you’ll be experiencing God as never before.” Trust me...You don’t want to ever experience “God” like this...don’t walk - *run from the darkness!*

Other parallels between the Black Madonna and The Shack’s Elousia include: gender diversity, nurturing of hurting hearts, emphasis on developing personal relationships and concern for the environment.

These parallels provide the reader with powerful, archetypical metaphors through which the mystery of life and suffering can be explored and upon which transcendent values can be formulated and applied for social welfare and the unity of the world’s diverse and divided population. These ecumenical metaphors are increasingly pushing their way into the evangelical church, especially via the Emergent Church and Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Heresy*.

Finally, the feminization of deity extends back to the foundations of human history to Nimrod himself. As noted, the Egyptian goddess Isis, in whom Fox finds his precedence for the return of the Black Madonna, was derived from the Babylonian goddess Ishtar (Semiramis). Ishtar was the source of all female deities of ancient Middle Eastern religion, including the idolatrous “queen of heaven” worshipped by the men and women of Israel (Jeremiah 7:18-20; 44:15-30).

The Black Madonna and “Elousia” find themselves in the company of an idol goddess that God Himself could not, and did not, tolerate before His face. (Exodus 20:3-5).

Furthermore, Elousia tells Mack “For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest that you call me Papa is simply to mix metaphors, to help keep you from falling back so easily into your religious conditioning.” (p. 93)

Religious traditions and conditioning are, in fact, quite distinct from Scriptural doctrines, and it is clearly the latter that Young wishes his readers to avoid believing.

The Second Person of Young's Trinity

Young leaves the door wide open for the possibility that “Jesus” originated from the “Papa-mama.”

The Shack's Jesus states to Mack, “We created a circle of relationship, like our own, but for humans. She out of him, and now all males, *including me*, birthed through her (Eve), and **all** originating *from* God.” (p. 148) Even if Young is referring to Christ's human birth (Incarnation) through Mary, the Son of God did not originate from God – He *is* fully God and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit.

This idea also seems to minimize the incarnation by propagating the idea that Christ's birth was as mundane as the rest of humanity's, thus calling into question His being the “only begotten of the Father” (meaning unique, or one-of-a-kind, John 1:14, 3:16). Theologically, this also casts doubt on His eternal generation (existence).

Scripture declare: “In the beginning was the Word [Second Member of the Godhead], and the Word [Second Member of the Godhead] was with God, and the Word [Second Member of the Godhead] was God. He [Second Member of the Godhead] was in the beginning with God...And the Word [Second Member of the Godhead] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory [the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Second Member of the Godhead], the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-2, 14

Jesus Christ of the Bible (fully man and fully God) is revealed as:

- **Creator** (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17)

- **Supreme Ruler:** The Father's will is that Jesus Christ shall rule the world with all power and authority and that every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord and every knee shall bow (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:15-16). He is sovereign over the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), sovereign over the world, over Israel and over the church (Ephesians 1:20-21), and is the Supreme Judge of all men (John 5:27).
- **The Incarnate Word** – the physical embodiment of what God is and a revelation of the nature and being of God. It is through His Son, Jesus Christ, that God reveals Himself to man (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:3).
- **Savior** (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53:4-6; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 1:5; and is the only Savior Acts 4:12)

Young's view of the Second Member of the Godhead is radically different because he sees "Jesus" and the concept of the "Christ" as two entirely separate things. "Jesus" was simply the human vessel in which and through which "Christ" the overarching Great Spirit chose to manifest Himself. "Jesus" was our example of a divinized, spirit-filled man...as we all can become. But, we'll see more on that later.

The Third Person of Young's Trinity

Mack asks the Shack's Jesus, "Speaking of Sarayu, is she the Holy Spirit?"

Jesus answers, "Yes, She is Creativity [Note that first and foremost again is the concept of creativity and then action (verbs)]; she is Action; she is Breathing of Life; she is much much more. She is my Spirit."

Mack then asks, "And her name is Sarayu?" To which Jesus explains, "That is a simple name from one of our human languages. It means 'wind,' a common wind actually. She loves that name." (p. 110)

Sarayu is most likely Sanskrit – the language that is the most important religious and literary language of India and Hinduism.

It seems to be an allusion to the *Rigveda* for it bears a phonetic and semantic resemblance to Vayu. The *Rigveda* is a collection of ancient, Indic hymns and is counted among the four canonical sacred texts of the Hindus, known as the *Vedas*.

Sarayu is a feminine derivative of the Sanskrit masculine stem *sar*, meaning to "flow," and means "air" or "wind" (i.e. that which is flowing). I think the striking similarity between "Sarayu" and both "Life Stream" (the name of Jacobsen's ministry) and "Windblown" (the name of his publishing company) is more than simply an odd coincidence.

It is also the name of a sacred river in India that bears ancient significance, finding mentions in the *Vedas* and *Ramayana*.

On Ram Navami, the festival that celebrates the birthday of Lord Rama, thousands of people take a dip in the sacred river of Sarayu.

In *Ramayana* 1.5.6, the Sarayu flowed beside the ancient city of Ayodhya. According to the great Sanskrit epic *Ramayana*, this is the site where Rama, the 7th Avatara of Vishnu in Hinduism, immersed himself to return to his eternal, real Mahavishnu form – a form of false baptism, a satanic counterfeit.

King Rama was also born on the banks of the Sarayu and it was also called the only river flowing beneath the earth.

Within Hinduism, Rama is referred to as *Maryada Purushottama*; literally “the Perfect Man” or “Lord of Self Control” or “Lord of Virtue.” Again, a counterfeit of Christ.

According to Hindu beliefs, Rama returns to Ayodhya (the capital of his kingdom) to be crowned king (eventually becoming emperor) and reigns for 11,000 years – an era of perfect happiness, peace, prosperity and justice known as *Ramarajya*. A clear counterfeit of Christ’s future earthly reign.

Rama comes from the feminine (Hinduism, as with all mystical religions, loves the feminine) form of the adjective *rami* and is an epithet of the night (*Ratri*).

Again, notice the theme of darkness in mysticism. Remember, Krishna (of Hare Krishna fame – a movement to spread the Krishna-bhakti system of Hindu beliefs outside of India, beginning in 1966) is the (you guessed it) feminine form of *Krsna* meaning “the dark one” or “the black one.”

This is a Hindu deity worshipped by Hindus. While many recognize Krishna as an avatar of Vishnu, other traditions

consider him to be the *svayam bhagavan*, or Supreme Being [AKA Elousia, AKA the Black Madonna].

Interestingly, Krishna is the 57th name in the *Vishnu Sahasranama* and means the “Existence of **Bliss**” – a manifestation of a kundalini experience.

The Hare Krishna mantra is composed of three Sanskrit names: Hare, Krishna and Rama. Hare refers to “the energy of God.” Krishna and Rama refer to “God Himself.” Together, they mean “the Black One who is All Attractive” or “The Black One who is the Source of All Pleasure.” Sensing a theme here?

“When the sixteen names and thirty-two syllables of the Hare Krishna mantra are loudly vibrated, Krishna dances on one’s tongue.” (Stava 17:30) Sound familiar? Like a kundalini experience?

By naming the Spirit with an Indic religious term for “wind” (and a name with close ties to a well-established history of mysticism and false religion), Young is clearly making an overture to eastern religion and mysticism. It may not be common knowledge for the average Christian but, rest assured, New Age/New Spirituality teachers and proponents spend a great deal of time studying their craft and know all this very well.

Furthermore, though it fits happily within feminist theology, the impersonation of the Holy Spirit as female directly contradicts Jesus clear statement that the Spirit is neither an “it” (He is a person, not a “force”) nor a “she” but, rather, is a “He”:

Scripture declares: “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take

of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-15)

Nowhere in the entire Bible is there one single reference to Father, Son or Holy Spirit – nor to any of His angels – as being female. It is unwise to go beyond that which has been clearly presented in Scripture.

Furthermore, nowhere in the entire Bible do we find either God the Father or God the Holy Spirit taking on physical forms. Only Jesus Christ did this – taking on the form of a physical, human body. And, not only is no mention ever made of this, Jesus clearly states (John 1:18; 5:37) that no one except Himself has seen the Father – and God clearly wanted it that way! (see Exodus 19)

In contrast to Young’s view of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are clear that He is not some neutered, spiritual “force.” Rather, He is just as much a person as God the Father and God the Son. This truth, that He is also fully divine and personal in nature, is demonstrated throughout the Scriptures:

- The Holy Spirit performs acts that only a “person” would do: reproves the world (John 16:8), teaches (John 14:26), speaks (Galatians 4:6), intercedes (Romans 8:26), leads (Galatians 5:18), appoints (Acts 13:2), is Himself appointed (John 15:26), and ministers by regenerating, sealing and baptizing (John 3:6; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 12:13)
- The Holy Spirit is affected as a “person” by persons: the Father sends Him (John 16:7), He can be vexed (Isaiah 63:10), He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), He may be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), He can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31), He may be lied to (Acts 5:3), He may

be disrespected (Hebrews 10:29), and He can be spoken against (Matthew 12:32).

- The Holy Spirit is related to as a personality: He is called “another Comfortor” – implying He is as much a person as Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:7; 1 John 2:1-2), He is called a Spirit in the same personal sense as God the Father (John 4:24), and despite “spirit” being a neuter noun in the Greek, a masculine form of the pronoun is frequently used (John 14:16-17; 16:7-15).
- The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and Son: He is called God, has the attributes of God, performs the work of God, and is presented as a personal object of faith as God.

A Fourth Person in Young's Trinity?

Though portrayed as separate from the Trinity, Young's character Sophia, who represents Wisdom (the highest aim and most prized possession in mysticism), is none-the-less portrayed as being very close. She is a divine-like lady-judge who is wise in all the ways of "Papa" and in how he conducts his/her affairs. As revealed in her exchanges with Mack, she clearly possesses clairvoyant, if not actual omniscient, perception – a divine attribute. (p. 156, 160)

Larry DeBruyn writes, "*The Shack*, under the cover of biblical allusion, presents a god which may be likened to a deity of eastern mythology and mysticism. The reader ought to beware lest biblical allusion be used to peddle theological illusion. But you ask, 'How can that happen?' How can Scriptural allusion promote spiritual delusion? I would point out that Satan used biblical allusion to tempt Jesus. In the second phase of the temptation of Christ, Satan alluded to Psalm 91:11-12, to which Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 [reinforcing the primacy of Scripture I might add], 'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' (see Matthew 4:5-6). Presenting a potpourri of spirituality combining biblical allusion with mystical illusion and myths logical delusion, *The Shack* will surely resonate with an Emergent Christian mindset that attempts to flirt with the New Age/New Spirituality of postmodernism. The fact that the novel is fiction makes no difference – it communicates wrong ideas about God." (DeBruyn)

A.W. Tozer wrote:

“Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are

themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.

Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards decline along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.

Before the Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, ‘What is God like?’ and goes on from there. Though she may continue to cling to a sound nominal creed, her practical working creed has become false. The masses of her adherents come to believe that God is different from what He actually is, and that is heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind.” (Tozer 9)

Scripture declares: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity [purity] that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.” 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

Young's Salvation

Elousia informs Mack, “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring people from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my joy to cure it.” (p. 120)

This **contradicts** Romans 1:18, 2:2-10: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil...but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good...”

This **contradicts** Revelation 19:15: “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

This **contradicts** Revelation 20:11-15: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the

heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

This **contradicts** 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10: “Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation [affliction] those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angles, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”

This false teaching also **contradicts** Scripture’s statement about the future bestowment of rewards (based upon judgment) to Christians by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:9).

This false teaching also **contradicts** Scripture’s statements about temporal punishment as well (Hebrews 12:6-7; Revelation 3:19).

This is just a sampling but there are literally hundreds of verses of Scripture that refute this claim by Young.

What Young argues for in *The Shack* is what is known as **Universal Reconciliation** (UR) – a belief that Jesus’ sacrifice or

God's overriding-love allows Christians *and* non-Christians alike to spend eternity with God.

In UR theology, there is no judgment. Everybody goes to heaven – not just the followers of Christ. Some in this theological camp even subscribe to the notion that this includes Satan and his demons.

Young conducted a lecture at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, on June 25, 2010, entitled “Can God Really Be That Good?” During his lecture, he told the audience, “The God of evangelical Christianity is a monster.” He was referring to the belief that God is a God of judgment and will judge the unbelieving.

He also rejects the biblical view of atonement (wherein Jesus died as a substitute for us to pay the price for our sin). (Young)

Young's rejection of biblical atonement echoes the sentiments of William Shannon and Brennan Manning who both believe and teach that the God who punishes His own Son to pay for the sins of others does not exist: “This is a typical patriarchal notion of God. He is the God of Noah who sees people deep in sin, repents that He made them and resolves to destroy them. He is the God of the desert who sends snakes to bite His people because they murmured against Him. He is the God of David who practically decimates a people....He is the God who exacts the last drop of blood from His Son, so that His just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased. This God whose moods alter between graciousness and fierce anger – a God who is still all too familiar to many Christians – is a caricature of the true God. **This God does not exist.**” (Shannon 109, 110) Brennan Manning wrote the very same thing in his book *Above All* (pp. 58-59) and recommended Shannon's book in a 1997 interview for *Discipleship Journal* (Issue 100, p.78).

And remember, according to Jacobsen's own website, Manning is one of the elite authors who have impacted his spiritual journey the most!

Maybe Young and his band of merry heretics need to read the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the church at Rome – not the kinder, gentler “New Age” paraphrase, but an accurate translation! Paul is pretty clear about the reasons for, basis of, impartiality of, and results of God's judgment and wrath. Despite Shannon and Manning's best attempts at imagining away the true God, He still exists and they will face Him one day as their judge!

Wayne Jacobsen (editor/publisher of *The Shack*) acknowledged that UR theology was included in some “earlier” versions of *The Shack*: “While some of that was in earlier versions because of the author's partiality at the time to some aspects of what people *call* UR, **I made it clear at the outset that I didn't embrace UR and didn't want to be part of a project that promoted it.**”

Jacobsen is a liar! Jacobsen specifically lists Brennan Manning's book, *Abba's Child*, as one of his Top 10 “must read” books that “most shaped” his spiritual journey! And one of those is *The Shack* so it's really his Top 9! He even writes, “He [Manning] has many excellent books, but this is one of my favorites.” And also provides links to two other Manning books.

Now, this is the same Manning who favorably quotes Matthew Fox (the expert on the Black Madonna and founder of Creation Spirituality) in not one but two of his books: *Lion and Lamb* (p. 135) and *A Stranger to Self Hatred* (p. 113, 124). Fox also, in addition to calling on the return of the Black Madonna, is a contemplative Universalist who has stated, “Remember that 15 billion years of the universe loved you and brought you forward. And it loved you unconditionally...We were loved before the

beginning...God is a great underground river, and there are many wells into that river. There's a Taoist well, a Buddhist well, a Jewish well, a Muslim well, a Christian well, a Goddess well, the Native wells-many wells that humans have dug to get into that river, but friends, there's only one river; the living waters of wisdom.”

Fox, not surprisingly, was highly influenced by Merton and “believes that the ‘second coming’ of the Cosmic Christ, an awakening to mysticism, will usher in a global renaissance that can heal Mother Earth and save her by changing human hearts and ways.” (Caddock)

In Shack-like fashion, Manning also writes in his *The Signature of Jesus*, in a chapter entitled “Celebrate the Darkness,” that “the ego has to break; and this breaking is like entering into a great darkness. Without such a struggle and affliction, there can be no movement in love...With the ego purged and the heart purified through the trials of the dark night, the interior life of an authentic disciple is a hidden, invisible affair. Today it appears that God is calling many ordinary Christians into this rhythm of loss and gain. The hunger I encounter across the land for silence, solitude, and centering prayer is the Spirit of Christ calling us from the shallows to the deep.” (Manning 145, 149)

Not to mention, Jacobsen spent 16 months editing *The Shack* and the UR message still reverberates through its pages loud and clear!

And, for the sake of debate, why on earth would Jacobsen collaborate with a UR author if he “didn’t embrace UR” and “didn’t want to be part of project that promoted it?”

Jacobsen replies, “To me that was the beauty of the collaboration...the author would say that some of that dialogue

significantly affected his views...Holding him to the conclusion he may have embraced years earlier would be unfair to the **ongoing process of God in his life and theology.**”

Really? Well that UR theology “embraced years earlier” is still very, very apparent...

Early in *The Shack*, Mack’s daughter asks if the Great Spirit, the Native American god, is another name for the Father of Jesus. Mack’s response...yes!

He may as well have told her that Allah or Rama or Isis or any other false god is also the Father of Jesus. After all, if everybody is going to heaven, as UR believes, what does it matter?

And why did she ask this question? It was as a direct result of Mack presenting a story of an Indian princess sacrificing herself for her people.

When his daughter calls the Great Spirit “mean” for forcing both Jesus and this princess to die, Mack (Young) never clarifies that Jesus’ Father is not the Great Spirit nor does God the Father have anything to do with this pagan legend. The silence is deafening.

Does Young still have UR beliefs? Consider his own words in an article he wrote, entitled “The Beauty of Ambiguity.” In this article, Young himself speaks to the Father-goddess, saying, “Faith in Jesus is the only way into your embrace.” To which she responds, “I take it that it wouldn’t bother you if I decided to save every human being that ever lived?” Young answers, “Nope. I actually hope you’ve figured a way to do just that.” (Young, *The Beauty of Ambiguity* (Mystery))

Hold the phone! If Young is still hoping that God “somehow” finds a way to save everybody, then that is Universal Reconciliation! And hoping UR might happen negates the Cross

and denies the very plan of salvation that God and His Son designed before the foundation of this very world.

The Shack's Jesus says, "Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims...I have no desire to make them Christian, but I want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters." (p. 182)

So, let me get this straight...**Christ** has no intention of making them "*Christ-like?*" That is pure folly. But I guess while we are throwing out the biblical concept of justification we might as well throw out sanctification as well!

This is eerily similar to *A Course in Miracles* which is now being widely promoted through Oprah Winfrey's radio program. In this work, "dictated" to channeler Helen Schucman in 1977 by her spirit guide who claimed to be "Jesus," Schucman states, "The esoteric spiritual traditions – whether Christian mystics, Hebrew Kabbalists, Zen Buddhists, Islamic Sufis, or Hinu yogis – all have specific practices to help individuals overcome this great '**illusion of separation**' and to experience the **One True Self, which is in us all.**" (p. 149)

Scripture declares: "And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" Matthew 24:4-5

Evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch writes, "In much modern philosophy and theology the biblical view of God has been supplanted by an all-embracing Absolute Spirit (as in monistic idealism and mysticism) or a Life-force or Creative Process in the world (as in naturalism). For Hegel the Absolute is both the **ground** and the culmination of the infinite forward surge that is

world history. ‘Without the world,’ he says frankly, ‘God were not God.’” (Bloesch 44)

He goes on to write, “In Schleiermacher the Divine is the **ground** of all finite meaning and comes to self-consciousness in human nature. For him the Father refers to the unity of the Divine Essence and not to one of the supposed distinctions in it. God’s omnipotence is defined in terms of his omni causality. Both Schleiermacher and Ritschl disclaimed the idea of the wrath of God and thereby lost sight of the biblical vision of a holy God who judges and condemns as well as creates and saves.” (Bloesch 44)

Not surprisingly, Paul Tillich, who leaned heavily on both Schleiermacher and Hegel, as well as on the neo-Platonic tradition in Christian mysticism, posits a “God above God” who transcends the God of theism. This deity, which is described as the infinite depth and **ground of all being**, incorporates the personal element but is himself not a Person. (Tillich 186) And remember, Young leans heavily on Tillich.

The Shack simply carries out the New Age mandate proclaimed in *Well-Being Journal* back in 1992: “Many people believe in evil, sin and dark forces. It is your purpose to teach the opposite which is the Truth: there is no devil, no hell, no sin, and no guilt except in the creative mind of humankind.”⁷

Berit Kjos responds, “*The Shack* calls for a similar denial of reality. Yet countless pastors and church leaders are delighted in its message. By ignoring (or redefining) sin and guilt, they embrace an inclusive but counterfeit “Christianity” that draws

⁷ This was a free New Age publication distributed in health food stores. The original source text itself has been lost (circulated in 1992) but its veracity can be fairly well established by the vast number of times and places it has been quoted – all which relate the same exact statement.

crowds but distorts the Bible. Discounting Satan as well, they weaken God's warnings about deception. No wonder His armor for today's spiritual war became an early victim of this spreading assault on Truth." (Kjos)

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:11-17

As with *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM), Young believes the only sin-like issue facing man is what ACIM calls "separateness" – a refusal to accept universal oneness with God.

Unhindered by such ridiculous notions as biblical guidelines, *The Shack* offers absolutely no standard for right or wrong, so there is no real need for biblical repentance or guilt.

This, of course, fits right into the popular vision of an ecumenical, unifying, non-judgmental church!

And how does one become part of this new church? The Shack's Jesus tells Mack, "It's simple. It's all about relationships and simply sharing life...being open and available to others around us. My church is all about people, and life is all about relationships." (p. 178)

Kjos insightfully responds, “That sounds partly true, as do most spiritual lies! For example, Jesus criticized the Pharisees who ‘searched the Scriptures’ but refused to ‘come’ to Him. Today’s postmodern seekers are just as foolish. They ignore unwanted Scripture, and then flock to the culturally attuned ‘Jesus’ of their imagination.” (Kjos)

What Young and all those involved in the New Age/New Spirituality movement are calling for is “spiritual” relationships without a stabilizing foundation of biblical doctrine. Devoid of doctrinal underpinnings, relationships lack order and functionality – but this is ecumenicalism at its best...spiritual anarchy! A new world religion in which whatever a man (god) determines for himself - that it shall be.

And what does Scripture say the early church was about? “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:42

Yes, relationships are important today – as they were to Jesus during His earthly ministry. However, the most important thing the church was engaged in was studying the scriptures. It is interesting to note that while “the breaking of bread” is a form of fellowship, more importantly it demonstrated their constant remembrance of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the source of our salvation...through His atonement for believers. Both of these activities (study of Scripture and the Atonement) are to Young only evil “religious conditioning” that he would desperately love to erase from our memory.

And what of Jesus? The gospels are replete with example after example of Jesus opening up the Scriptures, preaching and teaching the Word to all. How many times did He say, “For it is written?” He took advantage of every possible opportunity to teach the Word of God. Relationships were important but

primarily as a method of teaching and imparting the truth revealed in the Scriptures – the truth about Himself, His Kingdom and His Father.

While Scripture does teach the importance of healthy relationships, it consistently and frequently warns and commands us to study the word of God and apply that truth to our relationships.

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1Timothy 4:16

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer.” 2 Timothy 2:15-17

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom [Something Young denies]. Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2 Timothy 4:1-4

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow...” 1 Peter 2:2

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing

from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete [mature], thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:13-17

When Mack asks what it “means to be Christian,” The Shack’s Jesus replies, “‘Who said anything about being Christian? I’m not a Christian.’ The idea struck Mack as odd and unexpected and he couldn’t keep himself from grinning. ‘No, I suppose you aren’t.’” (p. 182)

Really? Odd and unexpected? Of course He’s not! The name “Christian” refers to Christ’s **followers** – not Jesus. But more importantly, this is more UR propaganda and all-inclusive, all-loving babble. The attempt here is to once again dismiss that fact that “Christians” are unique. Who said anything about being “Christian?” Young’s “God” has reconciled himself to everyone...all people...no matter what road they are on. Young’s point is that “Christianity” is no longer significant in or relevant to the new spiritual conversation!

Kjos writes, “It [the name “Christian”] has always clashed with trendy cultures. Even when ‘the disciples were first call Christians in Antioch’ (Acts 11:26) [because of their Christ-like actions and lifestyle], that word was a derogatory label used by enemies of the church. But that didn’t keep the faithful Christians from joyfully claiming that name and sharing His Word.” (Kjos)

More Flaws in Young's View of God

Mack is constantly immersed in a New Age Spirituality re-education program – a satanic brainwashing.

Regarding God, *The Shack* records, “By nature I am completely unlimited...I live in a state of perpetual satisfaction as my normal state of existence...We created you to share in that. But then Adam choose to go it on his own [no, he chose to sin – to reject God’s authority], as we knew he would, and everything got messed up. But instead of scrapping the whole Creation **we** rolled up our sleeves and **entered into the middle of the mess** – that’s what **we** have done in Jesus...When **we** three spoke **ourselves** into human existence as the Son of God, **we became fully human**. **We** also chose to embrace all the limitations that this involved – **flesh and blood**.” (p. 98-99)

Both “that’s what **we** have done in Jesus” and “When **we** three spoke **ourselves** into human existence as the Son of God” clearly demonstrate that Young sees the Trinity as one Spirit God with three personalities or “modes” rather than three distinct persons with one essence. Furthermore, it indicates that the “Son of God” was purely a human vessel and distinct from God the Absolute Spirit. Jesus and Son of God are interchangeable terms to Young – with both referring to the human vessel and not the eternal life-force or Absolute God.

Is Young teaching *Modalism* – an ancient heresy that taught the Trinity is not comprised of three distinct members but, rather, three distinct modes in which He appears through history?

If not, he clearly believes that the Father died on the cross with the Son and bears the marks of the cross to this day. (p. 95-99, 164)

Scripture teaches that neither God the Father nor the Holy Spirit ever made themselves finite or visible to man (John 1:18). As mentioned above, Young's version of the Trinity is what could be considered *modalistic* – one God who operated in three different modes. Young's distinctions are blurred to the point that we no longer have three persons sharing the same essence; but rather, one essence expressing itself in three ways – one being the indwelling of Jesus. This is much more in keeping with his New Age/New Spirituality “life force” concept of God.

On the other hand, and this is one of those areas where Young contradicts himself and his theology gets murky and disjointed, *The Shack* claims Jesus was fully God but never returned to heaven and that there was no real resurrection: “Although by nature he is fully God, Jesus is fully human and lives as such. While never losing the innate ability to *fly* [an eastern mystic concept], he chooses moment-by-moment to remain grounded.” (p. 99-100)

No, Jesus now sits at the right-hand of the Father in heaven, still with His human form and crucifixion scars but with all power and authority – His absolute divinity once again fully revealed and uncloaked. [Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22] Jesus Christ is not “grounded” nor is He choosing moment-by-moment to live within the confines of his once temporary humanity. And, when He returns to His creation (to **rule** absolutely with an iron rod Mr. Young), He will not come as the lowly Son of Man but as the King of kings in all his glory!

“But he [Stephen just prior to being stoned to death], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” Acts 7:55-56

And really, out of all the important stuff regarding the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, the most important thing to Young is Jesus’ so called ability to *fly*??? This may very well be why Young just doesn’t get it!

Furthermore, Young does not believe the Father abandoned Jesus on the Cross as Scripture clearly declares. (p. 96)

Regarding the proper view of the Trinity, Chafer sums it up best when he writes:

“While the doctrine of the Trinity is a central fact of Christian faith, it is also beyond human comprehension and has no parallel in human experience. It is best defined as holding that, while God is one, He exists as three persons. These persons are equal, have the same attributes, and are equally worthy of adoration, worship, and faith. Yet the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead makes clear that they are not three separate gods, like three separate human beings such as Peter, James, and John. Accordingly, the true Christian faith is not tritheism, a belief in three Gods. On the other hand, the Trinity must not be explained as three modes of existence [modalism], that is, one God manifesting Himself in three ways. The Trinity is essential to the being of God and is more than a form of divine revelation...In the nature of the uniqueness of the Godhead, there is no illustration or parallel in human experience. Thus this doctrine should be accepted by faith on the basis of scriptural revelation

even if it is beyond human comprehension and definition.” (Chafer 40, 41)

The Authority of God

Young's flawed Trinity presents a permissive "God" that submits to human ways and exercises no authority over man. Young believes that God submits to us (p. 145) and denies any concept of authority and submission within the Godhead (p. 122, 145) despite the fact that 1 Corinthians 11:1-3 declares otherwise. As such, God is reduced to being our servant as we are His – hey, remember, it's all about relationships stupid...not authority! (p. 236-237)

Chafer directly refutes Young's denial of authority and submission in the Godhead, writing, "The persons of the Trinity, while having equal attributes, differ in certain properties. Hence, the First Person of the Trinity is called the Father. The Second Person is called the Son and is sent forth by the Father. The Third Person is the Holy Spirit who is sent forth by the Father and the Son. This is called in theology the doctrine of procession, and the order is never reversed, that is the Son never sends the Father and the Spirit never sends the Son." (Chafer 40)

This focus on a relationship with our inner god rather than a proper focus on glorifying the Almighty God; on all-inclusive relationships rather than submission to the absolute authority of God, is at the heart of the Christian mystic tradition.

This improper focus is affirmed by Bloesch who writes, "Yet in the tradition of Christian mysticism, especially where the neo-Platonic influence was most felt, the glory of God was definitely subordinate to the fulfillment and blessedness of the self. The mystics were more concerned with the discovery of God in the depth of the soul and the perfection of self in God than with

giving glory to God by upholding Jesus Christ before the world.” (Bloesch 39)

This is reflected by Schleiermacher: “A religious man must be reflective, his sense must be occupied in the contemplation of himself. Being occupied with the profoundest depths, he abandons meanwhile all external things, intellectual as well as physical...” (Schleiermacher 132)

This certainly thrills the postmodern spirituality leaders who shun words such as “sovereignty” and “authority.” A reigning God who sets the moral standard for all time could “offend” and cause “division” – definitely not politically correct! And He could impede their great spiritual cause: inclusive relationships and authentic community.

Mack asks, “Why would the God of the universe want to be submitted to me?”

The Shack’s Jesus responds, “Because we want you to join us in our circle of relationships.” (p. 145)

Make no mistake. This concept elevates man to the level of God. A relationship in which neither party has authority over the other is, by logic, a relationship of equality. According to Young and New Age spirituality, we **are** gods. This is why it should come as no surprise when *The Shack* expresses thoughts like, “Such a powerful ability, the imagination! That power alone makes you so like us.” (The Shack’s Jesus, p. 140)

While there are many themes which flow through the pages of Scripture, the one, over-riding theme of the Bible is: Man reigning on planet earth through a right-relationship with God.

This is how the story begins and this is how the story ends. What we find in between is the unfolding story of God restoring the relationship man originally had but lost due to his sin.

This relationship is a loving relationship; however, make no mistake about it, it is a relationship in which God assumes full authority over man. Man has been granted authority, by God, over the earth but is subordinate to God.

It was man's rejection of God's authority in the relationship (through Adam) that caused the relationship to be severed. Furthermore, man had absolutely no ability to re-establish the once beautiful and loving relationship with God. It was God alone, through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, who built a bridge over sin and reconnected man to Him.

This relationship between God and man is mirrored in His other institutions, such as government, family and church.

Are children participants in a loving relationship with their parents? Absolutely. However, in this relationship within the family unit, the parents maintain absolute authority and their actions towards their children, while always loving, by necessity involve judgment and sometimes "tough" love!

Despite the desire of the United Nations, children are not co-equals in authority within the family unit. Likewise, man is not co-equal with God within our relationship with Him.

In contrast, Young's Trinity (together) explains how his heretical concept of the relationship between God and man works:

"Authority, as you usually think of it, is merely the excuse the strong use to make others conform to what they want....we carefully respect your choices..." (p. 123)

Really? Are you kidding me? Does that sound anything like the God of Scripture? While God allows us a certain amount of free will in this life; ultimately, we will either be conformed to His image or spend eternity in hell, conformed to our own lowly, sinful image!

But it doesn't stop there! No, Young goes on to record this grand dialogue:

“Are you saying I don't have to follow the rules?”

“Yes. In Jesus you are not under any law [and, according to Young, we are ALL under Jesus in one way or another...so there is no law period! It simply does not exist!] All things are lawful.”

“You can't be serious! You're messing with me again...”

“Child...you ain't heard nuthin' [sic] yet...”

“...enforcing rules [says Sarayu]...is a vain attempt to create certainty out of uncertainty. And contrary to what you might think, I have a great fondness for uncertainty. Rules cannot bring freedom; they only have the power to accuse [ACIM uses the word “attack” instead of “accuse”].” (p. 203)

First, if UR is correct, we are all saved and “in Jesus” [by whichever path we choose] and so there is, in effect, no law to enforce or break. God's giving of the Ten Commandments? Forget about it – it was all an illusion!

Second, if we ignore this first truth for the sake of debate, this is simply a gross misinterpretation of the Law and grace.

- True: Rules cannot bring freedom; **however**, believers are not justified by the law...they are justified by faith in

Christ based upon His atonement on the Cross. The law was never intended to bring freedom; but rather, to point to our need of a Savior.

- Saving faith does not nullify the Law – it establishes the Law.
- While the believer is no longer a slave to the Law or under its condemnation, the Law is still valid. While believers *can* do whatever they please and not suffer ultimate justice (eternity in hell), this does not mean that there no longer exists a wrong or a right nor that the believer won't suffer temporal consequences, discipline from God and loss of rewards in heaven. Every moment of a believer's life, he has the ability to choose to live according to the flesh or according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 5:1-2, 18)

This dialogue represents antinomianism in its purest form – a hedonistic theology. It is completely foreign to the gospel of Christ. It is the same error that many in the early church made and the charge most leveled against the church by those who, like Young, failed to grasp the biblical understanding of Law and grace. This is why Paul directly addressed this question in Romans, chapter 6-8.

Furthermore, God is not a God of “uncertainty” or chaos...He is a God of order. To the contrary, it is Satan who is the chief architect of chaos and uncertainty.

Kjos notes, “Are God’s guidelines really ‘a vain attempt to create certainty?’ Of course not! To impress God’s unchanging values in the minds for faithful believers is no ‘vain attempt.’ But there’s plenty of uncertainty for those who believe in evolving Truth and adaptable Scriptures. Such ‘uncertainty’ can lay no firm foundation for either peace or confident faith! In fact, many

‘Christian’ pastors today suffer from agonizing doubts – even about the existence of God! Small wonder, when they build their ministries on the shifting sands of people-pleasing ‘truths,’ not the solid Rock of God’s Word.” (Kjos)

In making this claim, Young is merely showing his prowess for staying current with the times by presenting the newest vein of New Age Spirituality into his book – *quantum spirituality*.

Mack says to the Spirit, “Looks like a mess to me.”

Spirit responds, “Mack! Thank you! What a wonderful compliment!...That is exactly what this is – a mess. But...it’s still a fractal, too.”

Spirit explains, “A fractal...is something considered simple and orderly that is actually composed of repeated patterns no matter how magnified. A fractal is almost infinitely complex. I love fractals, so I put them everywhere.” (p. 129)

Quantum spirituality seeks to fuse together quantum physics and mystic spirituality – chaos theory (your “garden” - or life - is a mess) with fractal theory (your “garden” - or life - is a pattern). This can be seen in the movie *The Seeker* based on Susan Cooper’s book *The Dark is Rising*.

It can also be seen in the following dialogue from Dan Brown’s best-seller *The Lost Symbol*:

“Peter,” she said, “you already told me that the Egyptians understood levers and pulleys long before Newton, and that the early alchemists did work on a par with modern chemistry, but so what? Today’s physics deals with concepts that would have been unimaginable to the ancients.”

“Like what?”

“Well...like entanglement theory, for one!” Subatomic research had now proven categorically that all matter was interconnected...entangled in a single unified mesh...a kind of universal oneness. “You’re telling me the ancients sat around discussing entanglement theory?”

“Absolutely!” Peter said, pushing his long, dark bangs out of his eyes. “Entanglement was at the core of primeval beliefs. Its names are as old as history itself... Dharmakaya, Tao, Brahman. In fact, man’s oldest spiritual quest was to perceive his own entanglement, to sense his own interconnection with all things. He has always wanted to become ‘one’ with the universe...to achieve the state of ‘at-one-ment.’” Her brother raised his eyebrows. “To this day, Jews and Christians still strive for ‘atonement’...although most of us have forgotten it is actually ‘at-one-ment’ we’re seeking.” (p. 58)

While this subject is too complex to adequately explore here, it is suffice to say that God does not create “messes” out of people’s lives. God is not the author of chaos and it is not a compliment to claim He does! Nor does Christian atonement have anything to do with seeking “at-one-ment” with the universe and the “Spirit” that resides in it!

But Young isn’t finished yet! His false “God” then mocks our true God by minimizing His sovereignty and judgments:

“I’m not a bully, not some *self-centered demanding little deity* insisting on my own way. I am good, and I only desire what is best for you. You cannot find that through guilt or condemnation...” (p. 126)

“You don’t need me at all to create your list of good and evil. But you do need me if you have any desire to stop such an insane lust for independence...Mackenzie, evil is a word we use to describe the absence of Good, just as we use the word darkness to describe the absence of light...evil and darkness can only be understood in relation to Light and Good; they do not have any actual existence.” (p. 136)

This is a lie straight from the pits of hell! Though the wonders of God’s love and grace vastly exceed our comprehension, He has told us His standard for good and evil – and He will punish those who minimize sin (and thus the need for the Cross) or reject His ways and warnings (cf. Jeremiah 5:4; Psalm 50:21; Romans 1:18, 22; Jeremiah 6:19).

Make no mistake: No Sin = No Cross!

ACIM echoes these views of authority, sin and guilt:

“Sin is insanity...Sin is the home of all illusions...There is no sin.” (Schucman, What is Sin?)

“...guilt is always totally insane, and has no reason...” (Schucman)

“The Holy Spirit never commands. To command is to assume inequality, which...does not exist.” (ACIM, as “dictated” to channeler Helen Schucman by her spirit guide who claimed to be “Jesus”, 1977, p. 103)

“...you have let the belief in darkness enter your mind and so you need a new light...The voice of the Holy Spirit does not command, because it is incapable of arrogance. It does not demand, because it does not seek control.” (ACIM, p. 76)

Leadership based upon legitimate authority is not arrogance – leadership in the absence of authority is. Is a parent who runs their household arrogant? Is a business owner who runs their business arrogant? Is a general who commands his troops arrogant?

“There is no guilt in you...Your only calling here is to devote yourself, with active willingness, to the denial of guilt in all its forms...We are all joined in the Atonement [UR]...So will the world of separation slip away...For peace is the acknowledgment of perfect purity, from which no one is excluded. Within its holy circle is everyone whom God created as his Son.” (ACIM, pp. 282-283)

Scripture declares: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” 1 John 1:8-10

The Shack promotes a perverted kind of saving forgiveness – one imparted and received through our own humanity: unity and healing, devoid of the Cross.

Mack not only learns to forgive all who have hurt him but he even forgives God! As if God had done something sinful!

ACIM’s “Jesus” offers up a similar twisted theology: “Forgive, and you will see this differently...These are words which end the dream of sin, and rid the mind of fear. These are the words by which salvation comes to the world.” (Schucman, Workbook Lesson 193)

Warren Smith notes, “According to the *Course* [ACIM], love is all there is. And because God is love, God is therefore in

everyone and everything. It states God is sinless, perfect, and ‘at one’ with all creation and that we, as a part of God, are also sinless and perfect in our ‘oneness’ with Him. It teaches that man’s only ‘sin’ is in not remembering his own perfect, sinless, divine nature. The only ‘devil’ is our illusion that we are separate from, and not a part of, God. The *Course* tells its readers that a ‘sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need to correct.’” (Smith, Biblical Atonement or New Age At-One-Ment?)

Smith goes on to shockingly point-out, “The *Course* [ACIM] also teaches that while ‘Christ’ is in Jesus, so ‘Christ’ is in everyone and that the ‘Christ’ in everyone is their divine connection with God and with each other. The *Course* further teaches that a ‘slain Christ has no meaning.’ It states that wrong thinking has produced the misperception that man is a ‘sinner’ and that he needs an external Christ to save him from his ‘sins.’ The *Course* teaches that salvation has nothing to do with Jesus’ death on the cross. Salvation comes from what the *Course* calls the ‘Atonement’ (‘At-one-ment’) process.” (Smith, Biblical Atonement or New Age At-One-Ment?)

It may sound loving, warm and fuzzy to claim universal salvation through human forgiveness and at-one-ness – but it is **not** biblical! This counterfeit “Jesus” has totally divorced himself from God’s Word. Jesus tells us exactly how salvation has come to the world in John 3:15-21!

Again we see this *modalistic* view where “Christ” is *in* Jesus. No, Christ is Jesus and Jesus is Christ – fully God and fully man; “consubstantial with God in his divinity” and “consubstantial with man (except for sin) in his humanity” (Bloesch 127). “Christ” is not some Absolute God or Spirit that manifests himself in different ways – in this case by indwelling “Jesus” the

man. Neither is “Christ” the Master Force that propagates creativity and process through “Jesus” the man – as in process philosophy.

Kjos writes, “Our God is Judge as well as Love. And since He is also sovereign and holy, he must deal with the reality of sin. It can’t simply be dismissed or justified. His salvation is *only* through the Biblical Cross, in spite of ACIM’s denials and The Shack’s deceptions. We partake in *His* atonement (and not the New Age atonement) through Biblical faith, not positive presumptions.” (Kjos)

“As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:9

Continuing with the matter of authority, Young’s portrayal of God is one which humanizes Him rather than exalts and glorifies Him.

Young quotes Jacques Ellul, “No matter what God’s power may be, the first aspect of God is never that of absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts Himself on our human level and limits himself.” (p. 88)

To which Giley responds, “Really? [A reaction that seems to occur over and over again for many of us!] This quote is in contradiction to the entirety of biblical revelation which first and often declares God to be absolute Master, yet in no way mitigates the incarnation, as Young and Ellul are trying to claim.” (Giley)

Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) was a French philosopher, law professor, sociologist, lay theologian and Christian anarchist. He went far beyond the theology of Karl Barth, observing, “That

which desacralizes a given reality, itself in turn becomes the new sacred reality.”

In other words, the Reformation desacralized the church in the name of the Bible, and the Scriptures became sacred. Science and reason desacralized the scriptures, and thus has now become sacred – a thought deeply associated with New Age/New Spirituality advocates.

However, even more important to this discussion, he was – no surprise here – a Christian Universalist! His belief in universal reconciliation (UR) was made abundantly clear when he wrote, “all people from the beginning of time are saved by God in Jesus Christ, that they have all been recipients of His grace no matter what they have done.” (Ellul and Bromiley)

Again, Jacobsen’s claim that he wants no part of project that promotes universal reconciliation is a lie. I cannot find one single instance where either Jacobsen or Young actually quotes (in a favorable light) or recommends a non-universalist writer or teacher. And even if one or two exceptions do exist, the sheer weight of the evidence convicts them.

New Paradigm: Experience Trumps Scripture

Tamara Hartzell, author of *In the Name of Purpose*, writes, “There is a new world emerging...This new world stands against the truth, against the Lord Jesus Christ, and against God. Its rise is coming about in the power and authority and deception of the god of this world (angel of light), who will easily lure the spiritually-prepared masses into worshipping him and his Coming One.” (Hartzell)

Make a note to yourself: “Purpose” is almost always a Contemplative Spirituality codeword for “process,” as in *process philosophy*. Always be careful about anyone who uses this term (like Papa Rick’s *Purpose Driven Dynasty*).

Kjos adds to this by noting, “It’s not surprising that so few Christians notice or resist this *process*. Ever since John Dewey and Julian Huxley began to replace factual learning with subjective socialization, our ability to discern error has been undermined...Leaders inside and outside the churches have discovered that facilitated group experiences create new perceptions, which produce correspond feelings that establish new beliefs. These steps are key to change.” (Kjos)

The Shack’s God agrees: “Paradigms power perception and perceptions power emotions...So check our perceptions, and beyond that check the truthfulness of your paradigms - - what you believe.” (p. 197)

“...religion is about having the right answers...[in contrast] I am about the *process* that takes you to the living answer.” (p. 198)

Again, remember the theme of creativity and process...it will come up later.

“You cannot *see* in your mind’s eye something that you cannot experience.” (p. 201)

ACIM’s “Jesus” similarly states (of course, through his channeler), “It is impossible not to believe what you see, but it is equally impossible to see what you do not believe. **Perceptions** are built up on the basis of **experience**, and **experience** leads to **beliefs**. It is not until beliefs are fixed that perceptions stabilize. In effect, then, what you believe you do see.” (ACIM 207)

Kjos poignantly notes, “Like other virtual experiences, reading *The Shack* stirs the imaginations of the gullible. It plants perceptions that shape new beliefs in ‘open’ minds. What few realize is that the end of this process will be a bit like Pinocchio’s experience. The cruel tempter had promised Pinocchio all kinds of fun and food on ‘Pleasure Island.’ But when he arrived, he changed into a donkey and became a slave.” (Kjos)

Elousia informs Mack, “For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest that you call me Papa is simply to mix metaphors, to help you keep from falling so easily back into your religious conditioning.” (p. 93)

Is that how Young perceives Biblical Christianity? Religious perceptions, traditions and “conditioning” are completely distinct from scriptural doctrines and it is clearly the latter that Young aims to have his readers avoid believing. Change your perceptions through experience, in turn re-defining your beliefs while ignoring the truth of the Scriptures.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all

unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

“And the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.’” Jeremiah 14:14

Note: This is related to the information presented in the section “Primacy of Scripture”

Other No-No's for Young

The church also takes a hit from young. (p. 91, p. 177) But this should come as no surprise since his editor and publisher, Jacobsen, rants on and on about the evils of church on his Life Stream Ministries' website.

Sunday school...no, not such a good thing (p. 98) After all, this is just a part of organized church and proliferates the insidious "religious conditioning" that is poisoning the minds of all the little gods.

Family devotions? Nope, no good either. (p.107)

And systematic theology? Forget about it because, according to Young, the Holy Spirit has declared, "I have a great fondness for uncertainty." (p. 203)

But hey, communicating with the dead is perfectly fine! Young's readers are taken on a whirlwind journey that even pierces the veil between life and death to see the joy beyond and communicate with loved ones. All fine and dandy...except for the pesky little problem that these subtle examples of "calling up the dead" are **explicitly banned by God** (Deuteronomy 18:11).

Heck, even astral travel (what *The Shack* calls "flying" – a word and concept popularized by Hindu Maharish Yogi long ago) is perfectly acceptable...just no "flying" to church!

Salvation According to Young

And nowhere is Young's love for uncertainty more noticeable than in his attempts at providing a picture of salvation.

When Mack asks what Jesus accomplished by dying, he is told, "Through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled *to* the world."

Let's be absolutely clear here, God was not reconciled to the world; He reconciled the world **to Himself** through Christ! And, this reconciliation to God only applies to those who choose to accept Christ's atoning work on the cross for *their sin*!

"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things **to Himself**, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross." Colossians 1:19-20

Furthermore, when pressed, The Shack's God explains that He has been reconciled to "the whole world," not just to the believer. (p. 192)

Does this mean that according to Young all will be saved? Remember, editor-in-chief Jacobsen stated he would never be part of a project that supported UR beliefs!

Young doesn't explicitly state an answer in *The Shack* but he certainly implies that the answer is a resounding yes:

- Mack's father (an unrighteous man who never showed any sign of being saved) is found in heaven. (p. 214-215)
- "God" repeatedly states throughout *The Shack* that He is fond of all people.

- “God” claims that He has forgiven all sins against Him. (ex: 118-119)
- “God” does not “do humiliation, or guilt or condemnation.” (p. 223)
- Contrary to vast passages of Scripture, “God,” at least according to Young, is not a God of judgment: “I don’t need to punish people for sin, sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my job to cure it.” (p. 120)
- And, “God” declares that “I will travel any road [referring to any religion] to find you.” (p. 182)

Gary Giley writes, “Jesus apparently means that He will travel any road to ‘join them in their transformation.’ The implication is that people are on many roads that lead to their self-transformation. Jesus will join people where they are on that road and apparently aid in the transformation. This is certainly not the teaching of Scripture, which tells us that we must come to the one road, the narrow way that leads to God through Jesus Christ.” (Giley)

Creativity and Action: It's All About the Process Stupid!

The very essence of God is directly challenged when Young, quoting from Unitarian-Universalist, Buckminster Fuller, declares God to be a *verb*, not a **noun**. (p. 194, 204)

In a related statement, The Shack's Jesus says to the Spirit, "She is Creativity; She is Action; She is Breathing of Life." (p. 110)

Yet, the Bible clearly and systematically presents God as a person (noun), not an action (verb).

Giley responds, "When this truth is denied, we are moving from the biblical understanding of a personal God to an Eastern understanding of God in everything." (Giley)

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Mack asks the Holy Spirit if he will see her again, he is told, "Of course, you might see me in a piece of art, or music, or silence, or through people, or in creation, or in your joy and sorrow." (p. 198)

This is NOT biblical teaching!

This concept is repeated in a line from the song Missy creates in the book. (p. 233)

Young further reinforces his Eastern concept of God with a statement straight out of New Age teachings: "Just say it out loud. There is power in what my children declare." (p. 227) This is echoed by Ronda Byrne in her book *The Secret* and proclaimed throughout the world by preachers and teachers of the Faith movement, but nowhere is it found in Scripture.

Young tells us that Jesus, “as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone.” (p. 100)

How did He do it then? According to Young, by trusting in the Holy Spirit. The Shack’s Spirit says that Jesus “is just the first to do it to the uttermost – the first to absolutely trust my life within Him.”

This clearly implies that if we each absolutely trust the God within us, we can heal and do acts of divinity – a New Age concept shared by the Faith movement.

Again, this “Jesus” simply represents a human vessel indwelt by the Great Spirit – no different from any other indwelt saint or prophet in the Old Testament or *enlightened* one today.

Giley notes, “There is just enough truth here to be confusing but not accurate. Jesus, never ceasing to be fully God, had all Divine power dwelling within Him. That He choose to limit His use of this power and rely on the Holy Spirit while on earth in no way diminishes His essence. While Jesus is our example, He is not a guru blazing a trail in which in this life we too can be like God. This idea smacks of New Age teaching, not Scripture.” (Giley)

This entire concept can be summed up as **Process philosophy**. This belief, popular in America today, presents a God who is bound to the world. A common axiom is “God is the soul of the world just as the world is the body of God.”

In process thought, both God and the world (intertwined or meshed-together in a pantheistic and panentheistic oneness) are in the grip of **creativity**.

Hartshorne notes, “What is not to be decided, even by God, is that progress...there shall be.” (Hartshorne 554)

While God has no authority to drive this creativity, it is our job to work together with this God within us to forge a better world – one that is ecumenical (all-inclusive), all-loving, non-judgmental. In other words, to forge the Kingdom of Christ ourselves with all its peace and prosperity for the masses – a New World Religion for a New World Order that encompasses all spheres of life (social, economic and religious). *Does this not sound strikingly like Papa Rick's Purpose Driven Movement???*

This brings so many aspects of Young's beliefs together: lack of divine authority, non-judgmental divinity, all-inclusive faith, a focus on creativity and imagination, a life-force that is in all, and so on – it's all about relationships and process...about discovering the god inside us all through experience...about being creators.

Bloesch adds, "What we are left with is a God who, though infinite in some of his aspects, is essentially finite and at the mercy of the creature." (Bloesch 45)

In opposition to this process philosophy (and all the other flaws in Young's New Age theology), Bloesch declares, "An authentically evangelical theology will uphold the supremely personal God of biblical religion over the suprapersonal God of speculative philosophy on the one hand and the crudely personal God of culture-religion on the other. It will side with the transcendent God of the prophets over the immanent God of the mystics. It will proclaim the infinite God of the historic catholic faith over the finite God of modernistic theology. It will appeal to the concrete Absolute, as seen in Jesus Christ, over the metaphysical principle of pure abstraction. The God of the Scriptures is a supremely moral deity who demands our obedience, not an infinite abyss beyond good and evil wholly detached from the creature; nor is he the tolerant, benign deity of

the folk tradition who merely desires our friendship. This God is jealous of his rights and solicitous for the welfare of his children (cf. Exod. 20:5, 6; Deut. 6:14-19). He is neither an unfeeling Primal Source nor ‘the fellow-sufferer who understands’ (Whitehead), the one who needs us just as we need him. He is not to be equated with ‘the personality-producing forces of the cosmos’ (Shailer Mathews), but he is the sovereign king who rules the cosmos. The true God is the holy, majestic Lord who gives himself in love but who demands our faith and love in return. He creates not because the Good must necessarily be productive or creative (as in Plato and Plotinus), but because he chooses to do so in his sovereign freedom.” (Bloesch 46)

Primacy of Scripture

The Shack, in keeping with Young's New Age/New Spirituality beliefs, attempts to make the case that experience trumps Scripture. Its pages lead the reader into a world of vicarious experience, through revelations and sensations.

Jesus Himself countered this false notion when He made the Scriptures the ruling norm (John 5:39-40; 14:15-17).

The Pharisees added their traditions and the Sadducees subtracted the supernatural. Jesus accused the Pharisees of making the word of God void (Mark 7:13, Matthew 15:6) and reprimanded the Sadducees for being ignorant (Mark 12:18-27).

Scripture is **verbally** inspired – meaning the Holy Spirit guided the individual choice of words by the human authors – and its inspiration is **plenary** – meaning every word is inspired.

Jesus affirmed this when he said, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” (Matthew 5:18) A “jot” is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and a “tittle” is the smallest part of a letter that would alter its meaning.

Furthermore, Scripture is both **infallible** – unfailingly accurate – and **inerrant** – contains (in the original autographs) no error nor records any error as a statement of fact.

In contrast to this biblical view, the liberal, neo-orthodox view popular around the world today claims that there are errors in the Bible and, thus, it cannot be accepted as literally true. While this view does acknowledge that God does speak through the

Scriptures, it is but one method or channel through which He communicates truth to man. As such, any truth imparted by Scripture is only as valid as it is understood by each individual reader in combination with new revelation from the Spirit and personal experience.

Young passionately rejects the cessationist view of Scripture – that God is no longer actively presenting new revelation to the world.

This is clearly seen in Mack: “In seminary he had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communications with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course. God’s voice had been reduced to paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects...Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book.” (p. 65-66)

My first thought was *what seminary did Mack attend?* Cause it must be one of the few remaining that still teaches the truth! It certainly wasn’t Oral Roberts University from which Jacobsen graduated!

Young clearly would prefer a God who communicates new and exciting mystical revelations through our thoughts and experiences rather than simply on paper (i.e. the Bible). (p. 195)

Sorry Young! You don’t make the rules...even if you do believe you’re a little “god.”

Of course, understanding the “subjectivity” of such new, experiential revelation, Young confidently assures us that we will “begin to better recognize [the Holy Spirits] voice as we continue to grow in our relationship.” (p. 196)

Really?

First of all, define “better.” Are we going to recognize the voice 90% of the time? 50% of the time? One-out-of-Ten? I don’t want to risk my eternal future (or the eternal future of my friends and family) on anything less than a 100% chance of success. I don’t know about you but “better” recognize isn’t good enough for me! I can absolutely, with 100% certainty, recognize God’s Truth in His Word – every time!

Secondly, why then does God tell us to ALWAYS test every spirit against the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1)??? This, in and of itself, rules out any possibility of new revelation because it will not be found in our “control” sample – the Word of God!

The 14th and 15th centuries witnessed the rise of both nominalism and mysticism. The call went out to elevate church tradition and mystical experience to equality (if not supremacy) with Scripture. An example of this can be seen in Roman Catholic theologians who began to speak of a “parallel source of truth.”

This movement was countered by the Reformation which sparked a return to the primacy of Scripture. The Reformers resolutely maintained that there is only one source of revelation – the Word of God. Furthermore, they affirmed that the Word of God contains not only the revealed, divine truth but that it contains the **whole** revealed truth. In other words, it is complete and not a work in progress.

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith **which was once for all delivered to the saints.**” Jude 3

“God, who at various times and in different ways *spoke in time past* [i.e. no longer doing this] to the fathers by the prophets, has

in these last days [our time] spoken [past tense and completed action] to us **by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds..." Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Scripture. He was the last Revelation (until his second appearance and revelation – where He will return as the King of kings and Lord of lords to reign with an iron rod on earth).

He was quite literally the Word incarnate! There is nothing left to be said by God. We have all we need within its pages.

Folks, stop looking for new revelation and mystical insights and simply start learning and applying what He has so graciously already provided us. You could spend an entire lifetime studying His Word and still never scratch the surface of the infinite amount of knowledge, wisdom and truth contained within it.

Furthermore, contrary to Young's characterization, it is not just a collection of words on worn-out papers in an out-dated and damaged cover – it is the living Word of the living God!

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

However, following the Reformation, neo-Protestantism sought to once again establish that the consciousness of the ecclesial community takes precedence over Scripture.

An example of this belief can be found in the theology of Schleiermacher who taught that the Holy Scripture, as the witness to Christ, is subject to the judgment of "the corporate spirit." In other words, it is the result of faith, not the basis of faith.

Likewise, this same notion could be seen in neo-Catholicism's references to the "infallibility of the people of God" taking precedence over the infallibility of the Word.

Bloesch responds, "The role of the Spirit is to awaken the church to the truth contained in the Scriptures and then to empower the church to proclaim this truth. With the Reformers and the dialectical theologians, we contend that Scripture when illuminated by the Spirit authenticates itself. The church simply recognizes the truth that Scripture upholds and then applies this truth to the world." (Bloesch 60)

He goes on to state, "Our position is that the Spirit both indwells the church and judges the church by the Word. The Word functions normatively over the church as the Sword of the Spirit. With Berkouwer we have definite reservations concerning the contention of Roman Catholic scholars that **the Spirit is the church's immanent life principle**, since this seems to deny the transcending, judging role of the Spirit. An American Benedictine, Kilian MacDonnell, reflects Reformation motifs when he declares: 'The Word always calls the church and constitutes it. And having constituted it, warns, judges, purifies, strengthens, nourishes, edifies it.' (MacDonnell 358)" (Bloesch 60)

If: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-2, 14)

Then to claim that the Word is incomplete or unfinished is tantamount to claiming God Himself is incomplete or unfinished! Understood, it was given to us by God, through men of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in incremental steps

(rather than all at once). However, once that delivery was complete – and God has declared that it was - that's it! End of story. Yes, we will spend every day learning to properly apply it to our lives. Yes, we will spend all of eternity learning to fully understand all its treasures and subtleties. But, as far as its content (as it applies to that which God has chosen to reveal to man in this life), it is complete...finished.

Evangelical theology upholds *sola Scriptura* by affirming that Scripture has primacy not only over the church but also over **religious experience**. Karl Barth, in criticism of culture-Protestantism, expressed this when he stated that the basic content of our faith must be derived from Scripture alone.

Conscience, like experience, can only be a trustworthy guide when it is anchored in the divine revelation of Scripture. While the Holy Spirit continues to guide the church in the *application* of Scripture to our world, contrary to Process philosophy, God's divine revelation to man is not a work in progress, it is complete and finished.

Evangelical theology also affirms the primacy of Scripture over dreams, signs, wonders, proofs and evidences of the faith.

God makes this unmistakably clear when in Deuteronomy He declares that a prophet or dreamer of dreams who gives a sign, *even if that sign actually comes to pass*, must be ignored if what he says **contradicts the word of God**. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

What is the bottom-line here?

Scripture tells us that Satan and his minions actively lead the whole world astray. He masquerades as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14) and, as such, is very adept at getting folks to believe in things that are not true.

Scripture makes it clear that in these last days (1) folks *will be led away from the true faith* and (2) that they *will be* led away by **deceiving spirits** and the **teachings of demons**: “The Spirit clearly says that in the latter times some will abandon the faith and will follow **deceiving spirits** and things taught by **demons**.” (1 Timothy 4:1, NIV)

Contemplative Spirituality opens your mind to the influence of these demons. Like a thief taking advantage of a door that is ever so slightly ajar in order to gain access to a house and the valuables contained within it, New Age spirituality (whether it is framed and packaged with Christian terminology or not) provides a critical entry point for Satan to get his foot (or talons) into **your** life.

Remember, our fight is a *spiritual* one – not a physical one. Scripture makes this unmistakably clear when Paul writes, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Now, if this is true...if we are ultimately contending against spiritual powers and beings...and...these spiritual beings are capable of masquerading as “angels of light” - of deceiving us with things that seem logical and good...then how will we know?

How will we know if we are being deceived?

How will we know if we are one of the ones falling away from the true faith?

God tells us how: By filtering everything through and testing everything against the inspired Word of God that has been once and for all delivered to us!

Paul, immediately after defining the nature of the Christian battle and our true enemy, continues by declaring, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand...And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:13, 17).

Swords by their very nature are weapons. In the hands of a skilled warrior they are used both offensively to attack an enemy or threat and defensively to deflect or ward-off attacks launched by a foe. What is our *spiritual* sword? The Word of God!

God tells us that our spiritual weapon of choice should be His Word and we should train ourselves to handle this weapon with skill and efficiency.

When we, as Young and the New Age/New Spirituality teachers demand, replace the Word of God with experience, conscience and/or proofs or evidences of faith, we are quite literally disarming ourselves! We are no longer capable of detecting if a teaching is of God or demons; whether it is truly light or simply darkness skillfully and cleverly packaged to convincingly appear *as* light.

While this is a spiritual matter, it would be comparable to David facing Goliath after laying down his slingshot! It is counter-intuitive and yet far too many are eagerly and joyously heeding this destructive advice without a single question or objection.

Jesus: the God-Man

As with everything else in *The Shack*, Young's vision of Jesus is tremendously flawed. He suffers from both an ebionite and docetic error in his understanding of the person and essence of the Savior.

Bloesch defines the proper biblical teaching when he writes, "On the basis of its fidelity to scriptural witness the church has declared that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man in One Person. As the Creed of Chalcedon (451) so powerfully enunciates he is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us men (except for sin) according to his humanity." (Bloesch 127)

Vast passages of Scripture affirm both the eternity and deity of Jesus Christ – His infinite being or person and His eternal existence, coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit and unaffected by His incarnation.

Specifically regarding the Incarnation, Lewis Sperry Chafer explains, "When considering the Incarnation, two important truths should be realized: (1) Christ became at the same time and in the absolute sense very God and very man, and (2) in becoming flesh He, though laying aside His glory, in no sense laid aside His deity. In His incarnation He retained every essential attribute of deity. His full deity and complete humanity are essential to His work on the cross. If He were not man, He could not die; if He were not God, His death would not have had infinite value." (Chafer 56)

There are two general types of Christological heresies: ebionite and docetic.

Young and the teachers of the New Age/New Spirituality movement present a counterfeit Jesus that combines elements of both heresies.

The ebionite type of heresy, derived from the Christian Jewish sect of the same name, denies the full divinity of Christ. According to this heresy, Jesus is but the greatest of prophets, a religious genius, a spiritual master, or a yogi or guru – **but not God himself.**

In essence, Jesus is simply a divinized or Spirit-filled man.

Echoing this heresy, Schleiermacher saw Jesus as “Elder Brother” and “Archetypal Man” but not as the divine Savior from sin. Raushenbusch saw Jesus only as the “perfect religious personality, a spiritual life completely filled by the realization of a God who is love.” (Raushenbusch 154, 155)

Bloesch explains the docetic type of heresy when he writes, “...the eternal core is not the person of Jesus Christ but an overarching pattern or truth that is exemplified in Christ. Christ becomes an eternal principle, a pattern for life, a divine force or Absolute Spirit. But he is not the Concrete Absolute, God existing in human form in a particular time and place. He is the Word as timeless truth but not the Word as living address.” (Bloesch 135)

Accordingly, what was most crucial to Schleiermacher was not his Person but the ideal that he actualized.

Tillich rejected the doctrine of the two natures and following Hegel contended that in Jesus the “eternal unity of God and man has become historical reality.” (Tillich, Systematic Theology 148)

He goes on to say that we should not pray to Jesus but to the Christ Spirit, to the New Being that was manifested in Jesus.

In keeping with those he studies, concurs with, promotes and quotes, Young presents a “Jesus” who is simply a human vessel for the “ground of being” or “life force.” He is our grand example of how to be filled by the all-loving, all-inclusive “Spirit” but did not die on the cross as a propitiation for our sin. He is as much a “God” as we are or, at least, can become.

This is precisely why Young sees “Jesus” only as an archetype and draws no distinction between Him and a native princess. While He was a phenomenal example, He is but one manifestation of the Great Spirit, one vessel filled by the life-force. He was special but not unique; spirit-filled but not inherently divine in his very essence. The native princess, or anyone else for that matter, could have served the same role...the same function...provided the same example – perfectly filled by the “Spirit.” Furthermore, the “Ground of all Being” will find everyone on whatever road they travel...even if it is not the narrow path that leads to “Jesus.”

The Bigger Picture

With regards to the New Age/New Spirituality teachings which are found within *The Shack* and so many other so-called “Christian” books, materials and ministries, it is nothing new or original. The prophet Isaiah spoke out against the very same environment in the kingdom of Judah.

Herbert Schlossberg writes, “When Israel fell into idolatry, it did not openly renounce the worship of the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob in order to bow before the pagan shrines. Rather, the nation combined the old rituals with what it knew of the Canaanite religion.” (Schlossberg 233)

The Israelites simply created a new spirituality that was a syncretistic blend of the true faith with heresy. It took the godly Josiah to restore the purity of the faith to God’s chosen people (2 Kings 23).

Only a hundred years later, Ezekiel once again confronted the same syncretistic blend (Ezekiel 8).

A study of Scripture reveals that Asherah was worshipped in both cases (2 Kings 21:1-7, 23:4; 2 Chronicles 33:7). We also learn that she was referred to as the “queen of heaven” (Jeremiah 7, 44).

Asherah was a Semitic mother-goddess. She was considered to be the consort (wife or partner) of Yahweh Himself – hence the name “queen of heaven.” The Israelites even baked small cakes for her festivals.

After 1200 B.C., she was referred to as the Semitic mother-goddess Astarte (also referred to by the title “queen of heaven”). Her counterpart in Mesopotamia (Babylon) was Ishtar and in Greek mythology she was known as Aphrodite. It was Ishtar who was particularly worshipped in Nineveh and, as we have seen, she is the original source of the Egyptian mother-goddess Isis [the Black Madonna] who, by no accident, just happened to be known by the title “queen of heaven” as well.

It is all one big, interwoven circle of mysticism that can always be traced back to the original Babylonian mystery religion and, ultimately, to Nimrod himself whose kingdom included Babel and Nineveh (Genesis 10:8-14).

Schlossberg insightfully notes, “In turning away from God, the nation [Israel] had not fallen into irreligion, but had combined the temple religion with the pagan beliefs and practices of the surrounding peoples. The worship of the God of the Exodus had been defiled by merging it with the worship of idols. When judgment finally came to the nation, it fell on this syncretistic perversion.” (Schlossberg 234)

And in these last days, we find this blending of the one, true faith with heresy not only alive but thriving. The church, just as the Israelites, has become guilty of not “irreligion” but rather of blending the faith with the false beliefs and practices of the heathen – and, in particular, of the Eastern religions.

In 1978, M. Scott Peck published his blockbuster book *The Road Less Traveled*. This work, a bestseller that has been translated into more than 20 languages and remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over 544 weeks (12 years) with over six million copies sold to date in North America alone, blended Christian terminology with a new spirituality of pluralism.

Sadly, it made the “Book of the Year” lists for several leading evangelical magazines.

Peck was a life-long Buddhist who claimed conversion to Christianity in 1983 - 5 years *after* his book was published. In 1988, he endorsed Matthew Fox’s book *Cosmic New Age Christ* – yes, the same Matthew Fox we have spoken about and quoted from at length. Furthermore, Peck has been favorably quoted by Bill Hybels who, along with Rick Warren, was mentored by New Ager Robert Schuller.

A *New York Times* book reviewer said it best when describing *The Road Less Traveled* as “an ambitious attempt to wed Christian theology to the 20th-century discoveries of Freud and Jung.”

Debbie Dewart noted, “Scott Peck began his trek down *The Road Less Traveled* as a Buddhist when he wrote his bestselling book by that title. By the time his second book was published, he claimed a conversion to Christianity. However, his Buddhist teachings remain a vital part of his writings, along with other aberrations such as process theology, Mormonism, New Age doctrine, and the secular humanist values of psychotherapy. Although *The Road Less Traveled* is reminiscent of our Lord’s words about the narrow road to life, Peck is clearly headed down the broad road to destruction. His theology clashes with Christianity at every crucial point.” (Dewart)

In his book, Peck drops the following bombshells:

“God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself). We are growing toward godhood. God is the goal of evolution.”

“To put it plainly, our unconsciousness is God. God within us.”

“There are several things that characterize the behavior of men and women in Stage II of their spiritual development, which is the stage of the majority of churchgoers and believers...their attachment to forms (as opposed to the essence of their religion)...formal...institutional...threatened when someone seems to be playing footloose and fancy-free with the rules...Another thing characterizing the religious behavior of Stage II people is that their vision of God is almost entirely that of an external, transcendent Being. They have little understanding of the immanent, indwelling God...And although they consider Him loving, they also generally feel He possesses – and will use – punitive power...they need a legalistic religion for their governance.”

“Yet through the ages, mystics of every shade of religious belief have spoken of unity, of an underlying connectedness between things: between men and women, us and the other creatures and even inanimate matter as well, a fitting together according to an ordinarily invisible fabric underlying the cosmos...Mystics acknowledge the enormity of the unknown...they seek to penetrate ever deeper into it that they may understand more...They love mystery, in dramatic contrast to those in Stage II, who need simple, clear-cut dogmatic structures and have little taste for the unknown and unknowable.”

“Our responsibility as individuals to empty ourselves in order to achieve peace was stated clearly by the Hindu mystic Krishnamurti twenty years ago in his book *Freedom from the Known*.”

“It is important for people who find the concept of emptiness frightening to remember that meditation – emptiness – is not an end in itself but the means to an end. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. So it is that the moment we become empty something

comes into our emptiness. The virtue of meditation is that whatever comes into emptiness is beyond our control. It is the unforeseen, the unexpected, the new. And it is only from the unforeseen, the unexpected, the new that we learn.”

[Note: When we empty our minds and open that door, we saw earlier (in Primacy of Scripture) exactly *who* it is that will enter – demon spirits and demonic teachings.]

“God does not punish...God cannot destroy; He can only create.”
[Process Theology]

“In one [scenario] all human souls, having been converted to light and love, reach out to the spirit of hate and falsehood in friendship. Finally realizing itself to be totally defeated, with no human body left to possess, with all immune to its power, out of utter loneliness it breaks down and accepts the offer of friendship, and thereby in the end even Satan is converted. That is the scenario I pray for.”

“In and through community lies the salvation of the world...peacemaking must be the first priority of civilization...”

“Instead, our primary goal should be as rapidly as possible to turn over swords – and our guns and bombs and tanks and missiles – the whole kit and caboodle – over to the United Nations or another variety of supranational government...In fact, a supranational government is incompatible with the nation-state system.”

In 1980, Marilyn Ferguson wrote *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. It is called the “Handbook of the New Age” by *USA Today*. They go on to write that it describes an “underground network” that is “working to create a different kind of society based on a vastly enlarged concept of human potential.” Not surprisingly, *The*

Road Less Traveled is listed under “Readings and References” for chapter 11, entitled “Spiritual Adventure: Connection to the Source.”

In 1988, *The New Age Catalog* was published by the editors of *Body, Mind and Spirit* magazine. This catalog contained a listing of books on channeling, Edgar Cayce, crystals, tarot cards, meditation, yoga and other New Age subjects. *The Road Less Traveled* (in audio-book format) was featured under “Create Your Reality” with the following description: “Dr. Peck...shows you how to cultivate your own religion and open up to the positive force he calls grace.”

In his follow-up release *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*, Peck wrote, “God, unlike some organized religions, does not discriminate. As long as you reach out to Her, She will go the better part of the way to meet you. There are an infinite number of roads to reach God. People can come to God through alcoholism, they can come to God through Zen Buddhism, as I did, and they can come to God through the multiple ‘New Thought’ Christian churches even though they are distinctly heretical. For all I know, they can come to God through Shirley MacLaine. People are at various stages of readiness, and when they’re ready, virtually anything can speak to them.” (Peck, *Further Along the Road Less Traveled* 155)

Dewart (Dewart) notes the following erroneous theological concepts which appear repeatedly throughout all of Peck’s books:

- Peck has no clear standards concerning the nature of truth.
- Peck interprets Scripture primarily as mythology, and he considers the Bible to be a mixture of truth and error, fact and fiction.
- Peck denies the historical accuracy of Adam and Eve and claims the Bible supports evolution.

- Peck denies the sovereignty of God. In place of the God of Scripture, Peck worships a finite “god” who is both limited and in the process of change. He stresses man’s freedom to the point of denying God’s sovereignty altogether.
- Peck’s writings reveal an emphasis on Jesus’ humanity that effectively denies His unique deity as Son of God.
- Some of Peck’s speculations about what Jesus might have said or thought border on outright blasphemy.
- Peck does not affirm Christ as the Savior who sacrificed Himself on the cross to make propitiation for the sins of His people.
- Evolution is the foundation for Peck’s view of man. He believes that man is evolving forward, and thus he anticipates radical changes in the nature of man that Scripture does not support.
- Peck views the fall into sin as an evolutionary thrusting forth into “consciousness” and therefore a step forward.
- Peck proposes “four stages of spirituality” for man. The third stage, characterized by skepticism and atheism, is claimed to be “higher” than the second stage, which would describe the orthodox Christian. The fourth stage and “highest” state is New Age mysticism.
- Peck further denies God’s sovereignty by viewing evil as essentially beyond God’s control.
- Peck denies the original goodness of God’s creation.
- Peck views evil as “mental illness” rather than sin against God.
- Peck believes that at the time of the Fall Satan was given a positive role by God, to contribute to the “spiritual growth” of man.
- Peck’s views about the relationship of Christ and the devil border on Mormonism.

- Peck believes the devil will ultimately have a chance to accept the “friendship” of mankind and be saved. Significantly, this appraisal of Satan occurs in *People of the Life*, a book embraced by many evangelicals and frequently found in Christian bookstores.
- Peck rejects the bodily resurrection taught in Scripture and states that he finds it “distasteful.”
- Peck believes that people of all religions will be found in heaven and that the “gates of hell” are wide open so that anyone can choose to walk out at any time.
- Instead of the glorious hope of Christ’s visible return to consummate history and establish His earthly kingdom, Peck substitutes a global “community” ushered in primarily by the efforts of man. [One World Government and dominionist theology]
- Peck claims salvation is available to people of all religious faiths and adamantly denies that there is an exclusive way of salvation.
- Peck’s vision of “community” is characterized by an inclusivity that unites all religious faiths and a contempt for any claim to exclusive truth. [One World Religion and the inevitable persecution of tribulation saints]

Sound eerily similar to *The Shack*? It is not a coincidence – it’s by demonic design. And what began slowly creeping out of the shadows and into the mainstream in the 70’s now finds itself firmly rooted throughout the “Christian” community.

David Jeremiah of Turning Point Ministries wrote in his 1995 book *Invasion of Other Gods: The Seduction of New Age Spirituality* that, “I believe the New Spirituality is the greatest threat to the Christian world-view today. It is subtle and insidious, ready to catch us unaware. My warning is not from an academic viewpoint; it is with the passion of the apostle Paul

when he said, ‘I did not cease to warn everyone night and day...with tears.’” (Jeremiah 26)

Only a decade later, Jeremiah would fall victim to the very thing he so accurately and passionately warned others about.

Before looking at that, it is interesting to note that even at this point (in 1995) the initial “crack” in Jeremiah’s proverbial door was already opening up, unbeknownst to him. In *Invasion of Other Gods*, he repeatedly quoted and referred to Eugene Patterson (of *The Message*) and his book was endorsed on the back cover by Dr. Larry Crabb.

Crabb’s promotional materials for his book *Soul Talk* (a “must read” that “most shaped” Jacobsen’s spiritual journey) claims it “introduces a revolutionary new way for Christians to experience God. It is a process he calls ‘soul talk.’ Soul talk happens when two Christians talk to each other in a way that results in their passion for God being stirred, ignited, and released. It’s about learning a language that when used, releases supernatural power that enables people to move to the deepest level of relationships with each other and with God.”

This was exactly what Jeremiah was writing and warning against in the book and yet, inexplicably, this man’s endorsement was chosen to run on the back cover?

In 1992, Marianne Williamson released *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*. Like ACIM and so many other New Spirituality works, she was caudled and promoted by Oprah Winfrey who interviewed her and even announced that she was so moved by the book that she purchased a thousand copies to give to friends. Williamson would go on to be a regular on “Oprah & Friends.”

She is a spiritual activist, founder of The Peace Alliance and minister in the Unity church which, among other things, believes that God is spiritual energy (pantheistic in nature and incapable of anger or judgment), Jesus had a divine nature called “Christ” which all people share (Jesus was simply our master teacher and example of how to tap into our own divinity), man is inherently good (she has stated, “You have committed no sins, just mistakes”), and our salvation is obtained by recognizing our divinity and applying it to our life.

It has been written that, “Williamson might be called Oprah’s patron saint. She’s all about love and healing, yin and yang, being wounded, and using love and prayer to heal all wounds. *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles* (1992) was number one on the Publishers Weekly non-fiction best-sellers list for eleven weeks. Williamson promoted her book and ACIM when she appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, an episode that received more pro viewer mail than any other show for 1992. She also plugged the book and the course when she was interviewed by Barbara Walters on the ABC television news show 20/20.” (*A Course In Miracles*)

As espoused in her book, central to Williamson’s understanding of love is the belief that “we are all part of a vast sea of love, one indivisible divine mind...the love in one of us is the love in all of us. There’s actually no place where God stops and you start, and no place where you stop and I start.” (Williamson 29)

In his *Invasion of Other Gods*, Jeremiah poignantly wrote, “The wife of a Christian publisher told her husband that she had just read the most fascinating book, *A Return to Love*. She praised it as a different concept of looking at God’s plan for our lives. How many others, simply because Christian terminology is used,

have a veil over their eyes about Satan's deceptive tactics?" (Jeremiah 150)

These books represent only the tip of the demonic iceberg that threatens to lure away unsuspecting folks from the true faith. I have personally heard the very same comment from many well-meaning Christians spoken in defense of Young's *The Shack*. They confidently claim that it simply presents a different way of looking at God – a fresh and “unconditioned” perspective. However, not every perspective is accurate and just because it is fresh and new (which, in this case, isn't even true) does not inherently render it as valid and truthful.

Williamson wrote, “Jesus and other enlightened masters are our evolutionary elder brothers” (Williamson 38) and “God remains who He is and always will be: He is energy, the thought of unconditional love. He cannot think with anger or judgment.” (Williamson 18)

This is the heart of ACIM, Universal Reconciliation, New Age spiritualism, Christian mysticism and Young's concept of God in *The Shack*.

I have chosen to highlight Jeremiah because I believe his case best illustrates the fact that everyone is capable of being deceived by this heretical movement that is sweeping through our churches and Christian communities. Here is a man who was well educated in the Scriptures, had been involved in the ministry for years (with no indication of any heretical tendencies), and was well aware of both the New Age spirituality threat and the clear and present danger it posed (he even wrote a book on it). And yet, by 2005 he was falling into the Contemplative Spirituality tar pit!

In 2005, Jeremiah joined with Ken Blanchard and Laurie Beth Jones in the Lead Like Jesus conference. In 2006, he published *Captured by Grace* in which he discusses Henri Nouwen and received an endorsement from Ken Blanchard. In 2006, Jeremiah favorably quoted Erwin McManus in a sermon. In 2007, he quoted M. Scott Peck on Turning Point – one of the very people he specifically identified in *Invasion of Other Gods* as being a part of the New Age movement that so threatened the faith. And in 2007, his church, Shadow Mountain, encouraged the use of Richard Foster’s book *Celebration of Discipline*.

Who are these folks?

Ken Blanchard is a staunch New Age proponent/guru. I could write an entire book just on his New Age/New Spirituality ties. In 2003, he was appointed to assist Rick Warren with his Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan initiative and at Warren’s Saddleback Church. Rick Warren now sits on the board of Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus organization (along with Bill Hybels, Laurie Beth Jones, John Maxwell and Mark Victor Hansen). He radically promotes eastern meditation and Buddhism and has had a lengthy involvement (including sitting on the board) with The Hoffman Institute – an organization that promotes mystical meditation and a pantheistic view of God. He has co-authored an audio set with Rick Warren and Bill Hybels entitled *Lead Like Jesus*.

Laurie Beth Jones is another New Age author and promoter. She was a presenter at the Ninth International Conference on Business and Consciousness produced by The Message Company – whose website unabashedly reports that it was “founded in 1994 with a mission to disseminate cutting-edge consciousness-expanding information. A world leader in producing inspirational, experiential and life altering conferences” including

conferences on Shamanism, Sacred Sexuality and Science & Consciousness.

Henri Nouwen was a Catholic theologian who wrote in his last book, “Today I personally believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God’s house, all human beings can walk through that door, whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God.” (Nouwen 51)

In a 1994 survey of 3,400 US Protestant church leaders, Nouwen was ranked second only to Billy Graham in influence among them. (Yungen 61)

He was extremely sympathetic to Eastern mysticism and pantheistic in his understanding of the world. Quoting Nouwen from his *Bread for the Journey*, Ray Yungen writes of his twisted theology, “The doctrines (instructions) of demons (no matter how nice, how charming, how devoted to God they sound) convey that everything has Divine Presence (all is One). This is clear heresy, for that would be saying Satan and God are one also. If what Henri Nouwen proclaimed is true when he said, ‘We can come to the full realization of the unity of all that is,’ then Jesus Christ and Satan are also united. That, my friend, is something only a demonic spirit would teach.” (Yungen)

Erwin McManus is a militant Emergent Church leader and advocate, pastor and author of *The Barbarian Way* and *Seizing Your Divine Moment* (name was later changed to *Chasing Daylight* and re-released).

McManus has stated, “My goal is to destroy Christianity as a world religion and be a recatalyst for the movement of Jesus Christ...some people are upset with me because it sounds like

I'm anti-Christian. I think they might be right.” (Book Seeks to Uproot Christianity to Return to Its Roots)

In an interview with *Relevant Magazine*, he said, “*The Barbarian Way* was, in some sense, trying to create a volatile fuel to get people to step out and act. It’s pretty hard to get a whole group of people moving together as individuals who are stepping into a **more mystical, faith-oriented, dynamic kind of experience** with Christ. So, I think *Barbarian Way* was my attempt to say, ‘Look, underneath what **looks like invention, innovation and creativity** is really a **core mysticism** that **hears from God**, and what is fueling this is something **really ancient**.” (Interview has been subsequently removed from their website with no indication given as to the reason for its removal or whether it was at the magazine’s discretion or at the request of McManus)

Jeremiah whole-heartedly endorsed McManus’ *Seizing Your Divine Moment*, writing, “I wish I could say I couldn’t put *Seizing Your Divine Moment* down. The fact is, I had to put it down many times to think about what I had just read! It motivated me like no book I have read in years. I marked almost every page and found myself saying ‘yes’ out loud on several occasions. You owe it to yourself to ‘seize the moment’ and read this book.” (Back Cover endorsement – removed from the revised edition that was released under the new title *Chasing Daylight*)

Other prominent endorsers of this book on McManus’ website include Rick Warren, Bill McCartney (founder and president of Promise Keepers – contemplative spirituality/emergent church proponent), the now deceased Dr. Ralph D. Winter (founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, a strongly dominionist front organization for many shadow ministries and networks, who wrote, “...[M]issions is essentially the restoration of God’s Kingdom and rule and power on this earth. It involves the

reestablishment [sic] of His glory, of His honor of His control of things."⁸), and Leonard Sweet (well-known contemplative spirituality teacher). (An Unstoppable Force)

Maybe Jeremiah should have put this book down and re-read his own *Invasion of Other Gods*!

McManus also co-hosted the Rethink Conference with Robert Schuller at Crystal Cathedral in January 2008 (speakers included Rick Warren's wife Kay Warren) and was a featured speaker at the Saddleback Church Worship Conference and Festival in June of 2007.

His concept of "awakening an apostolic ethos" in *An Unstoppable Force* is pure Emergent Church teaching, deeply rooted in new apostolic, replacement and dominionist views.

What he (and Rick Warren through his Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan) is proposing is a militant call to change culture - to establish a New World Order of state, church and commerce. This is something Jesus never told us to do. Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world. Our commission is to be spiritually preparing people for the coming kingdom by being separate from the world while we are in it – not building a physical, utopian society in this world.

McManus' website Awaken states, "Awaken is a collaboration between a team of *dreamers* and *innovators* who specialize in the field of developing and unleashing personal and organizational **creativity**. Awaken is committed to **creating** environments that expand **imagination** and unleash **creativity**. Convinced that the world is *changed* by *dreamers* and *visionaries*, Awaken serves humanity through its commitment to maximize **creative** potential

⁸ Written by Dr. Ralph D. Winter, executive director of the US Center for World Mission, in the 1998 May-June issue of *Mission Frontier*.

in every individual and organization. Awaken emerges out of the unique ministry of Mosaic and reflects Mosaic's commitment to **creativity**, uniqueness, innovation and diversity.” (Awaken)

Wow, how many times can you use *creativity* in one paragraph? This is straight-up process theology and could have been pulled right out of the pages of *The Shack*! And it is repeated again and again on every, single website McManus is associated with.

Mosaic is the multi-site, mega-church based in Los Angeles that McManus serves with as “Cultural Architect” and lead pastor. It has been listed as one of the fifty most influential churches in the US by *Church Report*.

I find his creative (I thought I'd borrow a word from him) choice of titles interesting as well as telling and would point-out that when Christ returns, He will in some sense be *the* Cultural Architect as he establishes His physical kingdom on earth as the King of kings. However, He was certainly no such thing during His earthly ministry and nowhere in Scripture did He call for us to be one either.

In fact, this was one of the very reasons the Jews rejected Him as the Messiah - He was not what they were looking for. They were (errantly) anticipating a Messiah that was a cultural architect (one that would deal with the Romans and restore Israel to its proper place in the world). However, He had come instead to serve and suffer as the sacrificial Lamb of God and not to affect socio-political (i.e. cultural) change as the King of kings!

Much like the Jews of Jesus' time, McManus and the Emergent Church/Dominionist Movement commit a similar error when they confuse our **present** mandate from Christ (a spiritual – not physical – mandate to share His gospel and disciple believers)

with His actions in the **future** (the creation of His earthly, physical kingdom) at the time of His glorious return.

On his personal website, McManus writes, “For too long we have focused on making sure people believe the right things...I know it may sound like heresy, but it is more important to change what people care about than to change what they believe!” (The Author)

First, any time you say or hear “I know it may sound like heresy,” guess what? It probably is! It ranks up there with my other least favorite phrase, “I know the Bible says ____ **BUT** ____!”

Second, this is a demonic strategy that was clearly revealed in *A Course In Miracles*. According to which, you don’t affect change by targeting beliefs (far too much resistance); instead, you target experience and accomplish the mission with little risk of detection and only token (if any) resistance – in fact, you’ll be welcomed in by hordes of cheering and adoring fans! Remember that, according to ACIM, experience shapes perceptions and perceptions in turn shape beliefs: “It is impossible not to believe what you see, but it is equally impossible to see what you do not believe. Perceptions are built up on the basis of experience, and experience leads to beliefs.” (ACIM 207)

Erwin McManus’ brother Alex served on the leadership team of Mosaic from 1998-2004, founded the International Mentoring Network (IMN), created Voxtopolis, operates his own blog/website entitled “On a Quest Into the Mystic...” and is a key leader behind Erwin’s Origins Network.

The IMN is a “custom made mentoring process with dense relational components, to discover, develop and deploy leaders.

The IMN is part social network, part cyber-seminary, part Idea Studio and part Bohemian chill.” (About Alex)

It is one of hundreds of New Spirituality/Emergent Church shadow ministries that are steadily cranking-out “leaders” to infiltrate the church, convert the faithful into diversity-embracing, creativity-loving lemmings and bring the dominionist idea of a One World Religion/Government to fruition. I mean if you want a billion-man army of “Christian” kingdom builders as Rick Warren does (though he has since reduced the number to just *millions* of boots on the ground), you’ll need a lot of leaders!

Voxtopolis, in the spirit of Rick Warren’s purpose driven plan, is “a collaboration between artists and activists, promoters and clubs, businesses and individuals designed to mobilize communities in the fight 4 [sic] humanity.” (About Alex)

Alex is also the author of *Making the World Human Again: The Quest to Save the Future from Religion* and is the publisher of the website *Into the Mystic*. And remember, this guy served on the church’s leadership team for six years!

He is also an associate professor for Bethel Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry in Entrepreneurial Leadership??? I didn’t even know that major existed! And I certainly don’t remember Jesus’ ministry ever teaching on *entrepreneurial leadership*! But remember, the business sphere is one of the three prongs of the One World Government and shaping and controlling it is a major goal of the folks advocating and working towards it.

And, no surprise here, he unequivocally denies the inspiration of Scripture in every way, shape and form! He believes it is purely human literature and nothing more. (McManus) Add to this his belief in evolution and the same (if not greater) militant ideas about building a physical kingdom that his brother Erwin shares

and you have a truly twisted soul indeed – and these are the people believers everywhere are rallying to and falling at the feet of!

The press release for the July 2010 launch of the Origins Network as posted on Margaret Feinberg's blog (she is a member of Origins' "Creative" Team) stated, "The Church in America is changing, and Origins is at the forefront. Origins is a worldwide network of leaders who follow Jesus thriving on the **diversity** and **creativity** growing in the church. It's an externally-focused network of *creatives, business leaders, activists, educators, and leaders* that exists to **love humanity**...if you want to understand and experience the **evolving force** of Christianity, one that represents the **diversity**, passion, and **creativity** found in the ways of Jesus, Origins' inaugural event is the place to find it...We hope to focus on what it means to be on a mission for Jesus – **creatively** and actively." (Margaret Feinberg's Blog)

Erwin McManus' website states that Origins is "a leadership development experience designed by AWAKEN and field tested by MOSAIC to equip church and para-church leaders...[and] proposes to **reawaken the apostolic ethos**...to the whole planet in the 21st century...[and] is designed to immerse your thinking in a **cultural architecture** for the 21st century." (Origins)

This spiritual movement is similar in structure, nature and scope (and just as powerful) as the socio-political system of shadow organizations and networks established and controlled by billionaire, socialist and radical One World Government advocate George Soros – who, incidentally, believes he has a divine nature and is a little god.

Finally, throw-in Richard Foster who is a well-known contemplative prayer/spirituality proponent and Universalist and you get the picture. And these are the folks Jeremiah is now

hanging with – the very people he wrote a book to warn his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ about!

In September of 2006, Jeremiah fully-embraced McManus' *The Barbarian Way*, preaching a series of sermons based upon the revelations he received from reading it and calling for a “major paradigm shift” at Shadow Mountain Community Church. In an email he sent out to his faithful promoting the series, he wrote, “This weekend, I will be sharing the second message in our Fall Journey With Jesus. The title of the message is ‘The Manliness of Jesus.’ I am praying that it will fire you up as much as it has me. It's a major paradigm shift from our normal thoughts about Jesus...I have read a book by Erwin McManus called THE BARBARIAN WAY. In it, he says something that should prepare our hearts for the weekend message.”

I have included this section in an effort to both demonstrate the depth and width to which this movement has infiltrated the “Christian” community as well as to demonstrate that none of us, no matter how mature in the faith or Scripturally-rooted we are, are out of its reach or immune to its power.

New Age/New Spirituality ideas and beliefs permeate every corner of Christianity today. From our churches to our Christian bookstores and from our Christian media (radio, internet & television programming) to our Christian music, one does not have to look far at all to find its presence and influence.

As a result, we must be ever vigilant lest the threat manage to infiltrate our heart and mind or those of our friends and family. We must relentlessly test everything against the Scriptures. We must actively and aggressively utilize the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and continuously build upon both our knowledge of it and our skills at interpreting and applying it to our lives.

Calling All Watchmen

In Ezekiel 33, we find God describing the purpose, importance and responsibility of a watchman.

“Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.’” (33:2-6)

In Scripture, watchmen served in both a physical and spiritual role. In a physical sense, they patrolled the walls around a city, constantly scanning the horizon for the approach of a hostile threat. They were responsible for stoically standing watch for the people within those walls whose very lives depended on their success or failure. In a spiritual sense, the prophets were watchmen charged by God to recognize the infiltration of spiritual heresy and warn the folks of the threat.

When a threat appeared, these watchmen were responsible for warning the people of impending threats by sounding the alarm – in biblical times this meant sounding a horn or trumpet in the

case of physical threats or preaching messages of repentance and warnings of God's impending judgment in the case of spiritual threats.

“Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Therefore, wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.’” (Nehemiah 4:19-20, during the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem)

Whether they served in the role of physical watchmen or spiritual watchmen, they were the early warning system for the people and their role was absolutely crucial to their safety and well-being.

How does this apply to us today? While our physical and social situation is very different from the Old Testament times, there still remains a vital need for faithful watchmen!

In a physical sense, while we no longer live in walled cities, we do still have watchmen – our law enforcement agencies serve as our local watchmen and the men and women of our armed services serve as our national or corporate watchmen. However, it should be noted that, despite the outstanding work these professionals do, we still have a right and an obligation to protect our own homes. Common sense still demands that we remain ever vigilant regarding the security of not only our own home but the homes of our neighbors as well.

In a spiritual sense, the church (the body of Christ) is comprised of local assemblies of believers and they need capable, spiritual watchmen just like the Israelites.

Christ has created an overarching system or network of spiritual watchmen who, when performing their functions correctly, will protect His sheep.

Pastors

The senior, or chief, watchman for each local church is the pastor. Ultimately, the spiritual responsibility of feeding and protecting the local flock belongs to him. He must constantly heed the warning of the Apostle Paul to be on the lookout for dangerous wolves.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:28-30)

Notice that Paul clearly beseeches pastors to be vigilant for two kinds of spiritual threats: external and internal. The internal threats are the hardest to recognize for they come from false teachers who cunningly cloak themselves in the veil of “Christianity.”

New Age spirituality is an example of an external threat. However, once it infiltrated the church and began to be advocated within the church by false teachers who claim to be “Christians,” it then became an internal threat – and much more difficult to eradicate.

This is precisely why it is so vitally important for threats to be identified by watchmen while they are still outside the “walls” for once the enemy gets inside the gates, the task of effectively

rallying the faithful and defeating it becomes much more difficult and the spiritual casualty rates climb significantly higher.

We now find ourselves in the undesirable position of being in the latter stage. New Age spirituality has, over the past few decades, silently breached the walls and is now being seductively packaged and marketed directly to believers as “Contemplative Spirituality” by false teachers within the “church” – false teachers who have become hailed by many as the true teachers and enlightened ones of the faith.

Proof of this is unmistakably seen in products like *The Shack* which are falsely promoted as “Christian” and exclusively targeted towards believers by false teachers who claim to be engaged in “Christian” ministry.

Elders

In addition to our pastors, we also have an added level of spiritual security in our church elders. They also serve as our watchmen, insuring that the pastor and teachers within the local body remain faithful and true to the Word of God – or at least that is what they are supposed to be doing. Paul makes it explicitly clear that church elders, in addition to overseeing church business, must be able to teach! This means they must be very knowledgeable of God’s Word and capable of effectively communicating it to the flock in a way in which the folks can properly apply it to themselves.

Elders are critical watchmen over their local church families; however, you can’t be a watchman if you don’t know what you’re watching for! Nor can you communicate the nature of that spiritual threat (teach why it is wrong) if you don’t have an extensive and solid knowledge and understanding of God’s Word and the spiritual gifts to effectively communicate (teach) it!

We must stop appointing men to the position of elder because they have been a member of the church for eons, own the most successful business in town, or donate large sums of money to the church! While they are responsible for overseeing the finances of the church and business experience may be helpful, the most important requirement should always be their testimony (witness), their knowledge and understanding of God's Word and their ability to faithfully teach the Word and uphold the tenets of the faith. They should be as spiritually knowledgeable and experienced as the pastor – if not more!

If your church has elders who are not highly knowledgeable of God's Word and either can't or won't effectively teach it, then you and your church are at risk of being deceived by false teachings. After all, how can they effectively evaluate their pastor and teachers if they have no means or ability upon which to conduct that evaluation?

Note: The role of deacons is entirely different. They are leaders in terms of service. They assist the pastor and elders in carrying out and accomplishing the vision and mission of the local church but are not teachers.

God has told us in His Word that pastors and teachers (and that means elders too) will be held accountable to a higher standard (James 3:1). While it is a blessing and privilege to serve the Lord in these roles, they are positions that involve a tremendous level of responsibility and emotional burden. This is why we should never cease praying for and encouraging our pastors and elders – they both need it and deserve it!

Husbands

However, by far, the most important spiritual watchman is at the family level – the husband. The husband is the priest or pastor of

his family. He is accountable to God for how he performs this duty. He is the family's ultimate and most important watchman. In terms of his responsibility to his family, his authority from and accountability to God exceed all of the other watchmen.

Husbands please understand this! When you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an accounting for your life, the most important evaluation will center on how you performed in the role of family pastor.

Did you spiritually lead, feed and protect your wife, children and other dependents in a godly and biblical manner? Your pastor will not be standing there with you! You will not be able to point the finger and pass the blame to him! Your wife and children are dearly loved by God and immeasurably important to Him. Jesus Christ has appointed you the pastor and watchman over them and He will hold you personally accountable for how you perform the task.

Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) What will it profit you if you earn millions or make it to the top of the corporate ladder but your wife or child loses their soul because you weren't there (or weren't capable) to provide the spiritual protection they needed? I know that's a sobering thought but that is the real responsibility we face as husbands – and it should motivate us to act!

I contend that the greatest reason behind both the present apostasy (falling-away from the faith) and the degree to which the New Age/New Spirituality threat has been able to successfully infiltrate the church is that we have failed, at the family level, to take our responsibility to be watchmen seriously.

Husbands are supposed to serve as Christ's spiritual fire-walls at the family level. We prevent the fires of heresy (false teachings) from being able to spread. If every family is properly compartmentalized under the effective spiritual care of their husband-pastor-watchman, then even if a church's pastor goes off the spiritual "reservation," even if the elders are unable or unwilling to intervene, he can inflict very little wide-scale or long-term damage and will be quickly relieved of his duties as families begin making a mass exodus from that particular local church.

However, when we so casually neglect our spiritual responsibility and willingly surrender it to our pastors, we leave our households spiritually unprotected and susceptible to false teachings. Pastors are not there to entertain us for a few hours, once a week. They are there to equip us with the spiritual tools we need in order to perform our own duties within our own families on a 24/7 basis!

While false teachers are accountable for their actions, they would not be so successful and popular today if we didn't accept them with open arms! They do what they do because we allow them to. We support their ministries, attend their events, buy their books and/or send them money – all the while providing them with the very success that encourages and empowers them to continue their demonic work.

And why do we so willingly accept them? Because we have become spiritually lazy! We no longer possess a knowledge or understanding of God's Word nor do we apply it to our lives. How many of us husbands have honestly spent even the most limited amount of time studying God's Word or trying to equip ourselves to better serve as our family's pastor and spiritual leader? When was the last time, when facing an important decision affecting our family, we opened the Word of God and

sought His counsel? And when was the last time we shared or taught our wife or kids something Scriptural or even modeled a proper, biblical response in our own lives for them?

And we wonder why our wives and children are being deceived into accepting all sorts of heretical beliefs! It's because the false teachers are doing what we would not...filling their spiritual void and feeding their spiritual cravings – only they are filling them with garbage! And our loved-ones have no spiritual defense with which to resist or refute them because we never took the time or thought it important enough to provide them with one!

A perfect example of this is Oprah! She has negatively impacted millions upon millions of women – they are her almost exclusive audience. Those women are our wives and daughters. If we had properly equipped and prepared them to resist the false teachings and New Age spirituality she peddles non-stop on her TV and radio programs (and now she has a whole television network), they would be in a right-relationship with God through Christ!

Now, I completely understand that we are each free to make our own decisions and that many will choose to willingly accept false teachings; however, that is not the issue. The issue is whether we, as husbands, have done everything within our power (and the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer) to faithfully and accurately teach them the Word of God and protect them from the inevitable threats they will face...after all, it is not a question of IF our wives and children will be exposed to false teachings but simply WHEN and HOW OFTEN!

If we have, then we have done all that Christ has asked us to do. If not, then we need to wake-up, man the walls and sound the trumpets because the enemy is at the gates of our homes and actively targeting the hearts and minds of our loved-ones!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Finally, just as we have a responsibility to keep a watchful eye on our neighbors in a physical sense - looking out for their safety, we also have a responsibility to be spiritual watchmen for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Pastors can't be everywhere at once and the demands of the ministry can be overwhelming. We all need to lookout for one another and sound the alarm when we see the enemy approaching another's life or family.

Again, if we each took seriously the responsibility to both know our faith and serve as a watchman for each other, then, like another level of fire-walls, we would make it much, much more difficult for demonic spirits to deceive our fellow believers!

Furthermore, this is where you ladies can have a really huge impact for Christ. You can be a "watchwoman" and stand guard over your girlfriends! Who better to know what's going on in your female circles? I mean we men have little clue what Oprah talked about on her show today or what false teachings were espoused on any number of other programs, networks and books geared towards women!

There has been an explosion of women's ministries, books, resources and television programming in the past decade. They are a huge source of false teachings because Satan loves to target women due to their emotional vulnerabilities – he has been using this tactic successfully since the Garden of Eden.

Doubt this? Research the financial data – it has become BIG business! Want to know where Americans' hearts are? Follow the dollars! And these "Christian" ministries, publishers and producers always know where the money is at. After all, you

don't invest in publishing books, producing programming or building massive ministries that don't sell or bring in the money. This is a huge ministry opportunity that is tailor-fit for godly women to serve in – ladies grab your trumpet and head for the walls!

A Final Word

I have spent a great part of my life “manning the walls.” I have been blessed with a strong gift of discernment from God and a strong calling to defend the faith and protect the faithful from threats and false teachings, both internal and external. It has not always been easy or comfortable but it has always been an honor and a privilege – both to serve my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to serve my brothers and sisters in Him.

Anytime you rock the boat or call into question people's experiences, perceptions and beliefs, there is sure to be an emotional backlash. However, we are in a spiritual battle for souls and there always exists a cost for serving in any conflict – whether physical or spiritual.

Jesus warned us of this cost when He said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

I have written this book to once again sound the trumpet, to both warn you of a clear and present danger that threatens you, your loved-ones and your friends, and educate you on the nature of that threat.

As I noted in the beginning, I am by no means alone in this task. Many faithful brothers and sisters in Christ have been engaged in

this spiritual battle against the silent infiltration of New Age influences into the church for years and many more are rising-up, grabbing their trumpets, climbing atop the proverbial walls and doing the same every day. *Will you join us?*

The threat posed by the New Age/New Spirituality movement (known also as Contemplative Spirituality/Prayer) that has been presented in Young's *The Shack* is not a matter of splitting theological hairs nor is it something to be taken lightly, dismissed easily or tackled with kid-gloves.

While all doctrine is important, there are areas of the Christian faith that are not core, essential teachings that sincere believers can lovingly differ on. However, there are also fundamental doctrines (such as the nature of God, the nature of Sin and man, the Incarnation, and the nature and means of salvation, etc...) which are non-negotiable. They, by their very essence, define our faith and differentiate it from every other man-made religion that all share a common point of origin – Nimrod and the Babylonian mystery religion.

Either Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life” or He is not (John 14:6). Either “No one comes to the Father except through Him” or everyone gets into heaven by whatever means they choose (John 14:6).

There is no middle ground. No personal experiences or perceptions matter. It doesn't even matter if you “heard” it from a spirit claiming to be Jesus Himself. God has already spoken and provided, with absolute clarity, His truth through His Word and we can either accept what He has declared or reject it...but to attempt to childishly re-define His declarations, in a futile attempt to make them fit our own petty desires, is to either be completely delusional or to be living in outright rebellion against Him. Since

most folks appear, at least at first glance, to be of reasonably sound minds, that leaves only the second option.

We must stop creating our own personal spirituality....stop trying to be little gods...stop sharing in Satan's rebellion against the authority of God. Ignorance is not an excuse. God has provided us with the truth and preserved it for us down through the ages.

If we find ourselves "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive," then it is because we have chosen to remain a spiritually infant. We have failed to grow-up (mature) in our faith through the study of His Word (Ephesians 4:14).

We must start studying His Word and applying it to our lives. To do anything else is to render ourselves defenseless against the cunningly deceptive powers of darkness that are intent on our destruction. And that is a dangerous game to play when one considers both the enormity and seriousness of the temporal and eternal consequences inherent in it.

We must not rely on what someone else claims the Word of God says – no matter how respected, educated or popular they are. We need to know for ourselves what inspired, inerrant and infallible, written Word of God says!

Don't believe a single thing I've said in this book until you test it against the Scriptures. You do your homework. But don't stop there...test everything against the Scriptures – you can't go wrong if you do!

The more time you spend in the Word, the better you'll know and understand the faith and the better you will become at testing

teachings and protecting yourself, your family and others from deceiving spirits and demonic teachings.

God is still calling watchmen to man the “walls” and sound the alarm. The need has never been greater for the church than it is right now in these last days. *Will you answer the call and join us?*

Whether it’s answering the call to be a pastor, serving as an elder, providing spiritual guidance to your family to counter the false teachings they are exposed to everyday, shedding light on false teachings your friends have been exposed to or are experimenting with, or insuring your pastor isn’t unknowingly drawn into the New Age/Contemplative spirituality movement...whether it’s small-scale and personal or large-scale and public...the opportunity to serve the Lord and “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” is all around you! (Jude 3)

What are you waiting for? It’s time to get serious! It’s time to start studying, applying and defending the faith...in our families and our churches! We need more faithful and skilled watchmen...we need you!

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him,
‘If you **abide in My word**, you are My disciples indeed.

And you shall **know the truth**, and
the truth shall make you free...”

John 8:31-32, 34-36

“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust,
avoiding the profane and vain babblings and
contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – by
professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith.

Grace be with you. Amen.”

1 Timothy 6:20-21

Appendix: What About You?

How about **YOU**? Maybe, through the course of reading this book, you have realized that you never really trusted Christ as your personal Savior.

For the first time in your life, you have realized that sin is real and you are really a sinner. You now feel the guilt that others have told you is merely imaginary. It is not. It is real and it has separated you from God and sentenced you to eternity apart from Him in hell.

However, the good news is that the one, true faith declares there is a solution – a truly unique and divine solution!

Jesus Christ became fully-God and fully-man so that He could die on the cross for YOU! He shed His blood to redeem you. He bore your punishment so you would not have to. Through Him you have the opportunity to receive complete forgiveness from God and to once-again share in personal relationship with Him, one that will continue throughout all eternity without end!

And the best news is that you don't have to "do" anything to receive this salvation – it is a gift from God!

However, like any gift, you do have to accept it!

How do you do that? It's as straightforward as saying this simple prayer in your heart:

*Father, I come before You in prayer today with a humble heart.
My eyes have been opened to the truth and I now realize that I
am a sinner and, as such, I deserve to spend eternity apart from
You in hell. However, I believe in my heart that You sent your
Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the Cross for me.*

Lord, I thank You for taking my punishment, that I rightfully deserved, upon Yourself so that my sins could be justly forgiven.

Father, I gladly and thankfully accept both Your forgiveness for all my sins and Your gift of eternal life which were purchased by the shed blood of Jesus and are now given freely to me through Your grace. Thank You, Father.

Please help me to begin walking in the light of Your truth and developing a personal relationship with You, Lord. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, let me be the first to welcome you to the “family” and congratulate you on receiving a new life through Christ! It is with great anticipation that I look forward to meeting you in heaven one glorious day!

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *by believing* you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

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