

The Shack: Father-Goddess Rising

Source:

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/index.php?p=1065&c=1>

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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: After reading John Lanagan's article below, those who are true believers in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will easily discern the deception and false gospel in "The Shack." What amazes me is that "Christian" radio stations in our area are promoting this antichristian-gospel book. This means those allowing it to be promoted are: ignorant of its contents, not true believers in Jesus as their Savior, or they are more interested in the money these sponsored advertisements produce than they are in protecting their listeners from the lies promoted in the book. I pray this article will spur the reader to warn their friends and neighbors about the dangers of this book's teachings.

Many are crediting *The Shack*, the novel by William P. Young, with revolutionizing their faith. With themes of overcoming loss, working through anger, and restored relationship between man and God, Young's novel has excited many within the Body of Christ.

Young has appeared on CBN, and has garnered fans across the country. *The Shack*, continues to sell briskly. Yet, in the midst of such enthusiasm, does *The Shack*, glorify Jesus Christ--or contradict the Bible with a false image of the Lord our God?

The novel's main character, Mack Philips, has lost his daughter. She has been murdered, her bloodied dress found in an isolated shack. Four years later Mack receives an invitation from God to spend time with the Trinity in the very shack where the dress was found.

Nowhere in the Bible do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit simultaneously assume physical forms on earth. *The Shack*, however, portrays Jesus as a carpenter, the Holy Spirit as an Asian woman, and God the Father as a large black woman named ... Papa.

Much like AA's "higher power," *The Shack's*, deity comes to Mack in a form he is willing to accept. While the novel's feminization of the Lord is as trendy as it is Babylonian, the reader rapidly becomes used to descriptions of God as "she" and "her." At one point the book's version of Jesus praises the fictional Father-goddess, exclaiming, "Isn't she great?"

Malachi 3:6 states, "For I, the Lord, do not change." God is Spirit. In the

entire Bible there is not one single reference to Father, Son, or Holy Spirit-- or to any of His angels--as female. It is probably not wise, then, to go beyond what has been presented in Scripture.

Unfortunately, this seems a frequent occurrence in *The Shack*. The Father-goddess character tells Mack she appears in female form "to help keep you from falling back so easily into your religious conditioning." The author and his publishing team apparently assume Christians believe the Lord is an old white man with a beard, and have produced the book in part to help straighten us out.

There is an apparent dismissal of the importance of Scripture, which is reflected in slippery theology found throughout the novel. Young writes, "Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book. Especially an expensive one bound in leather with gilt edges, or was that guilt edges?" Guilt edges?

The Father-goddess of *The Shack*, it seems, is never about guilt or punishment. She benignly 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."

That sounds wonderful. And, yes, sin enslaves. However, the novel's deity contradicts the Bible. Jesus will "be dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction..." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

Although most sermons these days skirt the issue, Christians receive punishment during our time on earth. "For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Hebrews 12:6-7)

But, this is not the message of the Father-goddess, simply because this is not the God of Scripture. An excellent writer, Young plays to emotion and touches on legitimate hurts and concerns. The author excels at imbuing his deity with attributes of love, forgiveness, and mercy, and this is what many people have responded to.

Increasingly in novels and movies the Lord is blithely used as one of the characters, and given words from the mouth of man. In this sense, the author of *The Shack*, is simply following the culture.

But something else is going on here.

Universal Reconciliation (UR) is the belief that Jesus' sacrifice allows Christians and non-Christians to spend eternity with God. In other words, in UR theology, everybody goes to heaven, not just followers of Jesus. Some in this camp even believe this includes the devil and his demons.

Publisher Wayne Jacobsen acknowledges that UR was included in earlier versions of *The Shack*. Jacobsen explains:

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.

So why did Jacobsen proceed to join forces with Young? He writes:

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 conclusions he may have embraced years earlier would be unfair to the ongoing process of God in his life and theology.

Perhaps, but this allegedly former theology even now seems to explain some of the content of the book.

The Bible clearly teaches the only way to God the Father is through Jesus, who loved us enough to die for us. 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 tells her ... yes. He may as well have told her that Allah (or any other false patriarchal god) is also the Father of Jesus.

Of course, if everybody is going to heaven because of UR, what does it matter? God, Great Spirit, Allah, what's the difference?

His daughter asks the question because Mack tells the story of an Indian princess who willingly died so her people could be delivered of an illness. According to an Indian prophecy, it could be ended only through her sacrifice. The author states, "After praying and giving herself to the Great Spirit, she fulfilled the prophecy by jumping without hesitation to her death on the rocks below."

When his daughter calls the Great Spirit "mean" for making both Jesus and the princess die, Mack never clarifies that Jesus' Father is not the Great Spirit, or that God the Father has nothing to do with this pagan legend.

Does the author still have UR leanings? In his article, 'The Beauty of Ambiguity,' it is not his character Mack, but Young himself, who speaks to the Father-goddess. He denies being a universalist, and proclaims "faith in Jesus is the only way into your embrace."

She asks, "I take it that it wouldn't bother you if I decided to save every human being that ever lived?"

"Nope. I actually hope you've figured a way to do just that," he replies.

Wait a minute. If Young is still hoping God somehow ends up saving everybody, well, that is Universal Reconciliation. And hoping UR might happen directly contradicts Jesus Christ:

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is

broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Although Young then proceeds to voice acceptance of the reality of hell, he complains to his fictional Father-goddess:

...why couldn't you have made things clear? People go to the Bible and find all these ways to disagree with each other ... Everybody seems to want to acquire their little piece of doctrinal territory ... Some find support for Universal Reconciliation; some find proofs for eternal torment in hell...

Young continues with his list. Issues run the gamut from Calvinism to eschatology and, having inserted Universal Reconciliation into the mix, his fictional Father-goddess never corrects him. No surprise there. Is this perhaps an attempt to at least infer valid consideration of UR by including it amongst a hodge-podge of doctrinal concerns?

Incredibly, Young's Father-goddess clarifies (?) that she made much of the Bible ambiguous on purpose! That the author, or any person, would dare present doctrinal confusion as the intended plan of God--and via a fictional character at that--is chilling. But, that's the way it is these days.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3)

It's going to get worse. Goddess worship, false christs, and many other heresies will continue to rise. Movies, novels, and TV will become increasingly blasphemous.

Readers of this novel would do well to examine Biblical teaching about the Trinity, sin, repentance, communication with the dead, and much else.

Many in the Body of Christ have run to get a copy of *The Shack*. Far better, brothers and sisters, to just run.

Endnotes:

William P. Young, *The Shack* pg.88

Ibid. pg.93

Ibid. pg.66

Ibid. pg.120

Wayne Jacobsen, "Is The Shack Heresy?"

Ibid.

The Shack pg. 31

Ibid. pg. 28

Ibid. pg. 31

William P. Young, "The Beauty of Ambiguity"

Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.