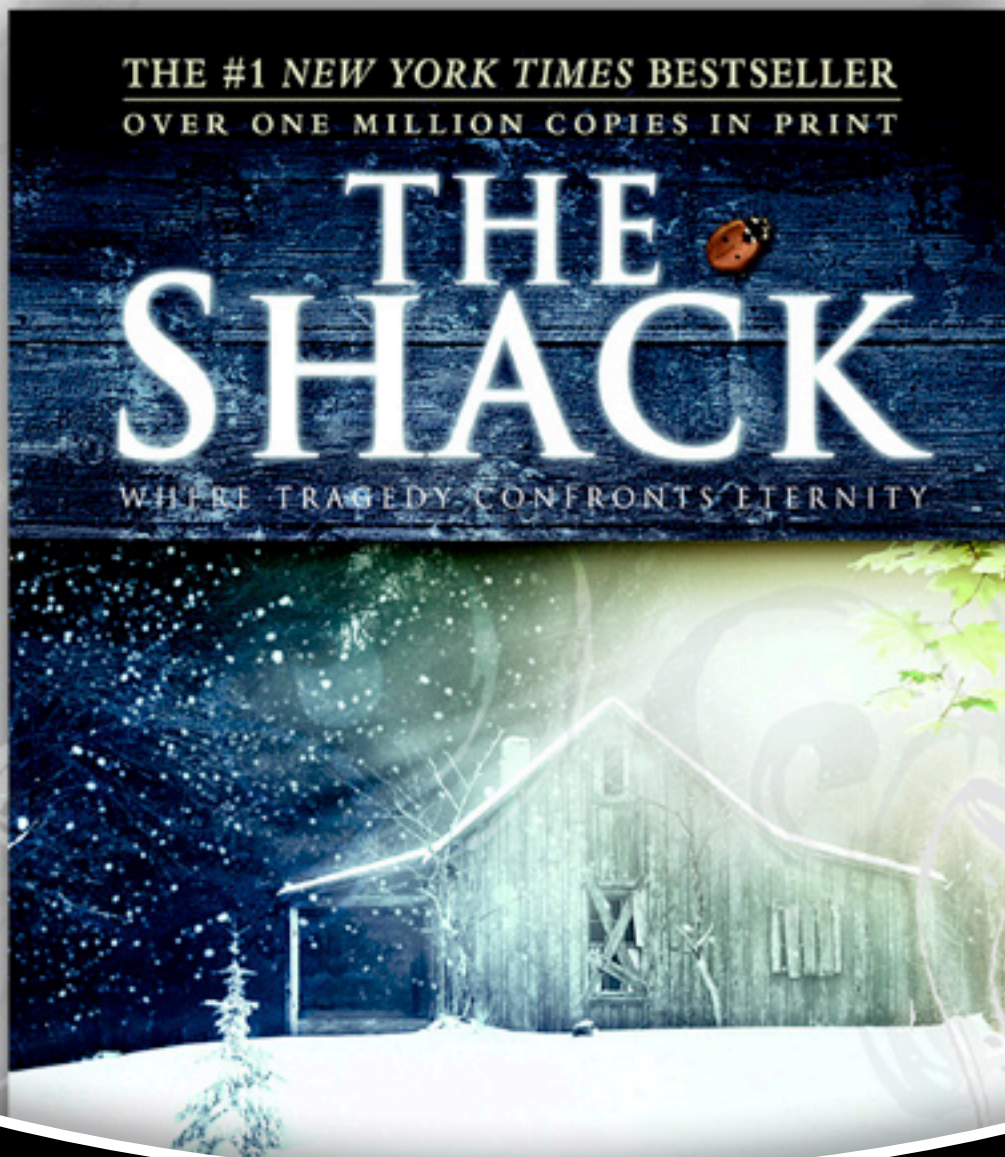


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*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy.... They will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be **turned unto fables**.” —1 TIMOTHY 4:1-2, 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4*



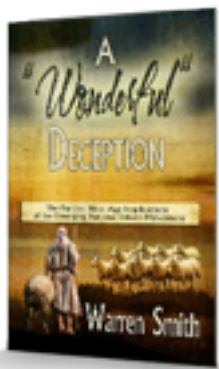
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by T. A. McMAHON

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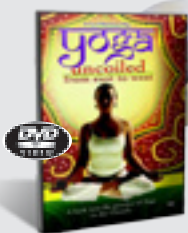
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— VOL. XXIV NO. 8 —

AUGUST 2009

Refashioning God

T. A. McMahon

Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

—2 Samuel 7:22

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

—John 17:3

Every man, woman, and child has the opportunity to spend eternity with God. That's mind-boggling! There is nothing imaginable that could possibly be more exciting and wonderful. Moreover, that possibility isn't something that man has invented. From Genesis through the book of Revelation, the Scriptures declare and explain how that becomes a reality. It's what the Bible is all about.

In God's revelation of Himself through His Word, we learn of His attributes and personal qualities in the only way that mankind can know Him accurately. Without His revelation, we are left with finite man's speculations and guesses about an infinite God. Such guesswork is often the basis of all the religions of the world. Their deities and their beliefs are the product of the imagination of fallen humanity (with the help of fallen angels). Biblical Christianity is the only exception. God has declared Himself in very specific terms to mankind. Without an accurate source of information, which only God Himself could and did provide, mankind would be left with nothing more than mythology, and most of the world is mired in this.

Tragically, a similar condition is infecting those who profess to be biblical Christians; they are slipping into the same swamp of delusion. That's one of the reasons why so few Christians seem truly excited about eternity and spending it with the Lord. They can't relate to it—or to Him—with real confidence. Many are tossed to and fro by their thoughts about God drawn from extra-biblical sources, from the latest best-selling Christian books, to Christian television programming, to what Oprah and her guests have conjured up. What's being communicated about God is usually pleasing (albeit to the flesh) but is rarely true to His holy character. Even the most appealing ideas about God, when they don't

ring true to the Scriptures, contribute to a misleading and superficial relationship with the One we are to love in truth and with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

John, the beloved Apostle, tells us in his epistle that believers love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). That love for Him began with a basic understanding of who He is and what He has done for us. When we finally understood and believed the simple gospel (that God so loved us that He became a Man in order to reconcile us to Himself through His life, death, and resurrection), Jesus saved us. He did what only God could do—provided salvation for all mankind by paying the infinite penalty for sin that God's perfect justice required.

At our new birth in Christ, which begins each believer's personal relationship with Him, He gives us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to live within us, to teach us His Word, and to help us to grow in the knowledge of God our Savior. That's the only way we can truly know, and mature in our relationship with, Jesus. Anything that deviates from God's way of knowing Him is a delusion that leads down a slippery slope to destruction. In this day of quick fixes, running after instant gratification, and experiential catharses, we need to heed Isaiah's counsel regarding spiritual maturity: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10). These precepts are God's instructions, His full counsel, which are completely sufficient for His children. As Peter declared, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). That's God's way of developing maturity and fruitfulness (not to mention confidence in and a greater love for Him!) among His saints: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8).

There is nothing complicated about God's plan. So, what's the problem? Each one of us has to ask himself or herself that question, whether indeed, we have not taken to heart, or have willfully deviated from, God's instructions. As Isaiah pointed out, the learning/maturing process is quite

simple ("precept upon precept"), but it does require learning what the precepts are and a willingness to do them. I'm speaking to my own heart as much as anyone else's when it comes to whether or not I fall short of what God desires in all of this.

For thirty years prior to accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior by faith alone, I had many beliefs about Him that were without support from the Scriptures—even contradictory. Some of the ideas came from the nuns and priests who, in many ways, were a wonderful part of my life growing up Catholic, whether in elementary school, private school, or high school. What they taught me was mostly unbiblical, including many things that were not even accepted as official Church dogma. The most notable example was the common belief that Jesus, for all practical and even eternal purposes, was subject to His mother, Mary. Her position as *Mater Dei*, the Mother of God (we were told), made her the most advantageous source of obtaining favors from Jesus. That certainly made sense to me and to the friends of my youth. After all, what good son would refuse his mom anything? Imagery of Christ as a small child with the Madonna was seemingly everywhere Catholic, from classic art and statuary to the many apparitions of Mary holding a baby—from the 1600s right up to the present, including Medugorje and Egypt. No one I knew who had collected holy cards (a popular practice of Catholics of my generation) of the Infant Jesus of Prague, or St. Anthony, or St. Joseph holding the infant Jesus, gave any thought to the biblical fact that Jesus was in His early thirties when He ascended into heaven. Such things created an impression about Jesus that was endearing yet deadly in its straying from the truth about our all-knowing and all-powerful sovereign God.

The erroneous Catholic ideas about Jesus (that a piece of bread is changed into the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, that He did not pay the full penalty for our sins, etc.) may not seem too surprising to evangelicals because, as most know, the Church of Rome doesn't strictly adhere to the Bible. To that she has added Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Magisterium, through which the bishops claim to infallibly interpret Tradition and the Bible. What is tragic is that evangelicals, who traditionally have regarded the Bible alone as their authority in all matters of faith and practice, are increasingly turning to extrabiblical sources

for their instruction regarding spiritual matters. That's not exactly new; popular Christian books have displaced the books of the Bible in many so-called Bible studies throughout the land. Multitudes seem to prefer the insights of Beth Moore, John Eldredge, and Max Lucado over the Holy Spirit-inspired prophets of Scripture. Sadly, man's opinions and subtle and not-so-subtle psychobabble have become the oracles of wisdom for most of Christianity.

For decades, because of the influence of psychology on the church, professing Christians have integrated psychotherapeutic concepts into the way they view themselves, as opposed to what the Bible teaches about humanity. For example, many if not most Christians, believe the humanistic concepts of self-esteem and self-love to be consistent with Scripture, although they are absolutely contrary to the Word of God. Why, then, are those concepts accepted by evangelicals? Primarily because Dr. James Dobson and a host of other influential Christian psychologists promote them. Man's ideas and pseudo-scientific speculations have become the so-called guiding light of increasing numbers of Christian families. Yet there is something even more ominous than the leaven of man's ways mixed with God's way in the life of a Christian. It amounts to refashioning one's view of God from a human perspective.

All of us, from time to time, have had thoughts about God that did not square exactly with what He himself has declared in the Scriptures, but that generation of misinformation has reached appalling levels among evangelical Christians today. This development has been stimulated primarily by the Church Growth and Emerging Church movements in their approach to allegedly reaching our culture for Christ. Reinventing Christ and Christianity, in order to make them more acceptable to the unsaved masses, is both the method and the goal. It amounts to recreating God in the fallen image of man. As delusionary as that approach may seem in attempting to reach the lost, astonishingly, it has millions of professing Christians caught in its web of deception.

Though many examples could be cited, the most popular vehicle of this tactic is a fictional book that has been atop the *New York Times* best-seller list for about 60 weeks, is available in 35 languages, and has sold more than seven million copies. I'm referring to *The Shack*, by William Paul Young. Multitudes have claimed that the book has transformed their lives by giving them a "new and wonderful awareness about God that they never understood from the Bible." The story centers upon a man, Mack Philips, whose young daughter was abducted during a family vacation.

Although her body hadn't been found, evidence pointing to her murder was discovered in an abandoned shack in the wilderness of Eastern Oregon; hence the title.

After several years, which have played emotional havoc with Mack and his family (he calls this time "The Great Sadness"), he receives a note in his mailbox inviting him back to the shack. The note is signed, "Papa," a very private and intimate name that Mack's wife affectionately uses for God. Mack apprehensively follows through with the invitation and encounters the godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in ways, means, and manifestations that are both unbiblical and bizarre. God the Father appears as a stereotyped, overweight black woman, who, nevertheless, is called Papa. She's a bit crude at times, likes to boogie to funk music, and some of her dialogue makes you wonder if she got past the third grade: "Well, Mackenzie, don't just stand there gawkin' with your mouth open like your pants are full"; "Take it easy on those greens, young man. Those things can give you the trots if you ain't careful." And when asked if there was anyone in the world of whom she was *not* especially fond, she replies, "Nope, I haven't been able to find any. Guess that's jes' the way I is."

The book may be fiction, but God is not. If God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit say and do things in this novel that are out of character with how they are revealed in Scripture, they are obviously false representations. Insights and explanations about God constitute doctrine. They are either true to God's Word, reflecting sound doctrine, or they are lies or fables that men concoct. Paul's prophetic words of warning in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 are evident in the popularity of *The Shack*: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The Jesus character is a giggling "good ol' boy" who is enamored by His creation. A bit of a klutz, he drops a bowl of sauce that splatters all over Papa's skirt, giving the three persons of the "Trinity" a good laugh. When questioned by Mack about his less-than-good looks, Jesus blames it on his "big Jewish nose," which he says he got from Mary's side of the family, specifically his grandfather. We learn that Jesus likes to fish for trout by trying to chase them down as he runs on water. He has yet to be successful but thoroughly enjoys the sport. Referring to the female Papa's unexpected crudeness, he declares, "She's a riot." Throughout the story, Jesus can't seem to restrain his giggles and chuckles. He and the

other persons of the Trinity are so like us that many readers claim they are now "more comfortable" with God. It's astonishing that what amounts to slandering the character of our holy God could make a professing Christian *comfortable*.

Nearly all of the literary devices in the book are either emotional or psychological hooks. The bait is "meeting felt needs." For example, Jesus the Carpenter constructs a coffin for the now-found body of Mack's daughter, although she makes her daddy feel better by communicating to him from heaven (necromancy?) that she's quite happy. As another example, the reason that God the Father appears as a woman to Mack is because he had a bad attitude toward his own dysfunctional father (who made it to heaven anyway, in keeping with the universalism [everyone is finally reconciled to God] implied in the novel). Heresies and distortions of biblical truth are found in page after page of *The Shack* (see Extra Page).

Thinking of Jesus' words in Matthew 24 that false Christs would arise and lead many astray, the Jesus of *The Shack* readily qualifies as a fulfillment of that prophecy. Again, more than seven million people have thus far been presented a bogus Jesus, and, for some, that may be their one and only introduction to him. That grieves me deeply. A false Jesus can save no one. Erroneous ideas about Jesus will destroy any hope of a *truly fruitful* relationship with Him. Jesus was, and is, certainly human. But He is also God, and His humanity was and is perfect in every aspect. In that light, all attempts to make Him seem more like us—sinful humanity—either in a book or in our minds, is an act of blasphemy. Blasphemy isn't just bad-mouthing God or Jesus; it's attributing characteristics to Him that are not true—*any* false characteristics. It is conjuring up "another Jesus," which Scripture condemns.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18). The success of *The Shack* among those who profess to be evangelicals is as shameful as it is destructive, yet it also indicates that "vanity" of mind and "ignorance" are not the exclusive domain of unbelievers. Only a love for the truth and a willingness to do what the Word of God says will preserve us from the apostasy that Scripture tells us will overtake the world.

Lord, help us to remain steadfast in the faith, submitting to You in all things, and worshiping You in Spirit and in truth. Maranatha!

TBC

Quotable

Error is like leaven, of which we read, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." 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.

H. A. Ironside

Q&A

QUESTION: Hebrews 9:27 says: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Lazarus of Bethany, who died physically, was resurrected and then, of course, died again. So, how many times did Lazarus die? The answer is "twice." We have other cases where Jesus gave His disciples the power to raise people from the dead who later died again physically. How are we to understand? Which is it, once or twice?

RESPONSE: As you point out, Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "Men" is generic, speaking of all mankind. That the Lord, of His own will and sovereign choice, has, on occasion, brought back to life individuals (temporarily) does not affect this general ruling. Both Elijah and Elisha raised individuals from the dead by the power of God. Jesus raised a number of people from the dead. Again, these exceptions did not change the ruling under which humanity lives (and dies), as Hebrews 9:27 summarizes.

The fact that the Lord Jesus walked on water (Mt 14:26) or that Elisha made the head of an axe float (2 Ki 6:6) did not overturn the law of gravity. In short, we need to discern the plain meaning of the Scriptures.

This is important, as Muslim "apologists," for the sake of argument, often bring this up as "yet another contradiction" in the Bible. With careful examination of context and word meanings in Scripture, such a conclusion is insupportable. Let us strive to be diligent as we search the Scriptures daily.

QUESTION: Many of the younger people (and some of the older ones) at our fellowship are getting tattoos. Some are saying that a tattoo can be used as a witnessing tool. What do you think about this?

RESPONSE: It must be noted that this appears to be growing in acceptance among professing Christians and with the profusion of "Christian" tattoo artists, someone voicing their disapproval may soon discover that they threaten another person's source of income (Acts 19:24-27). Further, it is

commonly heard that those disapproving of tattoos appeal to Old Testament passages no longer applicable to believers. What do the Scriptures say concerning tattoos and body piercing?

It is important to see in what context the prohibition against tattoos appears. In Leviticus 19:26-29, the admonition against marking or cutting the flesh comes in a section that forbids eating blood, using enchantments, observing times, or prostituting one's daughter. No one would say that these instructions were abrogated because they are "Old Testament." Further, some would point to verse 27: "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard" and presume that this is a simple command regarding shaving. It is not. Elements of pagan worship include cutting or otherwise marring the face and body. Hair was cut from the face and head (Lv 19:27; Dt 14:1; 1 Ki 18:28). Both blood and hair had a role in idol worship and pagan ceremonies.

Further, since the Leviticus prohibition against marking the flesh comes in a sequence including eating blood, we know from Acts 15:20 that abstaining from eating blood is one thing specifically enjoined upon Gentile believers. Other passages in the New Testament also leave no doubt that believers are not to be involved with occult practices such as enchantments or astrology. It seems logical to conclude that God's intent concerning "marks upon you" covers more than pagan funeral rites.

It is difficult to see how one can avoid the pagan connections tattoos have. Scripture and history are unanimous in noting that the pagan priests of most cultures either inflicted ritual scarring or tattoos upon themselves. The Lord wants us to be different from the nations. The apostle Peter tells us (as Christians) that we are a "peculiar" or special, people (1 Pt 2:9). The fact that so many believers are getting tattoos shows no leadership on our part but rather a tendency to be little more than followers of trends.

God certainly has absolute ideas on how we, as His creation, can decorate or adorn ourselves. Consistently, throughout Scripture (1 Pt 3:3-5), God respects the inward adorning of humanity over external marks or signs. Paul spoke of bearing "in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal 6:17). These were not self-inflicted wounds—persecutors inflicted every single one. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (2 Cor 11:12).

Finally, despite our best intentions, tattoos by their very nature draw attention to us. We don't need that. James warned about those who say they have faith, but their works deny it. One may have all kinds of evangelistic slogans liberally tattooed that allegedly proclaim one's faith. James didn't

need to advertise. He said, "I will show thee my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18).

What is that work? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas 1:27). May we take up that challenge.

Some have asked the question: "What about those who come to the Lord and are already covered with tattoos? What should they do? One of the blessings of the gospel is that the Lord receives us as we are. As the hymn so wonderfully puts it, "just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me." Although we repented of the sins of the past as we came to Christ, we still have the same bodies we have always had, including tattoos. Some choose to keep their tattoos as a reminder of what Christ has delivered them from, but perhaps our tattoos are immoral or occultic in nature.

The Lord may call one into missionary service. Depending on the culture, our tattoos may very well be a stumbling block to those we are trying to reach with the message of the gospel. Paul discloses his heart for the lost: "Conscience, I say, not your own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?...Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor 10:29-33). In such cases, there are certainly a number of alternatives for tattoo removal. Paul writes, "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19-20). How indeed can tattoos glorify the Lord?

QUESTION: I have been receiving TBC's mailing for more than 10 years and am normally highly impressed with the level of scholarship supporting the information presented. That is why I was extremely shocked by the obvious lack of scholarship in your figures [in the June issue] regarding the African slave trade, and your very limited explanation of it as being of Arab and African making. First, the minimal figures of the number of Africans (not "blacks", these people all had a country, culture, language, heritage) brought to the "new world" is between 9-12 million, not thousands, as you reported.

Secondly, though it is correct that Africans and Arabs had been involved in slave trades for centuries before European participation, there was a difference in the way the slaves were treated (as evidenced by the fact that Europeans did not want slaves from North African [Muslim] areas because many had been educated and were rife for rebellion; further, in

many African kingdoms the slaves were eventually given full privileges including land ownership)...It is extremely disheartening and frustrating that the far-reaching ramifications of the African slave trade are largely ignored in this country, especially when we are continually reminded of genocides and holocausts that happened on *other lands*, while the vile abuse suffered by those whose labor largely forged not only U.S. existence but that of just about every country in the Western hemisphere, goes largely ignored, undervalued, and unrecognized.

RESPONSE: We are clearly compelled to be as accurate and correct as possible. We know that to underestimate the magnitude of slavery is a disservice to the truth, and we also note that exaggeration tends to destroy credibility. What is in view here, however, is our mistake not in quoting statistics but failing to distinguish that the reference was specifically regarding the American colonies, to which some 645,000 slaves were taken. We have since corrected that.

"Twelve million Africans were shipped to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th centuries" [Ronald Segal (1995) *The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 4.)] "It is now estimated that 11,863,000 slaves were shipped across the Atlantic." [Note in original: Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," in *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 368.] Of these, an estimated 645,000 were brought to what is now the United States. The largest number were shipped to Brazil.

Second, it was after 1832 that specific anti-literacy laws were enacted, codifying the practice that you mention. They were not there at the beginning but represented a hardened attitude of those whose institutionalization of slavery was viewed as essential to economic survival. We mention this because your statement can undermine the points being made: "those [slaves] whose labor largely forged not only U.S. existence but that of just about every country in the Western hemisphere, goes largely ignored, undervalued, and unrecognized."

On the contrary, slavery actually limits the development of economies. Compare industrial and economic development prior to the Civil War. The North far outstripped the South (as well as Central and South America), in economic development, arguably because it was not based upon the labor of slaves but of free men. This is another reminder that great evil can never produce long-term success.

Regarding the alleged better treatment of slaves in Muslim lands, slavery is horrendous regardless of who practices it:

Harrowing eyewitness accounts tell of the vast scale and miserable conditions of the

slave trade in Africa. In the 1570s, many thousands of black Africans were seen for sale in Cairo on market days. In 1796 a caravan was seen by a British traveller leaving Darfur with 5,000 slaves. Black eunuchs became favoured for the royal harems. Even after Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807, a further 2 million Africans were enslaved by Muslim traders. (The Barnabas Fund, published in *Barnabas Aid*, April-May 2007).

While education was viewed as subversive by Western slavemasters, "Two-thirds of African slaves were female. The males were considered to be troublesome. Further, while Western slaveholders preferred men as workers, in North Africa the women were incorporated into harems and served as concubines. 'High prices were paid for eunuchs...Islam prohibits physical mutilation, so many eunuchs were castrated before entering Islamic territory'" (Ibid.).

QUESTION: Why do Christians quote Leviticus condemning homosexuality, while they ignore the rest of the prohibitions?

RESPONSE: Leviticus contains two types of prohibitions for a precise reason. Much of the book (as well as Numbers, Deuteronomy) is given over to specific prohibitions the nation of Israel was to observe as "a special people unto Me." Consistently, whether these prohibitions concern eating of particular foods, wearing of specific garments, or other ceremonial considerations, the Lord says to Israel, "these are unclean [or an abomination] to you" (Lv 11:7,11, etc.). This is one kind of prohibition, clearly applicable to Israel alone.

On the other hand, moral issues, such as adultery, sorcery, child sacrifice, bestiality, incest, homosexuality, etc., are said to be abominations (period). Penalties against those who commit these behaviors are assessed because it is "My [God's] judgment" (Lv 18:4).

News Alert.....

Charleston Daily Mail, 6/23/09 Excerpts: "Joy is related to the presence of God," [William Paul Young, author of *The Shack*] said. "God is about relationship. There is a God who loves us. There is a God involved in details we don't see."

These comments were sprinkled throughout the presentation Young offered at the Clay Center Monday for a fundraiser for the Christian ministry organization called Young Life. Young also was to speak Monday evening at Morris Memorial United Methodist Church.

Young talked about his bestseller *The Shack*, a work of fiction filled with genuine pain he experienced throughout life. The miraculous success of the book can only be attributed to God being involved in the details of life, he said.

Young never set out to write a bestseller and had no idea how to market a book. Young is a Canadian native who now lives in Happy Valley, Ore. "I've never considered myself a writer," he said. "My wife, Kim, wanted me to write something for the kids. She said, 'Would you put in one place how you think—because it is so outside the box?'"

He began that process in 2005 on the commuter train...as he scribbled thoughts on napkins, receipts and legal pads...eventually...compiled into a book for his six children, now ages 16 to 28...telling them how he dealt with hurdles in life that caused him so much pain, shame and grief...from sexual abuse as a child and an affair that threatened his marriage to devastating family deaths. He was working three jobs and struggling to make ends meet when he turned his notes into a work of fiction flecked with emotional baggage....He found peace and healing in the letting go of secrets. When the manuscript was done, he headed to a local Office Depot...to print 15 copies for family and friends.

Then something amazing happened. Friends loaned the book to their friends and more copies were requested. "I was soon getting emails from people I didn't know," he said. Many of the notes were filled with personal details about people's lives. Eventually, friends with some writing and movie knowledge decided to check into publishing the manuscript. It was turned down by 26 publishers before the group of friends pooled cash and credit cards to publish it themselves. In May 2007, they ordered 10,000 copies.

The book has since sold more than 7 million copies and made the *New York Times* bestseller list. "It wasn't anything we did," said Young, 54. "When the book touches people, they buy multiple copies. We can't claim how brilliant we are." He said the book is a result of the power of prayer. He asked God, "Let me hang around something you are blessing. The book is just something God decided to bless."

"The book has opened relationships and opportunities," he said. "I can watch people's lives because of a little story I wrote. How cool is that?" He even sees the controversy it has created as a positive way of encouraging dialogue among a variety of people. The book has attracted readers of virtually every religion.

"I trust the Holy Spirit is present in my life and the right things will be drawn out," he said. Plans are in the works to turn his current book into a movie within the next couple of years.

[TBC: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to (God's) word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).]

Speaking Schedule

Aug 13-15 (TA)	Pastor's & Leader's Conference Calvary Chapel Johnson County Olathe, KS (913) 829-9306
Sep 11-13 (TA)	Great Lakes Prophecy Conference Appleton, WI (920) 735-1242
Sep 16-18 (Dave)	Winnipeg Prophecy Conference Winnipeg, MB (204) 853-7786
Oct 4-6 (Dave)	Midnight Call Prophecy Conference Myrtle Beach, SC (800) 845-2420

Letters

Dear Saints of Berean Call,

Thank you for the many faithful years of your newsletters—they are so informative. So much of the time I've not even heard of the information you're writing about. What is sad to me is that when I realize that it's true and try to pass it on, there are people who just don't want to hear it! So many want to stay uninformed, period! Sad! But I look forward to your wonderful newsletters every month.... AH (TX)

Dear Dave and Tom,

Thank you so much for your *TBC* newsletter and for your time in putting it together. I do so much appreciate how you back up what you write with the truth of God's Word. Being an ex-Catholic, I remember much doctrine that was scripturally untrue.... I am thankful for the Lord's leading my family and me to a Bible-based church some years back, and, through His word preached accurately, our eyes were opened. We praise Him for your ministry. There are so few truly accurate ones today. JD (WI)

Dave,

Thank God for those who still believe that the Bible is sufficient. I am so tired of all the illustrational sermons and theatrical gimmicks used in proclaiming the Gospel. Dave, I wonder how you have survived without sports cars, etc., on your platform to help you illustrate the Gospel.... God gave us the greatest illustration and example in His Son Jesus. Thanks for just preaching the Word of God! BM (IA)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

Thank you so much for the welcome arrival each month of *The Berean Call*. In these difficult times it is so good to read sound Biblical teaching from God's Word. Here in the U.K., we are seeing such a determined turning away from the Lord Jesus and open persecution of His people. This

present government seems quite triumphant in its assault on the Body of Christ, and proud of our sinful record in HIV, teenage pregnancy, abortion, and growing numbers of homosexuals and pagans. We so need a true revival and repentance before our Holy God. Instead of so many distractions and events in our church life we need to "go forth and preach the gospel" so that souls may be saved in our Lord Jesus. BB (UK)

Dave Hunt,

What a sleazy mischaracterization of Calvinism. I used to be a fan of yours—attended several of your seminars and purchased your books. Now I wouldn't waste my time—your snippy insinuations—strident exaggerations to make a misguided point. God is in control not you. You've gone the way of sensational journalism and even worse is your adoption of Roman Catholic pelagianism. EL (email)

Dear Dave & T. A.,

Are we, who are the Lord's, being overwhelmed by the signs of the time we're in now—or what?! I would liken this to what Noah & family must have experienced as the last animals were herded onto the Ark and the ominous black clouds & lightning became so intense! Even as the Lord sealed the Ark doors shut! And instead of begging for God's chastening, cleansing, holiness, that they be made ready, most of the church-world's still looking for "that big break-through"—health, wealth, and their dream come true! No love of God's truth, so they've been deceived & blinded! And God's Spirit-led ministers have never needed to beg, bribe, and threaten their listeners to supply their needs, as long as they faithfully trusted Him. May He continue to strengthen, bless & keep you in all things! JH (WV)

Mr. Hunt & McMahon,

I enjoy your books and the work both of you are doing. I pastor a small church and have seen several families [leave] us for social and political reasons. Your ministry is large...reaching many millions, and I pray for you as you don't hold back on telling the truth in a society today that seems to only want their ears tickled—a so-called Christian society that wants to keep their pet lust and still feel they are good, Bible-believing, obedient saints. Hope and pray that you both are feeling and doing much better health-wise. JM (email)

TBC,

Too often in our fast paced world we do not thank people for what they do for others. I share your thoughts and they make me think. In the end, my walk with Christ is strengthened. Thanks! MR (prisoner, ID)

TBC Notes

The Heresy Lode

One of the problems that Dave Hunt and I had nearly a quarter of a century ago was convincing Christians that there was a substantial seduction taking place in the church that was undermining "the faith... once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). As frustrating as that experience was, those were the "good old days!" A wry grin comes across my face when I think about how many times we were accused of "digging for heresies among God's anointed servants." Although one did not have to "dig up" the false doctrines that were being taught back then, neither were they as common as rocks.

Today, heresies are coming out of the religious mines by the truckloads and openly sold on every corner. Christians are lining up for this spiritual fool's gold! Here are two examples, though hardly the most ludicrous or outrageous of those coming across my desk daily.

Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Katharine Jefferts Schori, blames individualistic views of salvation for ills plaguing the church in the United States. She argues that Christians should reject the belief "that we can be saved as individuals, that any of us alone can be in right relationship with God." Obviously, Paul badly misinformed the Philippian jailor. Or not!

Melanie Phillips, author of *Londonistan*, warns about Christian Palestinianism, a pro-Islamic movement that the Anglican Church, as well as some evangelical leaders are supporting: "Arab Christians [have] reinterpreted Scripture in order to delegitimize the Jews' claim to the land of Israel, this kick-started replacement theology, which roared back into the imaginations, sermons and thinking of the Anglican Church. The Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Riah Abu el-Assal, claimed of Palestinian Christians: 'We are the true Israel....'" Another writer notes that this heretical agenda is guilty of "de-biblicizing the Bible," expelling "the Jews from their own Scriptures," and reinterpreting it "from the viewpoint of the Qur'an."

Saints, we sorely need our "loins girt about with truth" (Ephesians 6:14) in these days of rampant apostasy. A seat-belt of righteousness is also necessary safety equipment.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
T. A. MCMAHON

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IS WINDBLOWN MEDIA'S BESTSELLER "CARRIED ABOUT...WITH EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE"? (EPH 4:14)

THE SHACK

Excerpts of a review by James B. DeYoung, Western Theological Seminary

(See theshackreview.com/content/TheShackReview2Page.pdf for the complete review)

RECENTLY *THE SHACK* HAS BEEN APPROACHING SALES OF [SEVEN] MILLION COPIES. There is even talk about making the book into a movie. But while the novel breaks sales records, it also breaks with the traditional understanding of God and Christian theology. And therein lies the rub. Does a work of Christian fiction have to be doctrinally correct?

Who is the author? William P. Young [Paul], a man I have known for over a dozen years. About four years ago, Paul embraced "Christian universalism" and has defended this view on several occasions. While he frequently disavows "general universalism," the idea that many roads lead to God, he has affirmed his hope that all will be reconciled to God either this side of death or after death. Christian universalism (also known as universal reconciliation) asserts that love is the supreme attribute of God that trumps all others. His love reaches beyond the grave to save all those who refuse Christ throughout their lifetimes. Even fallen angels, and the Devil himself, will one day repent, be delivered from hell, and enter heaven. There cannot be left in the universe any being whom the love of God does not conquer; hence the words, universal reconciliation.

Many others have pointed out the theological errors they find in the book. They fault Young's view of revelation and the Bible, his presentation of God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus' death and the meaning of reconciliation, and the subversion of institutions that God has ordered, such as the government and the local church. But the common thread tying all these errors together is Christian universalism. A study of the history of universal reconciliation, which goes back to as early as the third century, shows that all of these doctrinal deviations, including opposition to the local church, are characteristic of universalism. In modern times, it has undermined evangelical faith in Europe and America. It has joined with Unitarianism to form the Unitarian-Universalist church.

By comparing the creeds of universalism with a careful reading of *The Shack*, one discovers how deeply universalism is embedded within the book. Here is the evidence in brief:

1) The universalist creed of 1899 affirmed that "there is one God whose nature is love." Young asserts that God "cannot act apart from love" (p. 102), and that God purposes what he does always as an expression of love (p. 191);

2) There is no eternal punishment for sin. The creed of 1899 again asserts that God "will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness." Similarly, Young denies that Papa (God) "pours out wrath and throws people" into hell. God does not punish sin; it's his "joy to cure it" (p. 120). Papa "redeems" final judgment (p. 127). God will not "condemn most to an eternity of torment, away from his presence and apart from his love" (p. 162);

3) There is an incomplete picture of the enormity of sin and evil. Satan as the great deceiver and instigator of the temptation to sin goes unmentioned in Young's discussion of the fall (pp. 134-37);

4) There is a subjugation of God's justice to his love—a central tenet of universalism. The creed of 1878 asserts that God's attribute of justice is "born of love and limited by love." Young affirms that God chose "the way of the cross where mercy triumphs over justice because of love," and that this is a better way than that God should have exercised justice (pp. 164-65);

5) There is great error in the portrayal of the Trinity. Young asserts that the whole Trinity became incarnate as the Son of God, and the whole Trinity was crucified (p. 99). Both Jesus and Papa (God) bear the marks of crucifixion in their hands (contra. Isa. 53:4-10). Young's error leads to modalism, that God is singular and at different times assumes the different modes of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a heresy condemned by the early church. Young also makes God into a goddess; moreover, he breaks the second commandment by imaging God the Father as a person;

6) Reconciliation is effective for all without exercising faith. Papa asserts that he is reconciled to the whole world, not just to those who believe (p. 192). The creeds of universalism, both of 1878 and 1899, never mention faith;

7) There is no future judgment. God will never force his will on anyone, even in his capacity as judge, for this is contrary to love (p. 145). God submits to humans, and humans submit to God in a "circle of relationship";

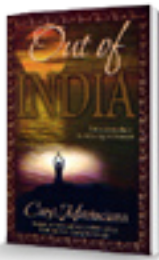
8) All are equally children of God and loved equally by him (p. 155-56). In a future revolution of "love and kindness," all people, out of love, will confess Jesus as Lord (p. 248).

9) The institution of the church is rejected as diabolical. Jesus claims that he "never has, never will" create institutions (p. 178). Evangelical churches are an obstacle to universalism.

10) Finally, the Bible is discounted in this novel. It is a book of guilt rather than hope, encouragement, and revelation.

Near the beginning of this review I raised the question: "Does a work of fiction have to be doctrinally correct?" In this case, the answer is yes, for Young is deliberately theological. The fiction serves the theology, not vice-versa. Another question is: "Do not the good points of the novel outweigh the bad?" Again, if one uses doctrinal impurity to teach how to be restored to God, the end result is that one is not restored in a biblical way to the God of the Bible. Finally, one may ask: "Could not this book lay the foundation for seeking a growing relationship with God based in the Bible?" Of course, this may be possible. But, in light of the errors, the potential for going astray is as great as the potential for growth. Young offers no direction regarding spiritual growth. He discounts the Bible and the institutional church with its ordinances. If one finds a deeper relationship with God that reflects biblical fidelity it will be in spite of *The Shack* and not because of it.

REAL TESTIMONIES OF SALVATION FROM HINDUISM

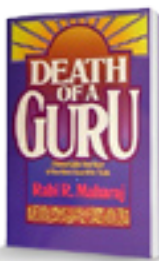


Out of India

Matrisciana—Born and raised in India, Caryl Matrisciana was surrounded by a strange and mystical religion, seeing firsthand the effects Hinduism had on the people of that nation. After leaving India as a young adult, she became involved in the counter-culture hippie movement, only to find that the elements of Hinduism and the New Age were very much the same. Eventually, Caryl would discover that this same spirituality had entered the Christian church. *Out of India* successfully identifies the mystical religious roots behind yoga, which is being practiced today by millions of people, many of whom are Christians. Revised and adapted from the best-selling book, *Gods of the New Age* (Harvest House, 1985). Lighthouse Trails, 246 pp.

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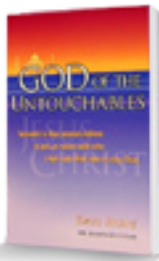


Death of a Guru

Maharaj—Rabi R. Maharaj was descended from a long line of Brahmin priests and gurus and trained as a yogi. He meditated for many hours each day, but gradually disillusionment set in. He describes vividly and honestly Hindu life and customs, tracing his difficult search for meaning and his struggle to choose between Hinduism and Christ. At a time when Eastern mysticism, religion and philosophy fascinate many in the West, Maharaj offers fresh and important insights from the perspective of his own experience. Harvest House Publishers, 208 pp.

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God of the Untouchables

Hunt—The poignantly human, true story of a young Hindu, raised in the heart of India, who found the Salvation that all men seek! Paul Gupta—a brilliant student, he failed in school; a devoted son, he stole from his father; a devout Hindu and named for a god, he succumbed to debauchery. And now, here he was, enrolled at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles! Where was the God of the Untouchables leading him? Everyone who has been tempted to turn to the East for enlightenment, who has been intrigued by Eastern mysticism, who is thinking of trying Eastern meditation, should read *God of the Untouchables*. Straight Street Publishing, 140 pp.

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Occult Invasion

Search The Scriptures Daily—this newly re-mastered series from *Search the Scriptures Daily* Radio contains a wealth of information that will inform and equip believers to recognize and address today's counterfeit spirituality appearing in the media, the workplace, educational institutions, and even in

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When mystical experiences and strange doctrines overtake his church, one man risks all to find the truth.

Reeves—For Kevin Reeves, the determination to rescue his family came to the forefront. Even if the cost was high and he had to stand alone, his journey back into the freedom and simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ would be worth the price. A compelling and deeply personal account of a young man's spiritual plunge into a movement called "the River," which claims to be spreading the kingdom of God through signs and wonders. Sometimes referred to as "River Revival," the Third Wave, or the Latter Rain, this movement is marked by bizarre manifestations, false prophecies, and esoteric revelations. Lighthouse Trails Publishing, Second Edition, 284 pp.

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For Many Shall Come in My Name

An ancient wisdom is drawing millions of people into mystical experiences and preparing the world for the end of the age . . . find out how.

Yungen—Most people believe the New Age has been long gone from our society, and, if practiced at all now, it is only by unconventional "fringe" types. This new expanded edition of *For Many Shall Come in My Name* reveals that this is not the case. In fact, quite the opposite has occurred. The New Age movement (a term not normally used by its proponents) has permeated virtually all aspects of our society. This "Ancient Wisdom" spirituality can be quite readily encountered in the following fields: Business, Education, Health, Self-Help, Religion, and Arts & Entertainment. This book examines them all. Lighthouse Trails Publishing, Second Edition, 248 pp.

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The Emerging Church: A new reformation—or an end-time deception?

Oakland—*Faith Undone* shows that the nature of the Emerging Church's new reformation is anything but new and, when it comes to pass, could bring violence and persecution to those who defend the Bible as the true and literal Word of God. Is the Emerging Church movement just another passing fad, a more contemporary approach to church, or the discontented grumblings of young people looking for answers? In fact, it is much broader and is influencing Christianity to a significant degree. Grounded in a centuries-old mystical approach, this movement is powerful yet highly deceptive, and it draws its energy from practices and experiences that are foreign to biblical Christianity. Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 260 pp.

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McMahon—Is it STILL “Showtime for the Sheep?” Originally written to address issues raised by Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, this powerful book addresses key trends that are increasingly affecting how the world—and the church—view the Word of God in this media-mesmerized millennium. The Berean Call, 160 pp.

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The Confusing World of Benny Hinn

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Oakland—To Catholics, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christianity. How might this peculiar belief lead to the evangelization of the world into Catholicism? Understand

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Marketing tactics, demographic analyses, and entertainment-oriented worship have taken the new-paradigm church by storm. Xulon Press, 144 pp.

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book challenges churches to remain true to the Christian faith and to remain faithful to God’s chosen means of converting sinners to Himself: the Good News of Jesus Christ. Evangelical Press, 190 pp.

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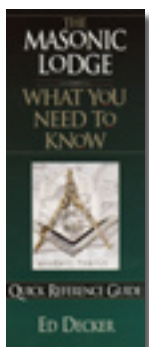
Murray—“My Lord, O King, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.” Words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father. Andrew Murray

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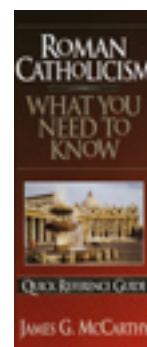


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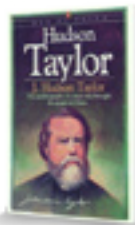
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