

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 37, NO. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2017

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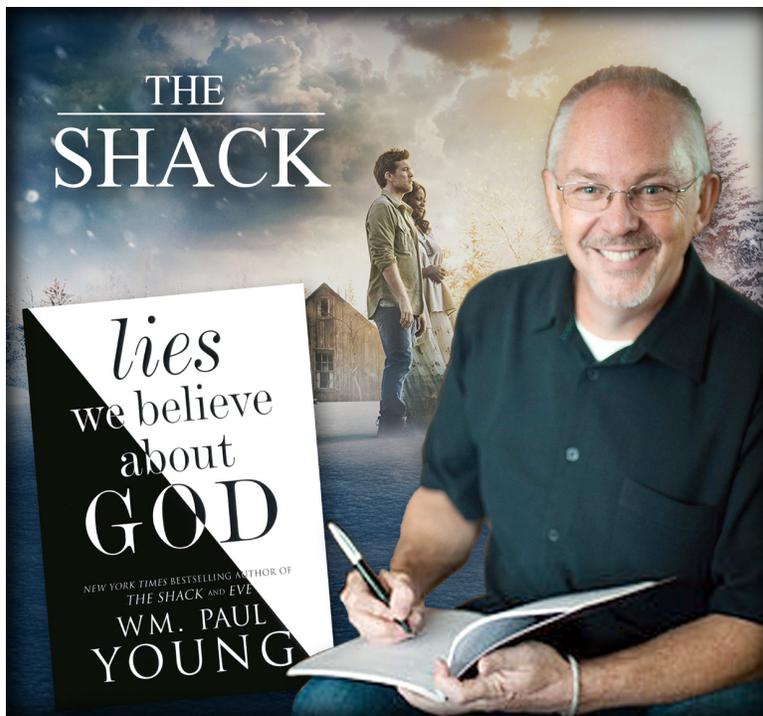
Lies Wm. Paul Young Believes About God More Unshackled Heresy from the Best-Selling Author

by J. Greg Sheryl

A book called *Lies We Believe About God* might lead the casual reader to believe that the author has set out to expose erroneous doctrines and beliefs to the light of Scripture.

But William Paul Young, who burst onto the literary scene a decade ago with his novel *The Shack*, instead has published a challenge to a number of cardinal Christian teachings with Scripture-twisting, out-of-context Bible quotes, and ideas born of his own experience.

Much of what Young presents in *Lies We Believe About God* are echoes from his multimillion-selling novel *The Shack*, published ten years ago and recently adapted as a theatrical movie. His new book's intended audience appears to be those who enjoyed *The Shack*, as he mentions it in nearly half of the book's 28 chapters.



Following the success of *The Shack*, Young also penned two more novels: *Cross Roads* and *Eve*.

As with many films based on books, the movie version of *The Shack* is not a slavish adaptation. The book's theological and philosophical dialogues are reduced to basic pronouncements and it only hints at the universalism that underpins Young's viewpoint. Thus, the Christian movie-goer might come away thinking that, except for the provocative portrayal of the Godhead as two women and a man, "That wasn't so bad."

(continues on page 10)

Inside this Issue:

JESUS IS YOUR BOYFRIEND?	PAGE 2
IS IT LAW OR GRACE OR BOTH?	PAGE 4
REVISITING THE SHACK AND ITS AUTHOR'S TRAGIC LIFE	PAGE 12

Editorials

JESUS IS YOUR BOYFRIEND?

Much like the modern-day Church, the church at Ephesus was susceptible to false teaching (see Acts 20:28-31). The Apostle Paul urged, “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Ephesians 4:14).

There is no doubt that the wind of false teaching is blowing through the evangelical Church today.

One of these foul winds is found in a genre of books written by women and for women. In some of these books we find “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:3-4) tailored and crafted as a cosmic boyfriend, a lovesick suitor, longing to date the female authors and their readers. The content is sensual and created out of sensual imagination. This lovesick Jesus seems uninterested in men.

Beth Moore subtly offers this premise in her book, *Audacious*, when she writes: “Do you believe with unrelenting conviction and confidence that Jesus *audaciously* loves you? Are you convinced that a fiery passion rages within Him toward you?” (pg. 41) Later in this book, Moore applies the Song of Songs to Jesus as the bridegroom, telling the reader to take “personally,

passionately, and prophetically” the words found in chapter 7, verse 10 — “I belong to my love and his desire is for me” (pp. 98, 99).

Other authors press the bride symbolism from Ephesians 5:23-32 to wild extremes and force it into an individual relationship with individual females rather than seeing it as a metaphor applied to the Church at large. The noun “church” is plural in the Greek. Therefore, the bride symbolism of Ephesians 5 is a picture of belonging, as well as a metaphor of submission and deep commitment. And because the word “church” is plural, it can be translated “assembly” and can mean the whole company of the redeemed: all of God’s people; all professed believers everywhere — men, women, and children.

Bridal mysticism is an error rooted in medieval Roman Catholicism. Teresa of Ávila and Madame Guyon were two medieval mystics who reported visions of intimacy with Jesus that are offensive and inappropriate. Prolonged fasting, mental instability, and sleep loss — not spiritual enlightenment — prompted their imaginative excesses.

St. Catherine of Siena, another medieval mystic and the first woman to be conferred a Doctor of Theology degree by the Roman Catholic Church, was said to possess a spirituality that was distinguished by her abandoning herself to Christ as His loving bride. It is claimed that she

(continues on page 20)

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News Updates

TBN HEADQUARTERS PROPERTY SOLD

Less than six months after reports that the Trinity Broadcasting Network was seeing significant declines in donations and income the past few years, it was announced that its headquarters had been sold. According to a brief news article in the *Los Angeles Times*, the world's largest Christian television network said that its 6.19-acre campus located in Costa Mesa, Calif., had been sold to a commercial real estate firm.

The network claimed that its "facility has become 'obsolete' as the organization grows in different parts of the U.S. and the world," the *Orange County Register* reported.

TBN purchased the property in 1996 for \$6 million. It was the former home of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International headed by Demos Shakarian, who died in 1993. While the sale price was not disclosed, the *Register* reported that the "property was assessed at \$41.3 million in 2016, according to CoStar Group, a commercial database." But according to Chuck Noble who helped broker the deal, "It was significantly less than that assessed number."

The network will keep its broadcasting studio in nearby Tustin, which it built over 40 years ago.

The headquarters property was not the only TBN parcel to be sold. Following the death of its founder, Paul Crouch, in November 2013, his 5,200-square-foot ocean-view Newport Beach estate sold for \$3.05 million. Since that time, it has been on and off the market, and last year it was relisted for a price of \$4.6 million.

Matthew Crouch, TBN Chairman and son to the late founder, said the sale will "provide the network with new options that are targeted at millennials as well as a diverse and changing culture." According to Nate Daniels, TBN's marketing director, the network is not experiencing financial difficulties.

—MKG

HINN'S OFFICE RAIDED

Benny Hinn is again in the crosshairs of federal criminal investigators. In late April, more than 40 agents from the Internal Revenue Service and the Postal Inspector's office searched the headquarters of the televangelist's office in Grapevine, Texas.

While authorities were tight-lipped about their investigation, WFAA, the ABC-affiliated television station in Dallas, said that a federal source indicated a lengthy IRS probe had been underway. "We are primarily investigating Title 26, which is tax evasion and general fraud against the government," a special agent with IRS Criminal Investigations told the network.

In a Facebook post, Hinn's organization stated, "As has been widely reported, Benny Hinn Ministries is cooperating fully with the government entities that are reviewing certain operations of the Church. The ministry has undergone intense scrutiny over the years, and we remain confident that there will again be a positive and speedy outcome in the days ahead." The ministry offered no additional word, refusing comment to inquiries by various news agencies.

According to an online report by WBAP, a Fort Worth news/talk radio station, "Investigators spent a large part of the day searching Hinn's offices and filling a truck they had parked near the front door with boxes."

In 2007, Hinn was one of six televangelists who were investigated by the Senate Finance Committee. That probe ended in 2011 with Hinn being cleared of any wrongdoing.

At the time of the raid in April, Hinn was conducting a healing crusade in France.

—MKG

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES FAIL TO PROTECT AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

Because media attention and outcry by victims' groups have been primarily focused on the Roman Catholic Church for permitting and covering up decades of child sexual abuse, the Watchtower Society has been able to stay in the shadows as similar allegations have surfaced against some of its elders and members. Yet the sexual misconduct among Jehovah's Witnesses exists and it is a worldwide epidemic.

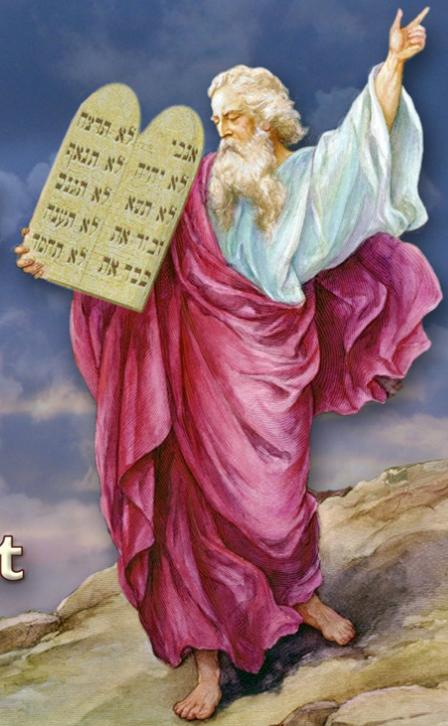
According to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse investigated the matter in 2016 and determined that, "Children are not adequately protected from the risk of child sexual abuse in the Jehovah's Witness organisation and [the commission] does not

(continues on page 21)

IS IT LAW OR GRACE OR BOTH?

The Galatian Error of the Hebrew Roots Movement

by G. Richard Fisher



In the prologue of his Gospel, the Apostle John writes: "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

A believer's theology shapes how he lives. Sound doctrine will have a good effect upon spiritual health. A believer's view of the Law and grace will dictate his or her spiritual growth and relationships with others in the body of Christ. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* reminds us that grace is "a concept which is at the heart not only of Christian theology but also of all genuinely Christian experience."¹ Yet as one handbook of Christian beliefs explains:

"Grace can seem a simple idea. It points us to God's sheer goodness, and in particular, his glad and free welcome to sinners, despite their failure and sin. It is deceptively simple, however, and the theologians of the church have spilled many gallons of ink exploring the ramifications of grace — how God can be gracious without compromising his nature as pure, how grace operates on people, and what part

they play in the reception of God's grace."²

Today there is almost universal agreement among Evangelicals that the grace of God is His unmerited favor in Jesus Christ. It is God's kindness to the undeserving. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes:

"The word *favor* is the nearest Biblical synonym for the word *grace*. ... Grace is favor, and favor is grace. ... *Grace* means pure unrequited kindness and favor. What is done in grace is done graciously. From this exact meaning, there can be no departure; otherwise grace ceases to be grace."³

The Scriptures are clear on this issue. In Ephesians 2:8-9, we are told that we are not saved by our own efforts, by our own merits, or by good works, but rather that through grace salvation is simply God's gift to repentant sinners. Someone has popularized the word "grace" by using an acrostic: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

One of the purposes of the Law is to convict us of sin, expose our desperate need, and drive us to Christ

(Galatians 3:24-25). The Law was not given as a means of salvation, but to reveal our sin so that we can embrace Jesus Christ for mercy through faith. Therefore, the Law cannot save, but it can inform us of our need of a Savior. Grace does not recognize *merit*; yet it operates in the face of our *demerit*.

From the time of the apostles up until present day, the issue of how much of the Law a Christian should practice has been a cause of division among believers. It has been referred to as the "Continuity/Discontinuity Debate" and is fueled in part by discussions of the relationship between Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament. The conversation develops from four primary theological positions of the relation between the Old and New Covenants.

Those four views are:

Traditional Dispensationalism sees a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church, as well as a fundamental distinction between the Law and Grace. As such it holds to a strong discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, maintaining that God has used several successive

“dispensations” (distributions of His mercies) in dealing with mankind.

Progressive Dispensationalism also holds to a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church, but sees more continuity between the Old and New Testaments. This view finds common ground with the covenantal view in that it identifies the various covenants found in the Old Testament as progressive moves toward God’s redemptive plan accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Classic Covenant Theology maintains a stricter continuity between the Old and New Testaments. It teaches a primary covenant within the Godhead, along with two principal covenants between God and mankind. That initial covenant — namely that God the Father appointed His Son Jesus to be the propitiation for the sins of man and that Jesus accepted that role — works in relation to the other two covenants between God and man. The two covenants God made with man include the Covenant of Works, which promised life for obedience and death for disobedience to Adam in the Garden; and now the Covenant of Grace, which promises salvation and blessing for faith in the atoning work of Christ and obedience to His commands.

Modified Covenant Theology also sees a rigid continuity in the covenants of God, but distances itself from the initial covenant within the Godhead. This view also regards the Old Testament Law in different ways than does its classic covenant theology counterpart. This modified position sees the Law (given through Moses) as only a means of blessing in Canaan, which was fulfilled at the coming of Jesus and the inauguration of the New Covenant. Believers are not under the Mosaic Law, but rather are under the Law of Christ.

Regardless of the position one holds, the question is this: What continues when covenants change? Some would say, “Nothing changes,” and then load the Church and believers up with impossible legislation as they merge law and grace. The Apostle Paul wrote large parts of the

book of Romans and the entire epistle of Galatians to address the problem of Judaizers who sought to impose the Law on believers. It is hard to believe that in the twenty-first century we must cover this ground again.

For centuries, the consensus within the Protestant wing of the Church has fallen into two broad camps. One is that as believers we should keep at least the moral commands of the Old Covenant and especially the Ten Commandments along with the New Covenant. The second view is that under grace and under Jesus Christ and the New Covenant we possess all that we need for Christian living and godliness. Jesus repeated nine of the Ten Commandments and the epistles are filled with all kinds of moral and practical directives. The outcome of this view is the conviction that all the Church needs to govern its life is the New Testament. This author embraces this second position, but would not break fellowship with those who espouse the former position.

However, what has emerged in recent years is a minority opinion that argues we should merge the Old and New Covenants. This opinion is held largely within the Hebrew Roots Movement. Just how much Judaism should be retained depends on the teacher. Some in the HRM are sincere in their extremes of Judaic practice and law-keeping. And they probably believe that they are helping Christians by imposing Old Testament standards, rituals, and practices on them. They may believe that without their help the Church will become even more libertine.

As far as the two covenants, one camp calls for selected integration from the old, another camp calls for separation of old and new. Now this third camp calls for a full amalgamation. One can only wonder if those in the HRM (the third camp) have missed or not understood the doctrines of grace and the Holy Spirit. The effects of grace received and the indwelling Spirit are life altering (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 2:11-13).

The Bible question and answer website, GotQuestions.org, tells us:

“Those of the Hebrew Roots belief hold to the teaching that Christ’s death on the cross did not end the Mosaic Covenant, but instead renewed it, expanded its message, and wrote it on the hearts of His true followers. They teach that the understanding of the New Testament can only come from a Hebrew perspective and that the teachings of the Apostle Paul are not understood clearly or taught correctly by Christian pastors today.”⁴

It further describes the movement in respect to its view of obedience to the Torah:

“Although there are many different and diverse Hebrew Roots assemblies with variations in their teachings, they all adhere to a common emphasis on recovering the ‘original’ Jewishness of Christianity. Their assumption is that the Church has lost its Jewish roots and is unaware that Jesus and His disciples were Jews living in obedience to the Torah. For the most part, those involved advocate the need for every believer to walk a Torah-observant life. This means that the ordinances of the Mosaic Covenant must be a central focus in the lifestyle of believers today as it was with the Old Testament Jews of Israel. Keeping the Torah includes keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, keeping the dietary laws, avoiding the ‘paganism’ of Christianity (Christmas, Easter, etc.), and learning to understand the Scriptures from a Hebrew mindset. They teach that Gentile Christians have been grafted into Israel, and this is one reason every born-again believer in Jesus the Messiah is to participate in these observances. It is expressed that doing this is not required out of legalistic bondage, but out of a heart of love and obedience. However, they teach that to live a life that pleases God, this Torah-observant walk must be part of that life.”⁵

Hebrew Roots Movement teacher Tim Hegg explains:

“It has been a standard teaching throughout the centuries of the Christian Church that the New Covenant, established by Yeshua’s death and resurrection, has replaced the Torah. This teaching has also resulted in dividing the Scriptures into two parts, usually labelled the ‘Old Testament’ and the ‘New Testament,’ which is just another way of saying ‘Old Covenant’ and ‘New Covenant.’ Accordingly, the ‘New Testament’ forms the primary Scriptures for the believer in our times, with the ‘Old Testament’ only providing background and illustration for what the ‘New Testament’ explicitly teaches. It is not uncommon to hear the slogan: ‘the New is in the Old contained; the Old is by the New explained.’ As a result, many Christians would hold the position that they are required to obey what the ‘New Testament’ teaches, and that the requirements of the ‘Old Testament’ are no longer applicable, but were for a bygone era.”⁶

Hegg then asks his readers, “But is this an accurate understanding of the New Covenant? Is the New Covenant a replacement for the Tanach (the Torah, Prophets, and Writings)?”⁷ To this he responds, “**The New Covenant does not replace the Torah, it establishes the Torah.**”⁸

Glenn McWilliams, another proponent of HRM teaching, lays blame at the doorstep of the Church for the reason Christians no longer observe the Torah:

“For centuries the Church has been teaching unsuspecting believers that Jesus came to set them free from the Law of YHWH ELOHIM. This has led many sincere Christians to believe that it is alright for them to live contrary to the very clear teaching of the scriptures. ... The Church erroneously teaches that because Jesus fulfilled the Law we are no longer obligated to

keep YHWH’S Law. It is no wonder that the Jews have rejected the Church, Christianity, and their Jesus. The idea that the Messiah would come and free people from the Torah is contrary to every word about the Messiah found in the scriptures!”⁹

To this McWilliams calls for reform and offers the plea:

“I would suggest to my Christian brothers that they re-think their position on the Torah and Yeshua and repent and join us in keeping the Torah.”¹⁰

The Apostle Paul identifies this servitude to the Jewish laws as “a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1), linguist Kenneth Wuest labels it “the straight-jacket of the law,”¹¹ but McWilliams’ “The Path of Pure Torah” video discourse on keeping “the Torah as Moses received it and Yeshua taught it” is advertised as “truly a cool drink of refreshing water from the stream that still flows from the throne room.”¹²

The Old Testament Law began its reign at Sinai. Because so many parts of the Old Testament are referred to as the Law (when quoted in the New Testament), it is safe to conclude then that using the word “Law” can mean all of the Old Covenant, including all of its social, civil, ceremonial, ritualistic, and moral commandments. This includes the *judgments and punishments* as well. Some verses in the New Testament make it clear that any part of the Old Testament quoted was quoted as Law, so all of the Old Testament was seen as one inseparable unit by the Jews.

James said, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Note that James says “the *whole* law.” The Greek word for “whole” is from the root *holos*. It means “complete (in extent, amount, time or degree) ... all, altogether, every whit, + throughout, whole.”¹³ So if we try to keep the Law, it must be our trying to keep *all* of the Law. If we were hanging by means of a chain over a large fiery

pit, only one link would have to be broken for us to fall to our death.

Then take notice of James’ use of the word “all” as in “guilty of all.” The word “all” is from the Greek root *pantos*. It “signifies wholly, entirely”¹⁴ and means every bit of it.

So if we fail in one part of the Law, we fail in all of it. That is why we need grace. In Matthew 5:19, Jesus addressed breaking even “one of the least of these commandments.” There is no way first-century Jews or twenty-first century HRM exponents can live under the Law. It is impossible then, it is impossible now. God is not grading on a curve. Once the Jewish temple was destroyed and the priesthood and sacrifices ceased, the Law as a comprehensive and united system ceased. Even if it were humanly possible, presently no one today could keep or perform “all” (*pantos*) the Law because so much of it is now gone, being torn away in A.D. 70. If people want to live under the Law, they must live *under absolutely all of it as stated in the Bible*. However, with so much of it now gone they cannot; it is impossible. But thankfully we do not have to live under the Law. As we will see there is another, better way to live; a higher Spirit-led life.

It must be stressed that we cannot adhere to the Law, but ignore or remove its punishments. That is why Paul said that the Law was “the ministry of death” and “the ministry of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9). He also reminds us that, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’” (Galatians 3:10). No one in Judaism or in the HRM administers and metes out the punishment sections of the Law. For example, the Law commands the execution of stubborn and rebellious sons (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). So modern-day practitioners of the Law are not keeping the whole Law. They are just toying with the edges that suit them. Alva McClain reminds us:

“That law cannot be divorced from its proper penalties is also the view of the greatest human legal authorities. John Austin defined law as embodying three essential ideas — command, obligation and sanction. Daniel Webster is reported to have said, ‘A law without a penalty is simply good advice.’ ... To emasculate the law of God of its divine penalties and still call it ‘law’ is a serious misnomer. It can only confuse the minds of men and finally bring all law, whether human or divine, into contempt or indifference. ... In summary we may say that for one to be ‘under the law’ in the Biblical sense is to be under the law of God — the entire Mosaic legal system in its indivisible totality — subject to its commands and liable to its penalties. ... Now the Word of God declares plainly that the Christian believer is not ‘under the law.’ At least four times, simply and without qualification, the New Testament asserts this great truth: ‘For ye are not under the law’ (Rom. 6:14). ‘Because we are not under the law’ (6:15). ‘Ye are not under the law’ (Gal. 5:18). ‘Not being myself under the law’ (I Cor. 9:20 ASV).”¹⁵

The HRM (and others) have unilaterally created a subjective partial law system that is selective, anemic, and benign and merely serves their whims.

Consider the following Bible verses:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Romans 3:20).

“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11).

“... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the

works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16).

“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

Some in the HRM might object at this point and insist that they are not attempting to gain righteousness or justification through the Law, but rather insight, growth, and sanctification — as if keeping the Law made one a better Christian. The problem with that argument is that many of the HRM followers fall into legalism and do not so easily understand the difference between salvation and sanctification. Because of the clutter of Old Testament requirements, inductees into the HRM may not, as J.C. Ryle suggested, have learned the enormous folly of joining anything with Christ in the matter of salvation.¹⁶

Roman Catholics know how easy it is to confuse salvation with rigorous involvement in all the trappings and rituals of the religion. The tiny — but important — differences between veneration and worship (*latria*, *dulia*, and *hyperdulia*) mean Catholics kneel before statues, pray to them, and worship them. It is debatable whether HRM followers are taught about grace and the real purposes of the Law as found in Scripture.

The other issue is this: Why bring in the accouterments of the Law for sanctification when *nowhere in the Bible are we told to do so or that the Law is a means to sanctify us?* We must know the difference between justifying faith and sanctifying faith. We obviously do not have to turn to the Law for Christian growth because we have large amounts of material on practical holiness in the New Testament epistles.

Some of the epistles give us long lists of things to put off and put on; what to do and what not to do. It is all too clear that genuine growth in Christ will demonstrate itself by an inner drive — a renewing of the mind prompted by the Holy Spirit, empowered and motivated by grace — to conform to the many commands and

directives laid down by the New Testament epistles. We have everything we need for life and godliness there (2 Peter 1:3). The early Church “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). Peter refers to the “commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2). One writer warns:

“Our vision of sovereign grace becomes dim when we trust in anything else besides the all-sufficiency of Christ’s provision and power. His grace is our coverage for time and eternity.”¹⁷

Some in the HRM neglect the New Testament epistles. There is too much time and energy spent on a trivial pursuit of the Old Testament.

Others in the HRM have a low, if not distorted view of grace when they mix it with law. It can only be that they must think of grace as a lowering of God’s standards or a pass when law-breaking occurs. It is a grace of permission and permissiveness. The demands of the whole Law are ignored or treated as if sinners can and do keep them. Why else would those in the HRM turn a blind eye to a total commitment to all the requirements of the Law? They “keep” the Sabbath in their own way, however in some way they must see grace as covering their desecration or careless keeping of it.

For example, travel is prohibited on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:29), yet those in the HRM drive to their “synagogues.” Even Orthodox Jews build synagogues in their neighborhoods so they only must walk (not travel) a certain number of allowable feet (about 3,000 feet). At least the Orthodox Jews are trying to be more consistent. Of course, neither the Orthodox Jews nor those in the HRM put to death those who violate the Sabbath as we find in Exodus 31:14 and Numbers 15:32-36.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul was clear when he stated: “So let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17). The stance of the early Church regarding

law-keeping and the Sabbath is clearly documented:

“The Early Church Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd Christian centuries were practically unanimous in their view of the Heb. sabbath. Some insisted that it was completely abrogated; others emphasized its typical character; but all agreed that it was not binding on the Christians. Ignatius, the disciple of the Apostle John, and the bishop of Antioch, wrote to the Magnesians in the early years of the 2nd cent.: ‘Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace’; and then goes on to categorize his readers as ‘those who were brought up in the ancient order of things’ but who ‘have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath’ ... Justin Martyr, the first great Christian apologist around the middle of the 2nd cent., explains in his *Dialogue with Trypho* why the Christians do not keep the law of Moses, submit to circumcision, or observe the sabbath. He asserts that (1) true Sabbath observance under the new covenant is the keeping of a perpetual sabbath which consists of turning from sin; (2) the righteous men of old, Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the like, pleased God without keeping sabbath; and (3) God imposed the sabbath upon the Israelites because of unrighteousness and hardness of heart. ... The testimony of the ante-Nicene fathers is that for the vast majority of Christians, the sabbath was a Jewish institution which was not binding on Christian believers.”¹⁸

Those in the HRM apparently view grace as a license to do what they wish and pick and choose as they please regarding the Law. People immersed in the HRM are the real law breakers. Believers who adhere to New Testament standards do not do as they wish or as they please. They

plead with God for strength to do as God wishes. Grace motivates them (Titus 2:11-13).

God Himself would not relax the Old Testament laws, but He rather had Jesus fulfill them in every part through His sinless life, His sacrificial death, and His glorious resurrection. The unity of the Law could not be tampered with and all its righteous demands had to be met and paid for completely by Jesus. In doing so, God remained both just and justifier of those who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:26). The Lord Jesus met all the demands of the Law *in our place*. This is the real meaning of grace. As H.D. McDonald tells us:

“Grace points back to the ultimate source of God’s act of justifying the sinner by His sheer goodwill and mercy. Faith, as man’s response to God’s act in Christ, is a divine work in us — itself a gracious and gratuitous gift of God. From first to last the justification of the sinner is a matter of grace: ‘But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would be no longer grace’ (Rom 11:6).”¹⁹

The Law could not save; it could only condemn. It was powerless to save, per Romans 8:3. The Law is not without purpose, but how that purpose is defined depends upon the person giving the reply. Authors Don and Joy Veinot and Ron Henzel explain:

“Among evangelicals there are three primary positions on the Mosaic Law. They can be distinguished from each other by one simple test: how they interpret Christ’s words. ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.’ (Matt. 5:17) More specifically, each view can be identified by how it interprets the phrase ‘to fulfill’ (Greek *plerosai*). At risk of oversimplifying (for variations exist within each viewpoint), the three positions and their adherents are as follows: 1. Christ Revises the Law (Reformed). 2. Christ

Replaces the Law (Lutherans and Dispensationalists). 3. Christ Reaffirms the Law (Theonomists and others). Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox hold to a variation of position two in which the ‘one true Church,’ through its clergy, mediates Christ’s authority in the world. So, in practical terms, they believe the church replaces the Law.”²⁰

To this, Alva McClain lays out eight purposes drawn from the Bible in God’s giving of the Law. They are:

1. The Law was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19).
2. The Law was enacted for the lawless and ungodly (1 Timothy 1:9-10).
3. Another purpose of the Law is to give men ‘the knowledge of sin’ (Romans 3:20).
4. Another purpose served by the Law is to show the terrible nature of sin (Romans 7:8-13).
5. The Law was given to reveal how vast is the number of our sins (Romans 5:20).
6. The Law was given to shut every mouth and establish the guilt of all the world (Romans 3:19).
7. The Law was given to set a restraining guard upon men until they find true freedom in Christ by faith (Galatians 3:23-24).
8. The Law was given to bear witness prophetically and typically of salvation by grace in Christ (Romans 3:21).²¹

Thus, we can see that regardless of whether one adopts a covenantal or dispensational position, the Law was very important in terms of the purposes for which it was given.

This leads us to an important point: The Law and the law system were *given to Israel alone*. The Law was not given to any other nation or any other group of people. It was not given to Gentiles. In Exodus 19:5 we read: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a *special treasure to Me above all people*; for all

the earth is Mine" (emphasis added). The covenant here is clearly linked to Israel as God's special treasure and God's special people.

God re-emphasized that exclusivity to Moses: "Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant *with you and with Israel*" (Exodus 34:27, emphasis added). Nowhere is the Church addressed and told to keep the Old Testament Law for any reason. So the Law was not given to Gentiles or people of the world, but *only to the people of Israel*. The people of Israel remain under the Law with its punishments until as individuals they come to Jesus Christ and embrace the New Covenant. However, for those who believe, the dispensation of Law was fulfilled and ended fully with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Romans 10:4 declares, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." The construction of the verse in Greek places "the end" as the very first words in the sentence. The Greek word for "end" is *telos*. It can mean the limit at which something ceases to be and of a previous activity ceasing. It can mean the result of something and bringing something to completion or to the end. W.E. Vine writes, "an end, most frequently of the termination of something, is used with the article adverbially, meaning 'finally' or 'as to the end,' i.e., as to the last detail" and adds to that, "the limit, either at which a person or thing ceases to be what he or it was up to that point, or at which previous activities were ceased."²²

In his volume, *Law and Grace*, Alva McClain develops the idea that, "being under the law" in the Old Testament had only two possible meanings. One was under the Law for salvation and/or under the Law as a rule of life. As earlier noted, it is a biblical fact that we cannot be saved by the Law and our Christian growth (sanctification) is not gained by law.

Ultimately, Jews who violated the Law had various sacrifices along with tabernacle and temple rituals to atone for their sins. Speaking to this, McClain writes:

"God's people in the former age were 'under the law' as a rule of life, whereas today, they are not 'under the law' as a rule of life. Yet this is the very sense in which the legalistic theology of our day affirms that the law is still in force over the Christian believer! What utter nonsense! If their affirmations be true, then the distinction between being 'under law' and not being under law has been canceled, and the Apostle Paul wasted his time writing the great books of Romans and Galatians, to say nothing of the other books which declare the vital importance of this distinction."²³

While "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16), it should be remembered that *being under the Scriptures is not the same as being under the Law*. All Scripture has value. And because of Calvary, the value of the Old Testament is proven as it serves several functions.

First, it convicts sinners of sin and shows them their need of a Savior. As Paul instructed the believers in Galatia: "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

Second, we can look at the Old Testament characters as examples of both negative and positive morality (1 Corinthians 10:6) without reverting to legalism.

Third, it shows us God's holy nature (e.g., Psalm 19:7-14), thereby being a guide for our own holy living (1 Peter 1:15-16; Leviticus 11:44-45).

Fourth, the Old Testament, to a measured degree, restrains sin and sinners — the evil in our society. Paul declares, "that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane" (1 Timothy 1:9a).

And finally, we can look at all of the Word to see Jesus. The Old Testament Scriptures prophetically and typically show us Jesus. We can see Jesus in the various parts of the

tabernacle system. We can look at all instances of sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament and understand more fully about the Lamb of God.²⁴ After all, it was Jesus Himself who gave us the example of this. On the afternoon of His resurrection, He walked with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27, see also v. 44).

As great as Moses was, he cannot compare to Jesus. Moses was only a servant in the house, but Jesus was a Son over all the house (Hebrews 3:1-6). The following quote aptly summarizes the issues:

"... we are not in any way demeaning Moses. We are saying that a New Lawgiver has superseded and gone far beyond what Moses and the law could ever do. We refuse to belittle Moses in order to establish Christ. However, we also refuse to demean Christ by making Him to be merely an equal authority with Moses. We do not believe that Christ came merely to interpret and rubber stamp Moses. Christ has given us new laws that are based entirely on grace. Christ is the New Lawgiver over the true house of God."²⁵

In his second epistle, the Apostle Peter tells believers how to deal with false teachers and scoffers. He closes his letter by commanding them to "grow in grace," not to grow in the Law or in works (2 Peter 3:18). As Bible teacher Peter Jeffery emphasizes:

"If salvation is to be effective it has to be acceptable to God. This is why grace is the key word in the gospel, because it delights in the Lord Jesus Christ as the sacrifice which God himself has provided. If we do not understand the New Testament meaning of the word grace, we will never understand the gospel, because grace is the key to understanding the substance and heart of its message, which is salvation through Christ alone."²⁶

Long before Jeffery wrote his definition of grace, John Newton comprehended well the hope that is found only in God's grace. Newton, who abandoned his life as the captain of his own slave ship upon his conversion to Christ, wrote the most famous and beloved of all hymns celebrating the theme of God's grace:

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see."

Indeed, how sweet the sound of amazing grace whereby God takes the sinful and rebellious lives of His enemies and extends to them a righteousness "through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:22). The Law demands holiness, while grace gives holiness; the Law makes blessings the result of obedience, while grace makes obedience the result of blessing; in the Law the "old man" was restrained ("thou shall not..."), in grace the "new man" has liberty (Galatians 5:1, 13). The Mosaic Law, with all its high social ethics, cannot ultimately satisfy. All of this is lost on those within the Hebrew Roots Movement who seek to mix that which should not be — and cannot be — intermingled.

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WM. PAUL YOUNG

(continued from page 1)

THE SHACK AND ITS ORIGIN

Young's rise to prominence began with *The Shack*, the story of a man dealing with a tragedy — the murder of one of his daughters — for which he blames himself and God and as a result descends into what the author repeatedly calls "*The Great Sadness*."¹

One day, the novel's protagonist, Mack, receives a note signed "Papa" — the name by which his wife calls God — inviting him to the shack where his daughter's blood-soaked red dress was found.² Mack visits the

shack, where God reveals himself as three persons: the Father, manifested as a black woman who answers to "Papa"; the Son, who manifests Himself as a Jewish carpenter; and the Holy Spirit, manifested as an Asian woman with the name "Sarayu."³ There Mack spends the weekend with the Godhead, dialoguing and spending time with them in fellowship as they deal with his anger, his sadness, and various questions. The encounter changes Mack; he finds peace with God and himself.

While the story at times provides insight into suffering, loss, and where to find God in tragedy, the book and the movie are troubling on many

counts, some of which were examined in a 2009 critique of the book in *The Quarterly Journal*.⁴

The Shack's portrayal of all three members of the Godhead in human bodily form strikes one as literary license taken too far. Of even greater concern is the strong strain of universalism — the anti-biblical notion that all people will be saved⁵ — present not only in *The Shack* but in his latest work as well.

Lies is not a long book. The page format is small. Its 260 pages might fill 100 pages of a standard-size hardback. Each of the 28 chapters examines a belief about God and ourselves that Young considers false. For

example, assumption or “lie” number nine is, “God is a magician.”⁶

The book also includes an appendix titled, “A Catena: God’s Drama of Redemption,”⁷ in which Young provides 34 Scripture passages cited in support of his belief in universalism; and “A Final Word from Dietrich Bonhoeffer,”⁸ consisting of two different quotations from Bonhoeffer’s book, *Ethics*. As with *The Shack*, *Lies* contains good and bad, with the bad far outweighing the good.

In the book’s Introduction, Young writes:

“This book is not a presentation of certainty. None of the examinations of ‘lies’ results in a final or absolute view on a subject. Rather, they are tastes of larger conversations. Each chapter refers to a statement I once believed and from which I have transitioned. You may identify with some and not with others. You might agree or disagree with my conclusions. Some of these ideas may be deeply challenging, while others may seem naïve and thoughtless. That is the wonder and uniqueness of our journeys and the beauty of dialogue and relationship.”⁹

After reading that, one is left wondering why he wrote such an aimless book. But it is intended to be a self-revelation of who Young is and what he believes. He states, “What you are about to read will tell you much about me as a person.”¹⁰ Likewise, in the book’s Foreword, C. Baxter Kruger writes, “My dear friend, Paul, has ventured beyond his wonderful and challenging fiction novels and here offers a more straightforward book about what he believes.”¹¹

WHAT YOUNG BELIEVES

Young portrays his book as being a dialogue¹² but it is a monologue.

One “lie” Young examines early in his book is, “God is good. I am not.” Here Young tells us:

“Yes, we have crippled eyes, but not a core of ungoodness. We are true and right, but often ignorant

and stupid, acting out of the pain of our wrongheadedness, hurting ourselves, others, and even all creation. Blind, not depraved, is our condition.”¹³

However, the Word of God instructs, “There is none righteous, no, not one” and “There is none who does good, no, not one” (Romans 3:10, 12).

Young’s next “lie” is “God is in control.” Young believes that his view exonerates God of the evil and the wrong that occurs in life. Of course, some evil that occurs in life is due to man’s evil, as he points out. However, this doesn’t account for *all* the evil in the world, such as diseases over which man has no control, accidents, natural disasters, and the malevolence of Satan and his demons who sometimes do their work in or through people.

Erwin Lutzer, pastor emeritus of the Moody Church in Chicago, states:

“It appears that the Bible is not as concerned about God’s reputation as some theologians are. It puts God clearly in charge of the wind, the rain, and the calamities of the earth.”¹⁴

Young’s challenge to the doctrine of God’s omnipotence reveals an inadequate view of the Almighty. One might ask, “If God isn’t in control of all that occurs in the universe, who is?” Scripture indicates that even Satan — of whom Young doesn’t account — must have God’s permission for the evil that he works in the world.¹⁵

The Westminster Confession of Faith offers a better understanding of God’s providence, when it declares:

“God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”¹⁶

Lutzer also deals with the matter of God and suffering in the world:

“Yet, we must honestly face the question, should God be blamed for such destructive [natural] disasters that create unfathomable human suffering? That word *blame* implies wrongdoing, and I don’t believe such a word should ever be applied to the Almighty. Even saying that God is responsible for natural disasters might not be best since the word *responsibility* usually implies accountability. God, however, is accountable to no one: ‘Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him’ (Psalm 115:3). It is best, I believe, to say simply that God is in charge of what happens on His planet, either directly or through secondary causes. Let’s begin by candidly agreeing that God plays by a different set of rules. If you were standing beside a swimming pool and watched a toddler fall in but did not pull the child out, your negligence would be cause for prosecution. Yet God watches children drown, or for that matter, starve, every day and does not intervene. He sends drought to countries in Africa, creating scarcity of food; He sends tidal waves, wiping out homes and crops. We are obligated to keep people alive as long as possible, but if God were held to that standard, no one would ever die. He could keep the whole population of the world alive indefinitely. What for us would be criminal is an everyday occurrence for God. Why the difference? He is the Creator; we are the creatures. Because He is the Giver of life, He also has the right to take life. He has a long-term agenda that is much more complex than keeping people alive as long as possible. Death and destruction are a part of His plan. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Not all of the Ten Commandments apply

to God. For example, He cannot steal for He owns everything. Having neither father nor mother, He must of necessity honor only Himself. God does not often strike a person dead, but through disease, disaster, and various other calamities He does 'take human life' regularly — daily, hourly."¹⁷

Some of what Lutzer says about "God plays by a different set of rules" also applies to Young's declaration that the so-called Golden Rule, stated by Jesus in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31, applies to God Himself.¹⁸ In his discussion, Young asserts, "The Golden Rule is immensely significant because it is the way God is. God treats me exactly the way God wants to be treated."¹⁹ In contrast to what Young states, Jesus is clearly describing relationships between human beings. The Greek word used in both Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 is the word *anthropos*, which means "human," not "God." Young has thus arrived at a false conclusion.

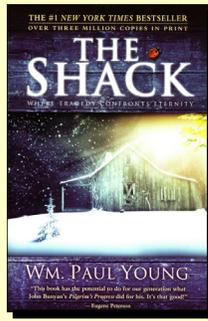
YOUNG'S UNIVERSALISM

Another "lie" Young examines is, "You need to get saved." Young believes this is a lie because he believes that everybody is already saved, but some do not know it. This reduces the Gospel to a proclamation of the good news that people are already in a relationship with God. Calling this belief a lie violates the tenor of the entire Bible. The only way someone could hold to such a view is by wishful thinking, combined with cherry-picking certain Scriptures and/or faulty biblical interpretation.

Universalism is the linchpin of Young's belief system. In this chapter, Young asks and answers his own questions:

"Are you suggesting that everyone is saved? That you believe in universal salvation? That is exactly what I am saying! This is real good news! It has been blowing people's minds for centuries now."²⁰

While the doctrine of universal salvation has gained traction in some corners of Christendom, generally



Revisiting The Shack and Its Author's Tragic Life

by J. Greg Sheryl

The story in Wm. Paul Young's novel *The Shack* is told by "Willie," a friend of the novel's main human protagonist, Mackenzie Allen Phillips ("Mack"). It begins about four years after a tragedy in Mack's life. While on a camping trip with three of his children, his daughter Missy was kidnapped and murdered by a serial killer who preys on young girls. Missy's blood-soaked red dress was found in an old shack, suggesting the tragedy that had befallen her. Mack blames himself for not having protecting Missy. He also blames God, and descends into what Young calls "*The Great Sadness*."¹

One day, a note appears in Mack's mailbox. It says, "Mackenzie, It's been a while. I've missed you. I'll be at the shack next weekend if you want to get together. — Papa."²

Mack visits the shack, the symbol of his deepest pain to see if God will meet him there. At first, God is a no-show. However, as Mack starts to leave, his surroundings are transformed. The shack becomes a beautiful cabin and Mack is introduced to incarnations of the Father (manifested as a black woman who answers to "Papa"); the Son (manifested as a Jewish carpenter); and the Holy Spirit (manifested as an Asian woman with the name "Sarayu")³. There Mack spends the weekend with the Godhead as they deal with his anger, his sadness, and his various questions (as well as giving him theological insights that he hadn't even known to ask). Mack emerges from the shack a changed man, at peace with God and himself.

Young says that *The Shack* was an accidental success:

"*The Shack* was not written for the world to read. I wrote it as a Christmas gift for our six children, most of it penned in long-hand on yellow legal pads while I rode the metro to one of my three jobs. When I printed it on the photocopier at Office Depot, complete with spiral binding and plastic cover, I was thrilled. Giving those copies to my family and a few friends did everything I ever wanted or imagined that book would do. Not once did it cross my mind to publish. I wrote the novel at the request of my wife, Kim. She'd asked, 'Would you someday please write something as a gift for our kids that puts in one place how you think? Because, you know, you think outside the box.' She was referring to my lifelong struggle with conflicts between faith and religion, and to my work both theologically and personally as I searched for helpful ways to think about God and humanity. Later, after I delivered the Christmas present, she told me that she had been thinking four to six pages. Oh well! Obviously, the book has become something much bigger than what I'd originally intended for a small audience. As of this writing, *The Shack* has sold around 20 million copies. For me, this whole adventure has been a God-thing, but not everyone views it this way."⁴

Young also says, "I did not feel whole enough to attempt what she'd [Kim] asked until the year I turned fifty."⁵ Regarding writing this story for his children, Young relates:

"Beginning with questions and responses, I wrote conversations between me and God about any topic in which I thought my kids might be interested. It wasn't long before I had stacks of notes."⁶

Young decided to write his thoughts in the form of a story:

"But who would be asking these questions, and why? That was when Mackenzie Allen Phillips was born — a man who could house my doubts, my fears, my wonder, and my own journey toward wholeness."⁷

Elsewhere, Young summarizes:

"What began with fifteen copies printed at Office Depot, a Christmas gift for our six children, became an unanticipated phenomenon that caught everyone by surprise. Three men together, Wayne Jacobsen, Brad Cummings, and Bobby Downes, wanted to see this story eventually come to life on the big screen, and it seemed prudent to first get it into print. After the early complete draft was ignored or turned down by twenty-six publishers, Wayne and Brad decided to establish their own publishing house, Windblown Media, with one initial title, *The Shack*. They each contributed a third of the original cost for the first print run and a friend of mine loaned me the rest."⁸

Later, Young says:

"In June 2008, *The Shack* debuted on the *New York Times* bestseller list at #1, where it remained for 49 weeks in a row. ... In the last years, *The Shack* has been translated into 50 languages and has sold at least 19 million copies

worldwide, placing it (unofficially) in the top 100 fiction bestsellers of all time. And now it's a movie!"⁹

The fact that the book did so well shows that the story resonated with many people, partly because it deals with a tragic situation that God heals. God is portrayed as extremely compassionate, loving, and non-judgmental. However, both the book and the movie portray an incomplete portrait of the God revealed in the Bible.

YOUNG'S TRAGIC BACKGROUND

Young has related details about his biography that may help readers of *The Shack* understand how he arrived at the conclusions he did. He says he was born to missionary parents on May 11, 1955.¹⁰ The biography on the back cover of *The Shack* briefly states:

"Wm. Paul Young was born a Canadian and raised among a stone-age tribe by his missionary parents in the highlands of what was New Guinea. He suffered great loss as a child and young adult, and now enjoys the 'wastefulness of grace' with his family in the Pacific Northwest."¹¹

Left untold above is what the "great loss" was that Young suffered as a child and young adult. The bio on Young's website page reveals only part of what he is referring to:

"These are some of the facts of my life, but they don't begin to tell the real story. That would take much more room than is available here. The journey has been both incredible and unbearable, a desperate grasping after grace and wholeness. These facts don't tell you about the pain of trying to adjust to different cultures, of life losses that were almost too staggering to bear, of walking down railroad tracks at night in the

(continues on page 18)

Christian theology has rejected the idea of a universal salvation.²¹

Professor Timothy K. Beougher explains:

"Church historians generally agree that universalism first appeared in the Alexandrian School, especially with Origen (A.D. 185-254). Based on his belief that God's ultimate purpose is to restore the original unity in creation, Origen taught that all of the condemned and even the demons would eventually be brought, through a time of 'purifying' punishment, into voluntary subjection to Christ. Gregory of Nyssa, one of Origen's followers, taught salvation for all (including Satan!). Universalism was eventually condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in 543."²²

Young concludes that because Jesus died for all, all are saved. This is unbiblical and illogical. Young must ignore or misinterpret many Scriptures to arrive at this conclusion. For instance, he cites John 3:16-17, claiming it supports his view.²³

John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." It is easy to see why Young would quote verse 17, because it seems to suggest that perhaps Jesus won't judge the world. However, verse 18, which Young doesn't quote, says what Young doesn't want Jesus to say: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Furthermore, John 3:36 states, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Young doesn't cite this verse either.

Theologian Millard Erikson wrote:

“The theory of universal reconciliation maintains that Christ’s death accomplished its purpose of reconciling all humankind to God. The death of Christ made it possible for God to accept humans, and he has done so. Consequently, whatever separation exists between a human and the benefits of God’s grace is subjective in nature; it exists only in the human’s mind. The message they need to be told, then, is not that they have an opportunity for salvation. Rather, they need to be told that they have been saved, so that they may enjoy the blessings that are already theirs. The advocates of this view lay great stress on 2 Corinthians 5:18: ‘All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.’ Reconciliation is not something that is to be; it is an accomplished fact.”²⁴

While Young doesn’t specifically cite 2 Corinthians 5:18 in his chapter, he does cite part of 2 Corinthians 5:19 in his *Catena*:

“For God was in Christ reconciling *cosmos* to Himself, not counting their sins against them (2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV/Greek NT, emphasis mine).”²⁵

But Young doesn’t cite the verse which follows: “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

As Beougher further notes, “The exhortation is not for the Corinthians merely to *recognize* that they have been reconciled, but for them to *become* reconciled to God.”²⁶

Theologian Robert Lightner of Dallas Seminary wrote:

“Any appeal to God’s universal love for man and Christ’s death for all as a basis for denying eternal punishment is unjustified. Scripture also requires the sinner to respond in faith before he can realize the saving merit of God’s love and the Savior’s death in his

place. God’s love and Christ’s death save no one apart from the responsible individual’s response in faith and trust in the Savior and His substitutionary death. The Cross does not apply its own benefits.”²⁷

YOUNG’S JOURNEY TOWARD UNIVERSALISM

One of Young’s friends, James DeYoung, a professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Western Seminary, Portland, Ore.,²⁸ has chronicled the evolution of Young’s belief in universalism.

In 1997, the two of them founded a Christian think tank, called M3 Forum. This group of 8-12 people discussed a variety of topics of interest to Christians.²⁹ DeYoung writes:

“For almost seven years Paul and I drove together to almost every meeting — a trip of about thirty minutes. We would share our latest thinking about a host of things. It now appears that some of the ideas found in *The Shack* took seed during those discussions.”³⁰

DeYoung relates that in April 2004, Young presented a 103-page paper at the Forum, endorsing universalism. DeYoung carefully distinguishes between a pagan form of universalism, in which Jesus is just one of many ways to God, which Young did not endorse, and the “Christian” form of universalism that Young embraced, which DeYoung calls “universal reconciliation.” Although the result of both pagan universalism and universal reconciliation is identical — that everyone ends up in heaven — in universal reconciliation Jesus is the only Savior. All will eventually embrace Him as their Savior even if some do so after a period of cleansing suffering in hell after death. So hell is only a place of temporary purgation, rather than eternal suffering.³¹

Regarding Young’s April 2004 presentation at the M3 Forum, DeYoung writes:

“Part of Paul Young’s extensive defense of universal reconciliation included his personal testi-

mony about how much this new doctrine had impacted his life. He wrote that it had made him a more loving person toward God and toward people. He claimed that universalism had changed his total perspective on life and his beliefs about God, about the church, evangelism, eschatology, and other matters. He deliberately stated that he was putting aside his earlier ‘evangelical paradigm.’ He was not just considering a new belief; he had committed to it. Paul Young’s paper surprised and saddened me.”³²

The following month, at the M3 Forum, DeYoung replied to Young’s presentation with a point-by-point response. DeYoung writes, “I noted that Christians had come to identify universal reconciliation as heresy in the sixth century. [But] I did not attack Paul Young as a person.”³³ DeYoung notes that Young never returned to the M3 Forum, even though DeYoung made “several phone calls” urging him to return.³⁴ He writes:

“Within the next two years after his presentation at M3 Forum, Paul Young completed writing his novel for his children for Christmas. When he sent the manuscript to some friends, they were highly impressed that it had great possibilities. However, these people were opposed to the universalism embedded in it and acknowledge publicly that they spent over a year trying to remove it.”³⁵

DeYoung also states:

“In a probing interview in late 2008, the author [Young] attributes his [life transformation] change to ‘intense therapy.’ The result was, to cite the words of the interviewer, ‘a new understanding of God. Instead of a distant, judgmental God, Young says he came to experience God as intimate and loving.’”³⁶

Elsewhere, DeYoung states:

“From my vantage point I am convinced that a major part of Paul Young’s real ‘shack experi-

ence' was where he embraced universal reconciliation. It is this doctrine that changed his life and his beliefs (as he himself has claimed) and originally was the main thrust of his novel."³⁷

In his book critiquing *The Shack*, DeYoung states:

"When I met Paul Young in a church in June 2007, he protested my opposing his views and reminded me that he followed universal reconciliation, not universalism."³⁸

However, despite possible technical differences between the two beliefs, both positions teach that all will eventually be saved. One theological dictionary states that the term *universal reconciliation* "may be used as a synonym for Universalism or universal salvation."³⁹

DeYoung also says:

"Later in February 2008, I invited Paul and several M3 Forum people and my pastor to come to my home and to hear Paul's concerns about my opposition to his writing. He professed to be no longer a 'universalist' but refused to say what he believed. He claimed that he was a person in process, that he was a person in flux. He said: 'I am not today where I was yesterday.' He did say that he hoped that the lost would not spend an eternity in hell."⁴⁰

The last sentence above certainly sounds like Young still either believed in universalism or at least hoped that it was true. So it doesn't appear that Young was being entirely forthcoming in stating he was no longer a universalist.

In a *Christianity Today* interview published in March 2013, Young said:

"One question I get, of course, is, 'Are you a universalist?' I'm not, because I don't think you can make that step doctrinally. I don't think Scripture is that obvious. There is this respect for the human creation's ability to say no. God will not force love. And we still have to choose to be

reconciled. But Colossians says that's what we are to be praying for, that *everything* gets reconciled back to him."⁴¹

In a blog dated Feb. 28, 2017, days before his book *Lies We Believe About God* was released, Young's theologian friend Baxter Kruger posted an interview he had with Young in which he questioned Young about his views of salvation and hell.⁴² Young's answers were vague. When Kruger asked Young if he believed that everyone would be in heaven, Young replied:

"I hope so, but hope is not a conclusion, or a doctrine. We do not proclaim that all will be in heaven. I believe that Jesus has embraced us all, ... But that is not to say that all of us will come to believe, or to know that this is the truth, ... I hope so. I will certainly not be disappointed if all come to know and experience the truth of their inclusion in Papa's family. The New Testament leaves us with this hope, but not with the declaration, not with the therefore all will come to know and believe the truth so as to experience its life and freedom."⁴³

Later, in the interview, Young stated:

"I think hell is what we experience, now and hereafter, when we live in rebellion and alienation to who we really are in Jesus. But Jesus has met us in our hell and intends to deliver us from our own evil. How that turns out, I do no[t] know. We are back to the question of universalism. I am not in a position to say either way, but I can say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not have an abandoning chip in their being. They will never forsake what they have created. So, I am hopeful, but I have never and will never speak definitively on how it all turns out. I trust the love of Papa. That is good enough for me."⁴⁴

Compare these statements above by Young with what he asserts in his latest book:

"God does not wait for my choice and then 'save me.' God has acted decisively and universally for all humankind. Now our daily choice is to either grow and participate in *that* reality or continue to live in the blindness of our own independence. Are you suggesting that everyone is saved? That you believe in universal salvation? That is exactly what I am saying!"⁴⁵

Now that he has owned his universalism in writing, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for him to deny that this is his position.

YOUNG AND HELL

Another of the "lies" Young examines is, "Hell is separation from God." Young believes that the nature of hell is that of "an age of redemptive purification."⁴⁶ For him, hell is redemptive as opposed to punitive, temporary as opposed to eternal. Beougher explains this view, "Hell thereby becomes a 'means of grace' where God's love eventually wins everyone, even Judas (and some would say even Satan), back to himself."⁴⁷ Young posits the idea that, because God is the source of all existence and because Romans 8:38-39 says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, therefore, hell is not actually separation from God. In fact, later in his book, Young states, "If separation is a lie, does it mean that no one has ever been separated from God? That is exactly what it means. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39)."⁴⁸

Young ignores the fact that Romans 8 is written to believers only. While nothing can separate *the believer* from the love of Christ, as Paul wrote in the verses from Romans, this passage says nothing about the unbeliever. Throughout his book, Young applies Scriptures meant for the believer to all mankind, because he believes everyone is saved.⁴⁹

Would that Young had told us what he thought of John 3, where Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (vv. 3, 5-7).

Whatever Jesus means in these verses, He certainly states that being born again is a prerequisite for seeing and entering the kingdom of God. Therefore, if a person is not born again, he will *not* enter the kingdom of God.

Regarding Young's belief that all will eventually be saved, even if they must temporarily reside in a "redemptive" hell, any number of Scriptures refute this.

The fact that there is no postmortem salvation is clearly seen in Hebrews 9:27, which states, "[I]t is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." Additionally, Jesus said, "[T]he hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).

The eternity of the *punishment* — not "redemptive suffering" — of hell is clearly taught in Scripture. The sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 come under different judgments:

"Then He [Jesus] will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;' ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41, 46, NASB).

The same Greek word *aionios* (meaning "eternal") is used in these two verses to describe *the fire* and *the punishment* of those who go into the fire and *the life* of the righteous. As Walter Martin observed:

"Therefore, if we would limit the duration of the punishment of the damned, then by all the laws of sound exegesis we must limit

the eternal habitation of the saved! This far even no universal reconciliationist is willing to go!"⁵⁰

Revelation 20 states: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (v. 10).

This appears to be the same fire spoken of in the Matthew 25 passage above. But a few verses later in Revelation 20, we read, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (v. 15).

Therefore, the punishment of the fires of hell is eternal, as is the punishment of those who go there.⁵¹

As to the number of the saved, Jesus indicates that the number of the saved will be few:

"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 is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).⁵²

Although the words "many" and "few" are relative terms and don't tell us a specific number or percentage of the saved and the lost, Scripture strongly indicates that there will be a lot fewer saved than will be lost.

YOUNG AND SIN

Young saves a huge "lie" for his penultimate chapter: "Sin separates us from God." In his book, Young embeds this and other lies, such as insisting that to make God responsible for Christ's death on the Cross is to impute to God cosmic child abuse.⁵³ In the process, he also denigrates the view that Christ delivered us from God's wrath.⁵⁴ In this chapter Young also seems to espouse "panentheism," which one theological dictionary defines as:

"The belief that God is in, but is not to be equated with, everything that exists. By contrast, pantheism is the belief that God is all and all is God."⁵⁵

Another source says panentheism is:

"The view that the whole of the universe is included in God but does not exhaust God. The world is not distinct from God, as in theism, but neither is God identical with the world (pantheism). Panentheists sometimes think of the universe as the body of God, but they say God transcends his body in much the same way that a person transcends his or her material body."⁵⁶

Young says in this chapter:

"And what does the truth of your being look like? God. You are made in the image of God, and the truth of your being looks like God."⁵⁷

"Jesus did not come to build a bridge back to God or to offer the possibility of getting unseparated. One of the multifaceted purposes of the incarnation of Jesus is that we who are lost in the delusion of separation can witness a human life who knows He is not. There is 'nothing' outside God. There is only God, and Creation is created 'in' God; and according to John 1, Creation is specifically created 'inside' Jesus, the Word who is God (see verses 3-4)."⁵⁸

"Meanwhile, God is watching ... from a distance? No! There is no separation [between people and God]."⁵⁹

AN EVALUATION

Young tells of a difficult and tumultuous life that is bound to elicit compassion from his readers. And he seems to have a lot of compassion for others.

But it appears that he found his solace in false doctrine, which he seeks to instill in others. His false beliefs about God and people and creation itself have given him a false sense of peace with God, himself, and others. Whether Young is saved is unclear, because his views of Jesus and the other members of the Godhead and creation leave one wondering if his faith is in the Jesus of the

Bible or “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4) who cannot save.

Not everything that Young believes is wrong, but so much is that it all but blots out what is right. He professes to believe in the biblical Trinity, although his apparent panentheistic view of God and His creation is at odds with that belief. John Ankerberg and John Weldon once wrote:

“For us ... *false teaching* is a mixture of truth and error. Thus, people may at the same time be encouraged and nourished by some things that are true but unknowingly accept error along with it. Unfortunately, sometimes even a small amount of error may be dangerous. Ninety-eight percent of rat poison is whole-some food. Only two percent is deadly.”⁶⁰

Regarding universalism, Terry Miethe has said:

“Universalism flatly contradicts Scripture at several points. First, it denies biblical teaching concerning hell as the eternal abode of those who refuse to accept Christ as Savior (Matt. 25:41-46). Second, although God indeed wills for all to be saved, the Bible recognizes that some will accept salvation and some will not. Third, universalism removes all moral responsibility. If everyone goes to heaven, sin has no eternal consequence. Finally, witnessing becomes irrelevant. Why would Christ have commanded Christians to share the Gospel when everyone is already destined for heaven?”⁶¹

Christian apologist and author Robert Morey wrote:

“In these dark days of apostasy all around us, it is good to be reminded that the biblical gospel is the clarion call to ‘flee from the wrath to come’ (Mat. 3:7). Any so-called ‘gospel’ that assures sinners there is no eternal wrath to flee is a false gospel and falls under the condemnation of Gal. 1:8. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, just as surely as God exists!”⁶²

Galatians 1:8 says, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

These are strong words. However, the gospel of universalism lulls people into a false sense of security by giving unbelievers the false hope of heaven, while leading them to an everlasting hell. Young is accountable before God — whether he believes it or not — for misleading people by causing them to have this false hope. The God of Paul Young is an edited and truncated version of the God of the Bible.

Endnotes:

1. Wm. Paul Young, *The Shack*. Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007, pp. 12, 24-25, 64, italics in original.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 16 (see also pp. 61-63, 65).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 87. In an excellent, informative online article about Paul Young and *The Shack*, Christian blogger Tim Challies explains that Sarayu is “Sanskrit for *air* or *wind*.” Tim Challies, “The Bestsellers: The Shack.” From Challies’ website online post dated June 1, 2014. Document accessed at: www.challies.com/articles/the-bestsellers-the-shack.
4. Gary E. Gilley, “Putting God in a Shack: The Unshackled Heresy of Wm. Paul Young,” *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2009, pp. 4, 12-13.
5. For a few example statements in *The Shack* that seem to hint at universalism, see pp. 110, 120, 161-163, 182.
6. Wm. Paul Young, *Lies We Believe About God*. New York: Atria Books, 2017, pg. 83.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-248.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 18; cf. back dust jacket of book.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 19.
11. Kruger in *ibid.*, pg. 3.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 18.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
14. Erwin W. Lutzer, *Where Was God?: Answers to Tough Questions About God and Natural Disasters*. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006, pg. 33.
15. E.g., Job 1:9-12; 2:3-6; Luke 22:31-32.
16. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Lawrenceville, Ga.: Committee for Christian Education & Publications, 1990, pg. 12, chapter III, paragraph 1.
17. *Where Was God?*, op. cit., pp. 35-37, italics in original.
18. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 46.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 118.
21. Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and

- Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999, pg. 13, s.v., “*apokatastasis*.”
22. Timothy Beougher in Paul R. House and Gregory A. Thornbury, editors, *Who Will Be Saved?* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000, pp. 86-87.
 23. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 242.
 24. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 1027.
 25. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 246, italic in original.
 26. Beougher in *Who Will Be Saved?*, op. cit., pg. 94, italics in original.
 27. Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation: The Theology of Everlasting Life*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1991, pg. 175.
 28. James DeYoung, Th.D. from faculty page of Western Seminary website. Document accessed at: www.westernseminary.edu/academics/faculty/james-deyoung.
 29. James B. DeYoung, *Burning Down ‘The Shack’*. Washington, D.C.: WND Books, 2008, pg. XIII.
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. *Ibid.*, pp. XIII-XIV.
 32. *Ibid.*, pg. XV.
 33. *Ibid.*, pp. XV-XVI.
 34. *Ibid.*, pg. XVI.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. XVIII-XIX. DeYoung explains, “All of these details are admitted on the Web site of Wayne Jacobsen and Brad Cummings [Young’s acknowledged collaborators on *The Shack*] as they seek to explain the charge of universalism often leveled at the book” (*ibid.*, pg. 247, endnote 4).
 36. *Ibid.*, pg. XXV, citing *Faith Today*, November-December 2008, pp. 20-24.
 37. *Ibid.*, pg. XII.
 38. *Ibid.*, pg. XIX.
 39. Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, s.v., “universal reconciliation,” pg. 293.
 40. *Burning Down ‘The Shack’*, op. cit., pg. XIX.
 41. Mark Galli, “The Love Shack,” *Christianity Today*, March 2013, pg. 34, italic in original.
 42. C. Baxter Kruger, “William Paul Young: Orthodox Novelist,” Baxter Kruger Perichoresis: Welcome to the Conversation online post. Document accessed at: www.perichoresis.org/william-paul-young-orthodox-novelist/.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 118, italic in original.
 46. *Ibid.*, pg. 131.
 47. Beougher in *Who Will Be Saved?*, op. cit., pg. 84.
 48. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg.

232.

49. Young argues this very point in *ibid.*, pp. 205-206, within a chapter entitled, "Not everyone is a child of God."

50. Walter R. Martin, *Essential Christianity*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1975, pg. 123.

51. For more biblical evidence of the fires of hell being eternal, see Revelation 14:9-11; Mark 9:43, 48; and Matthew 3:12.

52. See also a similar warning by Jesus, in response to a question about this very issue, in Luke 13:23-30.

53. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pp. 149, 169-170, 238.

54. *Ibid.*, e.g., pp. 169, 239.

55. Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001, s.v. "Pantheism," pg. 147.

56. C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002, s.v. "pantheism," pg. 88.

57. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 229.

58. *Ibid.*, pg. 232.

59. *Ibid.*, pg. 233, ellipsis in original, brackets added.

60. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on False Teaching in the Church*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1988, n.p. (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 5), italics in original.

61. Terry L. Miethe, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1988, s.v., "Universalism," pp. 213-214.

62. Robert A. Morey, *The End of the World According to Jesus*. Millerstown, Penn.: Christian Scholars Press, 2010, pg. 11.



REVISITING THE SHACK

(continued from page 13)

middle of winter screaming into the windstorm, of living with an underlying volume of shame so deep and loud that it constantly threatened any sense of sanity, of dreams not only destroyed but obliterated by personal failure, of hope so tenuous that only the trigger seemed to offer a solution. These few facts also do not speak to the potency of love and forgiveness, the arduous road of reconciliation, the surprises of grace and community, of transformational healing and the unexpected emergence of joy. The data of history might help you understand where a person has been, but often hide who they actually are. The Shack and Cross Roads will tell you much more about me than a few facts ever could, but a writer is always more, intentionally illusive behind the curtain of words."¹²

Theologian C. Baxter Kruger, who befriended Young after he read *The Shack*, wrote:

"The story behind the story [of *The Shack*] is the gut-wrenching hell that Paul Young suffered in his own life. I have seen a picture of Paul when he was six years old. He looked like an old man — weary, miserable, spent, and terribly sad. His eyes screamed despair. The picture made me cry. But that is the beginning of this story we have all — or at

least most of us — come to love. By the time Paul was six years old, he had been emotionally abandoned, physically and verbally beaten, and sexually abused — repeatedly. To say the least, he was crippled inside from his early days in life. No child — no person — can withstand such trauma. It creates a lethal rous of shame, fear, insecurity, anxiety, and guilt."¹³

In *The Shack*, it is the boy's father who is physically abusive toward his son. Likewise, in his latest book, *Lies We Believe About God*, Young writes:

"Growing up with my father was too often terrifying. Being around him was like walking through a minefield, with the explosive devices changing positions every night while I slept. ... But when his switch flipped, when he went from absent to furiously present, I felt as if I were being torn apart and scattered to the winds. My father was a missionary. He was the righteous man who was never wrong, and he was a strict disciplinarian. I believed I deserved his anger, of course, because there was nothing good in me. I was being rightfully punished, even when I didn't have any idea what sin I had committed by omission or commission. I did try to defend myself, sometimes by lying, but when that didn't work, I resorted to three words, which I screamed over and over and over as the waves of his rage approached. 'I'll be good! I'll be good! I'll be good!'"¹⁴

Young further relates other traumas he suffered.¹⁵ And he also says:

"My father was disappointed in me — all the time. At least that is what I felt as a child and therefore what I believed. Whether or not he was, I don't really know. We have not had that conversation yet."¹⁶

From the quotations below, it appears that Young was molested by the primitive New Guinea tribe in which he grew up, about whom he says:

"In the religious environment of my childhood, to say the word *sex* was to commit a sin. Meanwhile, the tribal culture in which I was raised (West Papua) was dramatically sexual. Many of the standard greetings were an association between sexuality and intimacy — the deeper the sense of relationship with another person, the more graphic the greeting. ... Speaking of sex, members of the tribal cultures in which I was raised wore little if any clothing."¹⁷

Other incidents in Young's past are worthy of mention. Katie Mettler, a writer for *The Washington Post*, tells us:

"Young grew up a child of Canadian missionaries. For his first 10 years, Young lived in a tribal village in New Guinea, where he says 'sexual abuse was a frequent part' of his childhood — though he has never said publicly who harmed him. ... Then in his late thirties, he had a three-month affair with his wife's best friend.

It was in this moment — when his wife confronted him about the affair — that Young explains he had a type of awakening. He entered therapy and admitted his indiscretions to the church where he worked, choosing to stay and endure whatever punishment the leadership there deemed necessary, Wayne Jacobsen, an original publisher of ‘The Shack,’ explained during a public talk about the book. But after several weeks, Jacobsen said, the pastor asked Young and his family to leave the congregation. His actions, the publisher said, were too embarrassing. A week later, someone pulled into Young’s driveway, a person who the author later claimed was one of the first within whom he saw God — the worship leader of his former church. She was a curvy, black woman.”¹⁸

This woman committed to be friends with Young and his wife through this situation. In her article, Mettler explains that this incident, “inspired a rethinking of how [Young] viewed God.”¹⁹

James B. DeYoung is a friend of Paul Young and professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Western Seminary in Portland, Ore. In a critique of Young’s *The Shack*, he gives this summary of Young’s life:

“In many public meetings and interviews, the author of *The Shack* has affirmed that his own personal shack is no more. No longer is he bound by guilt. He is totally open; he has nothing to hide; he has become fully transparent; he is fully honest. He openly confesses the struggles and conflicts of his childhood: molestation from the natives of New Guinea; his becoming a predator of boys; his anger at being verbally abused by his father; his distance from his mother. He confesses his mixed-up adulthood during which he committed adultery while married. His marriage was about to fall apart. The author has voluntarily made all these things a

matter of public record. Then something happened that changed him.”²⁰

Young says that the weekend of transformation *The Shack*’s protagonist Mack experiences with the Trinity at the shack in the novel represents what were eleven years of his own life.²¹

DeYoung also states:

“In a probing interview in late 2008, the author [Young] attributes his [life transformation] change to ‘intense therapy.’ The result was, to cite the words of the interviewer, ‘a new understanding of God. Instead of a distant, judgmental God, Young says he came to experience God as intimate and loving.’”²²

Elsewhere, DeYoung states:

“From my vantage point I am convinced that a major part of Paul Young’s real ‘shack experience’ was where he embraced universal reconciliation. It is this doctrine that changed his life and his beliefs (as he himself has claimed) and originally was the main thrust of his novel.”²³

A PAUL YOUNG TIMELINE

From what has been said so far, it is possible to construct an *approximate* timeline of certain events of Young’s life that may be instructive:

1955 — Young is born in Canada.

1956-1965 — Young spends childhood with missionary parents in New Guinea.

1993 — Has an extramarital affair.²⁴

1993-2004 — Has his own personal “shack” experience, culminating in his embrace of universalism. He presents his conversion to universalism at the M3 Forum in April 2004.

2005-2006 — At age 50, at his wife’s request, he writes, in the form of a story (which will become *The Shack*) his personal theological beliefs for his children. He presents this gift to his children, Christmas 2006.

2006-2007 — With the help of his collaborators, Wayne Jacobsen and Brad Cummings, they work on the novel, partly in an attempt to remove its theology of universalism. In the “Acknowledgements” at the end of

The Shack, Young writes, “[Wayne] and Brad bore the lion’s share of work in the three major rewrites that brought this story to its final form.”²⁵

Endnotes:

1. Wm. Paul Young, *The Shack*. Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007, pp. 12, 24-25, 64, italics in original. Except where otherwise noted, all references to *The Shack* in this article refer to the original 2007 edition of the book.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 16.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 87.
4. Wm. Paul Young, *Lies We Believe About God*. New York: Atria Books, 2017, pp. 51-52.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 235.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 236.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 237.
8. Wm. Paul Young, *The Shack*, media tie-in edition. Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2016, pg. 251, italics in original.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 253, italics in original.
10. William Paul Young, “Wm. Paul Young – About.” Document accessed at: <http://wmpaulyoung.com/wm-paul-young-about/>.
11. *The Shack*, op. cit., from the back cover.
12. Excerpted from “Wm. Paul Young – About,” op. cit.
13. C. Baxter Kruger, *The Shack Revisited*. New York: Faith Words, 2012, pg. 5.
14. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pp. 31-32, italics in original.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 210.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 93, italic in original.
18. Katie Mettler, “Why God is a curvy, black woman in ‘The Shack’ and some Christian critics say it’s ‘heresy,’” *The Washington Post* online post dated December 21, 2016. Document accessed at: www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/12/21/why-god-is-a-curved-black-woman-in-the-shack-and-some-christian-critics-say-its-heresy/?utm_term=.d020a637c051.
19. *Ibid.*
20. James B. DeYoung, *Burning Down ‘The Shack’*. Washington, D.C.: WND Books, 2008, pp. XXIV-XXV.
21. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 195.
22. *Burning Down ‘The Shack’*, op. cit., pg. XXV, citing *Faith Today*, November-December 2008, pp. 20-24.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. XII.
24. Tim Challies, “The Bestsellers: The Shack,” Challies’ website online post dated June 1, 2014. Document accessed at: www.challies.com/articles/the-best-sellers-the-shack.
25. *The Shack*, op. cit., n.p. (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 251).

often began her prayers addressing God as, “O divine madman! ... crazed with love, drunk with love.”

Mary Stewart Relfe was a forerunner of modern bridal mysticism. In the early 1980s she claimed to have come to know the dimension of being married to Christ. In her 1981 book, *When Your Money Fails...*, she dedicates the volume to her late husband, who died in 1978, and “To my beloved Heavenly Bridegroom, who ‘passed by me, and looked upon me and the time was the time of love; and He spread His skirt over me ... and sware unto me, and entered into a covenant with me, and I became His.’ Ezekiel 16:8” (pg. v). Later in the book she wrote, “Soon after the death of my husband, I began to experience being ‘married to Christ’ in another dimension. ... I would go to bed with the scriptures, sometimes several versions lying open on ‘my husband’s side.’ My Heavenly Bridegroom began breathing new life through these pages” (pg. 183).

Relfe’s “Heavenly Bridegroom” and marriage to Christ was a figment of her imagination. While Relfe’s books sold extensively, the Church in the 1980s was not quite ready for boyfriend or bridal mysticism. But today, Jesus apparently has many girlfriends and wives.

Bible students must recall that the bride symbolism is not the only symbol or figure, nor is it the primary one showing Jesus’ relationship to the Church. There are at least a dozen or more symbols for the Church found in the New Testament. Every one of these is important and instructive. Earl D. Radmacher wrote: “Both the body metaphor and the bride metaphor speak of the inseparable and vital union which exists between Christ and the church, but each has its own facet of this relationship to express. The former is a relationship of life and the latter a relationship of love. ... This love (*agape*) which Christ displayed is far different from ordinary emotional love” (*The Nature of the Church*, pp. 246-247).

Jesus pictured as a lovesick boyfriend is not only outrageous but is also offensive. He is transformed from a first-century itinerant Jewish rabbi into a twenty-first-century movie idol.

This Jesus even takes some of the female authors out on dates and to dinner. Choo Thomas writes that Jesus showed up in a Christmas gown and crown one Dec. 25 and said to her, “Sweetheart, I am happy to be celebrating My birthday with you” (*Heaven is So Real*, pg. 200).

Even a novice in the Bible is usually aware that Dec. 25 is not the actual date of Jesus’ birth. While the Dec. 25 date commemorates the Incarnation of Christ, the best of Bible scholars can only guess as to the exact date of our Savior’s birth. This is consistent with first-century Judaism as birth dates did not take on the significance as do birth dates in the West today. Choo seems totally

unaware of this and is tripped up by her own ignorance and boastful arrogance.

It is easy to see how wicked and wayward these ideas can become by watching a 10-minute YouTube video, “Dinner with Jesus.” The anonymous lady on the video claims that on Saturday, Dec. 8, 2012, she had a dinner date with “Yeshua Jesus.” Throughout her monologue, she repeatedly states that she does not want to put God in a box. But she does, in fact, put God in the box of her own carnal imagination.

She says that she purchased a dress and had her hair and fingernails done for her “dinner with Jesus.” Jesus would not tell her where they were to meet and eat so she rode around the restaurant district trying to divine where she was to go. Finally, driving through a residential section she came upon a “big famous hotel” — with no valet parking. She wandered around the hotel and was finally drawn to a courtyard by an indoor pool with tables and a flaming torch. There Yeshua was sitting while romantic music played. She explained to the waitress that she was “blessed” because Yeshua had chosen her to be their waitress. And, “He gave her a big tip too.”

At the end of the two-hour dinner date she made her way home and once inside her home she read the Song of Solomon. This is problematic. Because earlier in the video she said she lives on the East coast, but happened to be on the West coast and that is where the “date” occurred. She then shared that she entered her prayer closet, where Jesus was and they had intimacy like that of “where a husband and wife become one in love making.” She called that description “a good analogy” and added it was “spiritual love making.” On her video, she is quick to say that even men can have a date with Jesus.

Although never stated or hinted, perhaps this video was intended to be evil spoof. Yet many will not see it that way. It shows where bride mysticism and salvation as romance leads us.

This kind of blasphemy and sacrilege is difficult to speak about and write about, however the woman in the video seems unashamed. Jude’s words come to mind: “But you beloved remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons who cause divisions, not having the Spirit” (vv. 17-19).

Dee Brestin and Cathy Triccoli wrote *Falling in Love with Jesus: Abandoning Yourself to the Greatest Romance of Your Life*, a book endorsed by Beth Moore. The reviews on Amazon are interesting. One recent customer review stated: “This book has completely changed the way I view my relationship with Jesus! The authors shared intimate stories and scripture in a way that I could understand the true relationship that He desires to have

with me. Highly recommend to anyone who desires an intimate relationship with Jesus! You will truly be blessed!" According to this reviewer, the Bible is inadequate to do what Brestin and Triccoli can do.

One Thousand Gifts by Ann Voscamp is another book filled with sensual terminology and discussions of carnal intimacy with Jesus.

Jesus is not scoping out His next date and you won't find Him on Tinder, Match.com or even Christian Mingle. He is at the right hand of the Father interceding for believers. We know where He is and what He is doing. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is our sympathetic High Priest. To reduce Him to someone who is looking for a girlfriend or a wife is to create another Jesus.

In the past, these kinds of teachings were rejected as unorthodox. The history of such teaching should give any thinking person concern. It was taught by Gnostics, medieval Roman Catholic nuns, and cults such as The Family International. Now it is being taught and tolerated — if not embraced — by mainstream Christianity.

Reader beware and mature in your thinking. Do not be deceived and blown about by the wind.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

believe the organisation responds adequately to allegations of child sexual abuse." The *Herald* also reported, "The inquiry heard the church received allegations of child sexual abuse involving more than 1000 of its members over a 60-year period but did not report a single claim to police."

In Canada, *Enquete*, a weekly television newsmagazine airing on Radio-Canada, investigated allegations that the Watchtower failed to protect its children. The research confirmed the flawed directives of the Watchtower — *internal policies and no police* — that favors the abuser rather than the victim. The *Enquete* report stated, "While the Watchtower tells elders it is the 'absolute right' of members to report allegations of child abuse to police, doing so is effectively discouraged by an organizational emphasis on dealing with such matters internally and avoiding 'unnecessary entanglement with secular authorities,' as stated in an internal [Watchtower] document from 2014." The article emphasized its findings by citing the Australia commission report saying that in its country "the Jehovah's Witness church there had recorded allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 members. Not one allegation was reported to authorities outside the church."

In the United States, it is the same. Last February, the central Pennsylvania online news source, *PennLive*, reported on a trial taking place in a Philadelphia court in which Stephanie Fessler was accusing a fellow member of her Jehovah's Witness congregation of "negligence, assault, battery and intentional infliction of emotional distress." The sexual abuse occurred over a decade ago when Fessler was a teenager.

The news article stated, "And according to a lawsuit Fessler filed against the Jehovah's Witness church in Spring Grove, had church elders contacted the authorities as they were legally obligated to do, she would have been spared more sexual assaults from the same woman."

The report further stated, "When Fessler's parents became suspicious, her mother notified the church elders, who did not comply with their obligation as mandatory reporters under the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law to report the abuse to the state's ChildLine or to the police. Instead, they chastised and 'publically [sic] reproved' Fessler. The acts continued after the abuse was reported to the church elders, she says."

The lawsuit was filed not only against Terry J. Monheim, the perpetrator of the sexual abuse, but also the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Spring Grove Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 2012, Monheim pleaded guilty to charges of indecent assault of a person less than 16 and corruption of minors and was sentenced to three to 23 months in prison, running concurrently with five years of probation.

Five days into the court proceedings involving Fessler's lawsuit, the trial suddenly ended with Fessler settling with the defendants. According to her attorney, the matter was resolved and due to the confidential settlement agreement, all parties were barred from talking about the case or in disclosing the amount of the settlement. According to an earlier report, Fessler was seeking punitive damages and the suit denoted a "\$1.9 million demand against the church's \$100,000 offer to settle the suit."

—MKG

POPE CLAIMS NO RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS

Pope Francis continues to make headlines, drawing favor from politically liberal advocates and acquiring scorn from conservatives and the religious world. In February, a letter from the pontiff was read to more than 600 clergy and social justice activists attending a conference on inequality in Modesto, Calif. In the communication, Francis insisted that terrorism is not the result of religious conviction.

“Christian terrorism does not exist, Jewish terrorism does not exist, and Muslim terrorism does not exist. They do not exist,” he said in his speech to those attending the meeting. Francis maintains that terrorism is not the result of religious beliefs but is borne from economic unfairness and disparity. “The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence yet, without equal opportunities, the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and will eventually explode,” he further stated.

Many see the pope’s remarks as criticisms of President Trump’s immigration policies.

The pontiff also used the forum to reiterate his assertions of an ecological crisis. The United Kingdom news source, *Daily Mail*, reported, “Pope Francis also hit out at the ‘denial’ of climate change saying: ‘Time is running out. Let us act.’ He said: ‘I ask all of you, people of all backgrounds including native people, pastors, political leaders — to defend Creation.’”

Following his latest controversial statements, numerous online editorials and articles responded with strong contempt for the pope, calling him “an idiot,” “Dope Pope,” and “a very dangerous man.”

—MKG

ADVENTIST CHURCH TOPS 20 MILLION MEMBERS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has topped the 20 million membership mark after a “major drive” brought in a “record number” of new adherents.

The Adventist Church reported that nearly 900,000 people joined its church in 2016, a 4.6 percent increase from the previous year. The sect also posted “another milestone,” saying it baptized “a record 1.2 million people” and reported that it is planting new churches at a “rapid rate.”

The success of the membership drive is tied to the church’s Total Member Involvement, an outreach plan begun in 2016 which encourages all church members to “actively share the gospel in his or her community.” The program includes “literature distribution, Bible studies, cooking classes, health seminars, free clinics, and public evangelistic meetings.”

Seventh-day Adventism grew out of the failed prophecies of William Miller (1782-1849), who said that the return of Jesus Christ would occur around 1843. Avowed Adventists, including James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates, and others reinterpreted Miller’s errant eschatology and in 1863 formally organized the SDA church in Battle Creek, Mich.

—MKG

WATCHTOWER FACES CHALLENGE IN RUSSIA

For nearly two decades, Jehovah’s Witnesses have faced strong antagonism in Russia. In March the opposition was taken to a new level. *USA Today* reported that “Russia’s justice ministry has filed a lawsuit with its supreme court to declare the national headquarters of the country’s Jehovah’s Witnesses an extremist organization.”

According to *Christianity Today*, if the court ruling goes against the Watchtower it “would allow Russia to enact a countrywide ban on its activity, dissolving its organization and criminalizing its worship.”

In the past, “Russian prosecutors in various localities have periodically sought to outlaw or curb the group, charging it is a cult that destroys families, fosters hatred and threatens lives,” the *USA Today* article stated.

In 2015, 16 Jehovah’s Witnesses were convicted of “practicing extremism” in the port city of Taganrog. In 2009, the sect had been banned from conducting activity in the city. Five of the defendants were sentenced to 5 years in jail, while the others received stiff fines. Later the jail sentences were suspended.

The legal pressure of recent years imposed on Jehovah’s Witnesses by Russian authorities also included a ban against distribution of books, pamphlets, and other literature, including the Russian-edition of *The Watchtower*.

According to the *2017 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses* there were more than 170,000 members in 2,315 congregations in Russia in 2016.

—MKG

LDS CHURCH CONTINUES TO BATTLE ONLINE POSTS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is turning to its lawyers and threatening legal action in an attempt to curtail the online publication of private documents and videos that have been “leaked” to a group of former and inactive Mormons. The dissident group has been posting an assortment of restricted church materials on its **MormonLeaks.io** website since it was first launched in December 2016. The website was founded by a former Mormon, Ryan McKnight, who resides in Las Vegas.

The LDS church moved from its earlier pacifism to sending out a “takedown notice” after an internal PowerPoint presentation from December 2015 was posted online. The presentation was created for senior-level church leaders and disclosed the “Far Left” and “Far Right” attacks on the church — issues and ideas

that are drawing away church members. According to the online news source *Gizmodo*, “Ex-Mormons have even been referring to it as the ‘enemies list’ in forums and on podcasts.”

Following the March 1 directive from the LDS church, DocDroid, a third-party document-sharing site, removed the document from the MormonLeaks website. However, according to *The Washington Post*, “Two weeks later, on Tuesday [March 14], MormonLeaks reposted it on its own website, along with a letter from its lawyer, Marc J. Randazza, who said the site obtained the ‘document lawfully and had a right to distribute it in its capacity as a journalistic resource devoted to discussing facts about the LDS Church.’”

The Salt Lake City Tribune reported, “Randazza, asserting the March 1 ‘takedown notice’ was a misuse of copyright law, asked the church to continue its ‘reasonable’ policy of the recent past of seeming ‘to handle criticism and commentary with admirable grace, tact and class.’”

McKnight’s clashes, however, are not limited to the LDS church. Craig Criddle, another former Mormon turned LDS critic, originally launched **MormonLeaks.com**, along with purchasing the domain name **MormonLeaks.org**, in 2010. When McKnight’s efforts to purchase the domain names from Criddle failed, McKnight unveiled plans for his website to be called **MormonWikiLeaks**. But that proposal elicited opposition from **WikiLeaks**, the website launched by Julian Assange to post thousands of secret government documents. In the end, McKnight and company acquired and are using the domain name **MormonLeaks.io**.

—MKG

FAMILY CHRISTIAN STORES CLOSE

The cyber-marketplace has dealt another blow to brick-and-mortar retailers, this time claiming Family Christian Stores, which called itself the “world’s largest retailer of Christian-themed merchandise.” The chain announced in February that it would be closing its 240 stores in 36 states. The closing will affect more than 3,000 employees.

In 2015, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, saying its sales had fallen nearly 30% since 2008. Online merchants such as **Amazon.com** have cut into the sales of bookstores of all kinds across the United States.

The retail bookseller grew out a publishing endeavor that was founded in 1931 by brothers Peter and Bernard Zondervan, who were nephews of Christian publisher William B. Eerdmans. The company, based in Grand Rapids, Mich., first published public domain writings

and sold the remaining stock from other publishers. Within a couple of years it began publishing works from its own list of authors. In the 1970s, Zondervan published Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which is said to have sold more than 30 million copies.

In 1932, the brothers opened their first bookstore — called Zondervan Book Store — in their hometown, and then five years later opened a second store. It wasn’t until 1960 that their third store opened, but by 1975 there were 40 stores in operation. In 2000, the number had grown to 356 stores in 39 states.

In 1971, the chain changed its name from Zondervan Book Stores to Family Bookstores, and then again in 1997 to Family Christian Stores. Harper & Row Publishers (which became HarperCollins) purchased Zondervan in 1988.

—MKG

PFO REDESIGNS WITNESSING TRACTS

Throughout its more than four decades of ministry, Personal Freedom Outreach has produced numerous witnessing tracts specific to cultic groups and aberrational teachings. Beginning in 1975 with its first tract on Jehovah’s Witnesses, PFO eventually produced 44 different pamphlets. Nearly all of these tracts were printed in-house by PFO’s staff.

However, in the past decade, due to the growth of Internet access and usage, demand for several of our titles began to wane. Therefore, last year it was decided to streamline down to only the tracts which still are popular, redesign them, and have them commercially printed in full color. During the spring of 2016, PFO began that process.

The first two projects were *Islam: A Clear and Present Danger* and *The Deity of Jesus Christ According to the Scriptures*. Later that year, two of our cult outline tracts, *Jehovah’s Witnesses: The Christian View* and *Mormons: The Christian View*, were redesigned.

In 2017, another of our tracts specific to Jehovah’s Witnesses, *Destroying the Mediatorship of Christ*, was republished.

As the stock of other popular titles nears depletion, those tracts will also be redesigned and printed in full color. Once completed and available, the Witnessing Tract page of PFO’s website will be updated to reflect each new tract, along with the price for these items.

As the newly designed tracts were made available, subscribers to *The Quarterly Journal* have received samples inside their journal mailing, a practice that will continue as other titles are released.

—MKG



Books in Review

SOLID GROUND

by Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer, editor

P&R Publishing, 155 pages, \$13.99

Efforts to undermine God's Word are nothing new, but today's assaults have become so refined and widespread that even some who claim to be Evangelicals have joined the campaign.

This is why Gabriel Fluhrer, in his editor's preface of *Solid Ground*, writes, "Each generation must own for itself the cardinal truths of the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and ours is no exception. Indeed, in my own estimation, our generation is in danger of seeing what is perhaps *the* most central doctrine of the Christian faith — the doctrine of the inspired and concomitant inerrancy of Scripture — eclipsed to a degree previously unknown in the modern era" (pg. x, italic in original).

Solid Ground is an excellent collection of essays by eight prominent authors, pastors, and teachers who are committed to the "vital conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, and so without error in its original autographs, the only infallible rule of faith and practice" (pg. xi). Those contributing to this volume include J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, Mark Dever, the late James M. Boice (to whom the book is dedicated), and four others.

Fluhrer writes, "Without an errorless Bible, we cannot truly know the gospel, and without the gospel, we cannot know the Word incarnate and so would remain without hope, without God, in the world" (pg. xiii). And further along in the book Boice states, "If we contrast that high view of Scripture [held by Martin Luther and others] with the exceedingly low view of the church today, it is certainly worth asking if it might not be the case that the weakness of the church in our time comes from a lack of exactly the conviction that the Reformers had" (pg. 52).

The chapters develop and defend the important facets of Scripture by examining its inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, profitability, and sufficiency. All of these are being disputed — some overtly, others subtly — by a broad spectrum of scoffers, mystics, pragmatists, psychologists, and even some mainline theologians.

While each essay is meaningful, the chapters by Boice and Philip Graham Ryken alone make this an essential volume. Boice explores the meaning of *sola Scriptura*, and in so doing responds to "the problem of tradition," "the problem of subjectivism," and "the wretched effects of relativism." These and other such issues, Boice tells us, have birthed a lack of commitment to the Word, which is high among clergy.

And lest one think that the current wave of historical, linguistic, and archaeological evidence is good reason to cast doubt upon Scripture, Boice writes: "On the contrary, as the data has come in over the last decades, the historical reliability of the Bible has been strengthened. It doesn't mean that we understand every single thing we read. It doesn't mean that all the apparent problems have been resolved. But as the data comes in, the tendency is to resolve the problems, not create more" (pp. 71-72).

In his chapter "The Accessible Word," Ryken examines the attack on perspicuity, which is a major principal in the doctrine of Scripture. Perspicuity is the teaching that the meaning of Scripture is clear and can be understood. Ryken notes, "Casting aspersions on the clarity of Scripture is almost as old as the world itself. Consider the diabolical question that Satan asked Eve in the garden of Eden: 'Did God *actually* say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden''? (Gen. 3:1). This was partly an attack on God's authority, of course, but it was also an attack on the perspicuity of his Word" (pg. 107, italic in original).

In more modern times, and for centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently attacked the perspicuity of the Bible. And in the past decade, leaders in the emergent church movement, such as Brian McLaren, have done the same.

The men whose writings make up this book are academics who are regarded as "top pastors-scholars of the past thirty years," yet the lay person need not be intimidated. What is presented is not only well within the grasp of every reader, but it will challenge and convict toward a renewed love of and appreciation for the richness and perfection of the Bible.

This book deserves the attention of every Christian who desires to be encouraged in their confidence of the Word of God.

—MKG

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