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The Shack - and its New Age leaven

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"The Shack and Its New Age Leaven - God IN Everything?" by Warren Smith

The Shack is being described as a "Christian" novel and is currently ranked number one on the New York Times bestseller list for paperback fiction. Many believers are buying multiple copies and giving them to friends and family. The Shack reads as a true story, but is obviously allegorical fiction. The book conveys postmodern spiritual ideas and teachings that challenge biblical Christianity--all in the name of "God" and "Jesus" and the "Holy Spirit." Author William P. Young's alternative presentation of traditional Christianity has both inspired and outraged his many readers. All the while his book continues to fly off the shelves of local bookstores.

Much like New Age author James Redfield's book The Celestine Prophecy, The Shack is a fictional vehicle for upending certain religious concepts and presenting contrary spiritual scenarios. Allegorical novels can be a clever way to present truth. They can also be used to present things that seem to be true but really are not. Some books like The Shack do both.

I was drawn into the **New Age Movement** years ago by books and lectures containing **parabolic stories that were not unlike The Shack**. They felt spiritually uplifting as they tackled tough issues and talked about God's love and forgiveness. They seemed to provide me with what I spiritually needed as they gave me much needed hope and promise. Building on the credibility they achieved through their inspirational and emotive writings, my New Age authors and teachers would then go on to tell me that "God" was "in" everyone and everything.

The Shack's Wayne Jacobsen Resonates with Contemplative and Emerging Writers

William Paul Young is the official author of The Shack, **but Wayne Jacobsen is one of its editors**. According to a New York Times article, Jacobsen spent 16 months helping to rewrite the first draft. This would leave the logical conclusion that Jacobsen had some significant influence on the final outcome of the book. And with that in mind, readers need to be aware that Jacobsen is a proponent of emerging and contemplative books and authors. It's an important thing to know because Christian figures are heralding the book, helping it to remain on the New York Times Best Seller list. **Those that understand this book--its obvious and its not so obvious messages--know that it's important to issue a *warning*. And the fact that popular Christian authors like Eugene Petersen and Gayle Erwin (The Jesus Style) endorse the book means that unsuspecting, well-intentioned Christians will buy the book, and if they follow the advice at the end of the book, will buy other copies of the book and give them away to friends. *<DdO - Marketing PLOY that fooled a lot of women leaders in other local church>***

Update on The Shack: New Age Similarities, Continued Popularity, and Calvary Chapel Official Statement

The Shack by William P. Young has been on the New York Times Best Seller List for 15 weeks, currently in the number one position for fiction books. The book has been promoted by popular Christian figures such as Eugene Peterson and Gayle Erwin (The Jesus Style). What's more, numerous Christian ministries such as Probe Ministries (an apologetics group based out of Texas) are endorsing the book. Probe's associate speaker, Sue Bohlin says "The Shack became one of my all-time favorite books before I had even finished it."

In addition to receiving wide acceptance from the Christian community at large, the author speaks at many evangelical churches. On September 8th and 9th, for instance, Young will be speaking at North Valley Calvary Chapel in Yuba City, California, church of Calvary pastor Bob Fromm. ² However, even though this is a Calvary Chapel church, Calvary Distribution (the resource and book venue for the Calvary Chapel movement) **has issued an "Official Statement" regarding The Shack. Calvary Distribution's book reviewer Keyan Soltani calls The Shack "a dangerous book."** The Official Statement reads:

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

* **The minimizing of the word of God:** The Shack errs in the presumption that God desires to be freed from His word as expressed by the characters, yet, the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 138:2 "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name."

* **The redefining of the nature of God:** the book implies a theology of modalism which is defined as the non Trinitarian belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God, as perceived by the believer, rather than three distinct persons in God Himself.

* The book's conversational tone is **intended to catch the reader off guard with overt casualness**. There is a personalized-trademarked version of God that requires the least bit of commitment; seeker-friendly experience over truth; an air of anti-authority for the spiritually lazy consumer.

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

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

In a Lighthouse Trails report on The Shack, it was brought out that co-author of The Shack, Wayne Jacobsen ³ resonates with the leaders in the emerging church, which may well have influenced the final draft of The Shack. The book refers to God as "the ground of all being" that "dwells in, around, and through all things--ultimately emerging as the real" (p. 112)--this is the ripe fruit of contemplative/emerging spirituality. One can find this language and definition of God in the writings of John Shelby Spong and Marcus Borg, and the concept overflows within the emerging camp. Let there be no mistake, this description of God does not mean that God upholds everything; it means that God is the essence of all that exists (in other words, He dwells in all humans and all creation).

New Age proponent **Sue Monk Kidd** would agree with The Shack's definition of God: in her book, *First Light*, she says God is the graffiti on the building (p. 98).

<<DDO: SM KIDD is famous for GUIDEPOST MAGAZINE articles and parenting magazine articles from 1980s.>

It is possible that a key to understanding The Shack could actually lie with **Monk Kidd who was once a conservative Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher. She began studying the teachings of mystic Thomas Merton, which eventually led her out of the Southern Baptist arena and into the New Age.** Today, she follows goddess spirituality (Sophia) and **has said in one of her books that God dwells in all things**, even excrement (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*).

There is perhaps a striking similarity between The Shack's "God" the Father and the Black Madonna used in Monk Kidd's best selling novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* (coming out soon as a movie). Monk Kidd says the Black Madonna she chose is "a powerful symbolic essence that could take up residence inside of [the novel's character, Lily] and become catalytic in her transformation."⁴ The fact that both Sue Monk Kidd and William Young have chosen a Black Madonna figure as representing "God" and that both talk about the ground of all being (God in all things) cannot be ignored. Episcopal priest (panentheist) Matthew Fox says: Today the Black Madonna is returning. She is coming, not going, and she is calling us to something new (and very ancient as well).... [The Black Madonna archetype awakens in us and ... she is so important for the twenty-first century.... The Black Madonna invites us into the dark and therefore into our depths. This is what the mystics call the "inside" of things, the essence of things. This is where Divinity lies. It is where the true self lies.... Because she is a goddess, the Black Madonna resides in all beings. She is the divine presence inside of creation.⁵

The gap between the New Age and Christianity is being narrowed, and The Shack is another disastrous and deceptive tool that will bring this about.

When David Jeremiah favorably quoted and referenced Sue Monk Kidd in his book, *Life Wide Open*, we knew this would further close the gap that gave Christianity its distinctness. It is this distinctness that allows sinful man to see his need for a Savior.

When that gap closes, the **Gospel message will be hidden from view** from even more people than it is today.

The Shack has brought about some huge strides in causing this to take place.

<<DdO: *Need to research date of David Jeremiah's quote.... and whether it was about her OLD or NEW material; I know for myself that SM Kidd was a strong Bible-believing and Bible-quoting-in-context Baptist Christian magazine article writer in the 1980s, with Biblically sound articles.>>*