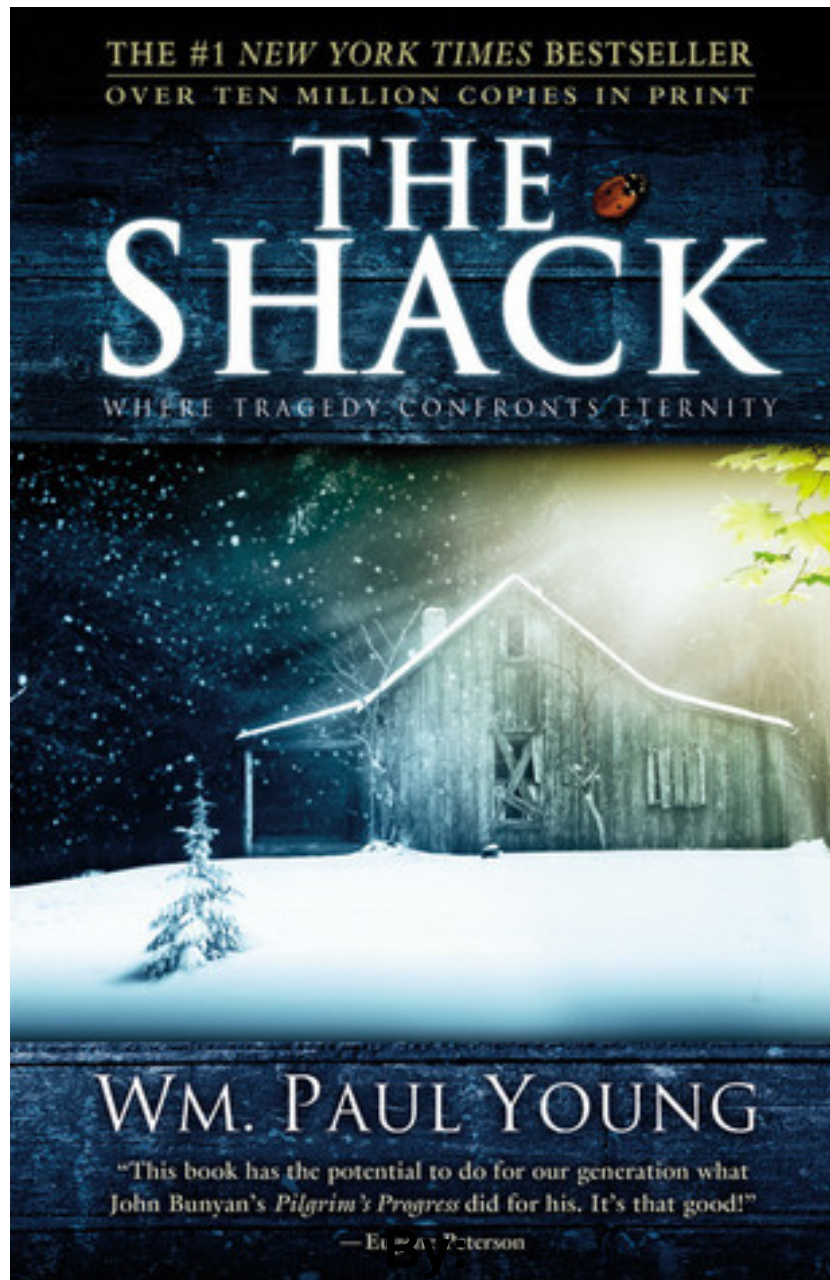


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William Paul Young

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What people Say:

Jay

I know, I know. Everyone loves this book. No fewer than forty-three people asked me "Have you read The Shack yet?"

Invariably, they responded to my negative response with something along the lines of "You have to! It changed my life! I was full of questions, and life stunk, and then I read the book, and God made sense to me, I understood quantum physics effortlessly, and all of a sudden I could spin flax into gold!"

So, what I'm about to say is going to make a lot of people pretty angry.

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The Shack appears to me to be an ex-hippie's best attempt at amalgamating God, Dr. Phil, and Oprah. The writing is bad, the story is cheesy, the format is formulaic and cliché, and the theology is spotty and poorly explained at best, and downright heretical at worst.

I was not impressed. If it makes a lot of people think hard thoughts about God that they'd rather avoid, then I suppose that's fine. I'm just not sure hard thinking should be done at the expense of clear thinking. And I'm certain bad writing is no way to advance good theology (even if this were).

Kimâ™¥

Having had such high hopes for this book, I was sadly disappointed about its content, being for the

most part simply unbiblical. Yes, there were poignant scenes and emotional moments that moved me to tears- but that does not tip the scales against all of the errors slipped in and truths that were twisted. Being protective especially of new Christians, I strongly caution anyone about reading it. This book should be read with much discernment.

Please read the Bible and learn about the Way, the Truth

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Please read the Bible and learn about the Way, the Truth, and the Life! There is nothing good about this book that the Lord can't teach you without it.

I'd like to write a more thorough review when I have time. For now, here is a good one to read:

9-1-08 Update:

Friends, I still do not recommend this book. Here are a few more articles that may help you understand why:

11-10-08 Reply to "It's just fiction" comments.

Renee

Pure drivel. This book read like a Betty Crocker recipe gone bad: take one all-American Jesus lovin'™/fearing family, add one unexplainable tragedy, mix with equal parts anger , guilt and sadness , bake for three weeks and get a bitter man who has turned his back on God. Alias, no need to give up, because God writes our hero a personalized note, and tells him to meet him in "the shack" (the place of his daughter's murder), funny thing is, god is a black woman cooking pancakes in the kitchen who s

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need to give up, because God writes our hero a personalized note, and tells him to meet him in "the shack" (the place of his daughter's murder), funny thing is, god is a black woman cooking pancakes in the kitchen who says "you can me god, Yahweh or just plain ol' Jessie, I answer to all three". Yes, I said pancakes!. I could go on, but it's just too easy. The lesson of power of forgiveness was demonstrated well, but no better than the Hallmark card I bought my boss when I spilled a whole bottle of red wine on his new suit!..

Amanda J

I was recommended this book by several people who found it both moving and fresh. So Mr. Young certainly has an audience for this glib encounter between Mack, the "everyman," and God. I, however, must not be the intended audience. Despite the fact millions of copies have been sold and the book has climbed its way to the top of the New York Times Bestsellers List, I found

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to be preachy and fake to the point of insincerity.

The main characters are so flat and one-dimensional that one can barely believe they are in need

of redemption. By all accounts Nan is the perfect wife. So much so, she harbors no ill-will or judgments against her husband, even when their young daughter is kidnapped while in Mack's care. The rational among us realize that it was not Mack's fault young Missy was snatched by a serial killer, but one can hardly suspend their disbelief that in the face of such tragedy, the family confronts little of the typical doubt and blame so many have felt under similar circumstances. Granted occasionally guilt creeps to the surface, as Missy's sister Kate becomes sullen and silent, blaming herself for her sister's fate, but all in all the family appears to do quite well.

I supposed this shouldn't surprise the reader, however. Mack has already overcome many trials, including horrible abuse at the hands of his father. In spite of leaving home at a tender age, Mack becomes educated, successful and a wonderful husband and father. Sound too good to be true? Don't worry; the author is Mack's long time friend and confidant, chosen by Mack to write this detailed account of his spiritual transformation. Or is he?

In the forward, Mr. Young journals about his friendship with Mack, his struggle to truly believe Mack's story and ultimately his decision to help Mack turn his experience into a book. But wait, this book is fiction, and despite the author William Young inserting himself into the story as the gun-wielding, jeep-owning "Willie," this is not a memoir, it's a novel. A literary device or dishonest intent, I'll let you decide, but at very least it's horribly misleading, lending credibility where it is not due.

But that's not the point is it? This book is "bringing a fresh perspective to the theological scene." But I didn't find it fresh or even slightly startling. Could it be that this #1 bestseller is actually dull and trite? Absolutely. Mr. Young attempts to grab the reader by making God the Father appear to Mack as a woman. Are you completely blown away? Unable to wrap your mind around the religious consequences? No? I didn't think so, because at the very least, you've taken 7th grade Ancient Civilizations and you know that yes, there have been people, in fact, entire cultures that have pictured god as a woman. More recently, the cult classic film, Dogma, after a series of affronts on Christian assumptions (disgruntled angels wreaking havoc, descendants of Jesus walking among us), reveals that God is a girl!

Oh, but Mr. Young goes a step further; his God is not just a woman, but a black woman. Does that make any difference? It shouldn't. Young is assuming that our white Protestant values will be affronted by this depiction, making his novel all that more shocking and controversial. I for one am offended; certainly God can be represented as an african-american woman, but I do not find these ideas mind-blowing. The fact that Mr. Young does shows how little he really understands. His caricature of God- for that's what it is- seems to only use proper grammar about 90% of the time (Is this what you think black people sound like, Mr. Young?) and his depictions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit fall flat. They are neither engaging nor inspiring.

Christie

First off this will be lengthy so don't feel you have to read it

.

This is a hard book to review because you pretty much have to separate it into two parts. The novel, and the theological.

This man is not a writer. As far as the novel aspect of this book, I don't personally believe it is well written. Both the descriptions and dialogue don't ring true to me. But if delve into a little of the back story regarding this author you find that he never intended this book to be published. After experienci

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This man is not a writer. As far as the novel aspect of this book, I don't personally believe it is well written. Both the descriptions and dialogue don't ring true to me. But if delve into a little of the back story regarding this author you find that he never intended this book to be published. After experiencing several tragedies in his life he spent a lot of time trying to figure out who God is and with the encouragement of his wife wrote this novel as a gift to his children. Friends read it and encouraged him to have it published.

As far as the theological aspect goes I think he presents God in a way that challenges our notions of who exactly we think he is. It seems to be done in a deliberate way and to be honest it sometimes made me uncomfortable. This was written by someone who believes in the Trinity but was making attempts to show how they function separately. All of the characterization of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and their interactions with each other felt off to me. However the conversations they have with the main character provided some amazing insight to me as to the love God has for us and just exactly how arrogant we can be in our judgements of God's decisions whether those judgements be conscious or not.

Here are a couple condensed conversations that particularly spoke to me: