

A MOVIE GUIDE FOR THE VIEWING OF “THE SHACK”

Why/How the film is a subversive attack on Christianity and the culture of America

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A “MOVIE GUIDE” for “The Shack”? “Why?” you ask.

It’s a fair question. Let me try to give a reasonable answer.

The film “The Shack” is the movie version of the fictional novel, *The Shack*. This novel has sold upwards of 10? million copies over the last several years. It was on the *NY Times* best seller list for many months. This is quite amazing when we consider that this was written by a writer claiming to be a Christian and intended for Christians to give a Christian explanation for why people suffer. Obviously the story has resonated with a multitude of people, whether Christians or not, who have wondered about the love of God, eternity, and why Jesus came into the world.

Why has this best-selling fiction novel captured the imagination of millions of people? It has a special appeal to those who identify themselves as Christians but who are struggling with serious questions of doubt and uncertainty about their faith. They have been challenged by circumstances and pressures beyond their control. They feel that God does not care about them and perhaps has even abandoned them. Many are angry at God. In a very real sense not anyone of us would dare to say that we could never be where they are—in a shack where they must come face to face with God. *The Shack* provides an explanation for their pain and anger, and a way of escape—back to God.

Perhaps the most gnawing concern of Christians who are hurting and even of those who are not Christians is the question: If God is a good God why do so many people suffer? Similarly, if God is a good God why are so many people—those who are non-Christians—destined for eternal suffering? Why should people suffer everlastingly for sin and for sins committed for a short duration in time? For whatever reasons we all have thought about such theological questions.

It is well known that the novel became a focus of controversy. This controversy swirls around the author, Paul Young, and whether he has tried to sell subliminally his beliefs as a universalist in his novel. There are many who believe that the novel has betrayed Christian belief, and there are others who think not. Some believe that it is heresy; others think not.

I am one in the former category. I have known Paul Young for many years. I have firsthand knowledge of how in writing he rejected his evangelical (Christian) beliefs and embraced universal reconciliation. I have written a book, *Burning Down the Shack*, that explains my former relationship with Paul Young. Over several chapters I seek to show how the teaching of Paul Young contradicts the Bible and blasphemes the God of the Bible.

But whether you know about the controversy or not, or don't care about it, or, on the other hand, are deeply concerned about it, everyone should be at least curious as to what the controversy is all about. And how the film contributes to it. As you view the film, "The Shack," you will suddenly be thrust into the uncertain but necessary position of being a film critic. You will need to decide whether what you are viewing is in line with Biblical truth that Christians have always believed since the time of Jesus and the Apostles or is a perversion of this truth which calls itself universal reconciliation (UR).

In the following pages I will describe (1) why I am personally concerned about this matter of the novel and the film [in short, I knew the author Paul Young for several years prior to the writing of his novel when he renounced his evangelical faith], (2) what universal reconciliation means, (3) proof of Paul Young's conversion to UR, (4) how UR came to be embedded in the novel, and (5) most importantly how UR can be discovered in the film. By carefully comparing my points with what you see on the screen, what is in the film, you the viewer can come to your own informed conclusion.

In short, I will show that the film is a deliberate attempt to sell UR in a subliminal way. As commercials are sometimes embedded in a subtle manner in film to sell a product to the unsuspecting viewer, the fictional story of "The Shack" seeks subliminally to force UR on the unsuspecting.

I believe that "The Shack" as both the novel and the film is the greatest attempt in the last two hundred years to deceive millions of Christians. I'll defend this statement below.

So here's the plan. This MOVIE GUIDE seeks to focus on specific scenes in which various statements are put in the mouth of the main human character, Mac, and in the mouths of the Trinity—the view of Christians that God is three persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Papa (the Father) is portrayed by a large, African-American woman; Jesus the Son is portrayed as a Jewish carpenter; and the Holy Spirit is portrayed by Sarayu, a small, South Asian woman.

To make the MOVIE GUIDE easy to use and helpful, I'm here presenting the most provocative statements that, in the eyes and ears of many, constitute heretical theology about God, Jesus, eternity, hell, and God's love and justice. These are 21 statements taken from Young's novel and most of them are restated in the film. I listed these in the introduction to my book, *Burning Down the Shack*. I here add a brief response to each of these statements. A fuller reply is found in the chapters of *Burning Down the Shack* (cited as *BDS* with the chapters indicated).

I'm asking that you the viewer of the film be alert to these statements or their equals. They make the movie a faithful portrayal of the novel, and equally heretical. At a screening in late January, Paul Young himself said that the film follows the book more closely than any other film based on a book.

After this section I outline what universal reconciliation (hence UR) is all about—what it believes and why it is heresy. Then I give a list of the statements found in a paper that Paul Young wrote in 2004 in which he confessed that he was rejecting his traditional Christian beliefs and had become a convert to UR.

Finally, I give the reasons why all of this is important—why this MOVIE GUIDE was necessary. I include a section that shows the significant place that *The Shack* now takes in history—the history of universalism in America. I also give brief consideration of how the Reformation (now in its 500th anniversary) affected universalism.

By the end of my discussion in this MOVIE GUIDE I will demonstrate why Paul Young with his universalism is (1) an anarchist like others who would destroy institutions, (2) a terrorist assaulting culture on a scale parallel to ISIS and the LGBT community, (3) and demonic—as doing the work of the Devil and against the Holy Spirit.

Thus my goal is the following. I wish to convince those Christians (and others who may or may not care) who are insensitive or reluctant to find heresy in the novel that it really is there, and that the movie version is an equally subtle portrayal using visual imagery and fiction to propagate heresy.

You see, *The Shack* represents a literary genre recognized as theological fiction. Paul Young has explicitly said that his novel is highly theological—teaching us something about God and sin and judgment and relationships—and metaphorical about his own journey to know God in his “shack.”

You may not care about this controversy. But Young does, and with his sword he has “drawn a line in the sand” challenging every Christian and the future of our culture. And every Christian committed to the truth and to loving obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord of one’s life ought to care. The Christian should be jealous to bring glory to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and to affirm his word as the truth and to love his church.

THE 21 STATEMENTS BY WHICH TO IDENTIFY UNIVERSALISM

All of the following statements, unless otherwise identified, come from the mouth of Papa (who fills the role of God in the novel and in the film).

1. “The first aspect of God is never that of the absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts himself on our human level and limits himself” (from p. 88).

This statement, to say the least, is over stated. God has revealed himself *both* as being Almighty, as transcendent, as beyond us in omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Yet he also is One who desires a deep relationship with his people, as being immanent or close to them.

2. “When we three spoke ourself into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human” (99).

While this statement reflects knowledge of the Trinity, it represents serious, even heretical distortion. Only the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate. Jesus and the Father are one in nature or essence (John 10:10; Hebrews 1:1-3) but only Jesus became a human person. Throughout his life he submitted himself to do the will of the Father as a distinct person of the Godhead who had not become incarnate, as even the Lord’s prayer recognizes (Matthew 6:9-13; see also Hebrews 10:5-10). As Jesus

faced the greatest challenge of his human existence, his death for sinners, he committed himself in the Garden of Gethsemane to do the Father's will (Matthew 26:36-45). Finally, Paul the Apostle asserts that all the fullness of deity abides in Jesus in a bodily form (Colossians 2:9). And in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 the distinctive natures of the Father and Son are delineated: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people." Jesus Christ is the perfect bridge between God and human beings because he alone has two natures—divine and human, with the latter being acquired at his nativity. While there is much beyond human comprehension in understanding the Trinity, nowhere in all of Scripture is it ever said that the entire Trinity became human. The movie, "The Shack," is extremely deceitful here regarding the Trinity (see *BDS*, chap. 2).

3. "Although Jesus is fully God, he has never drawn upon his nature as God to do anything" (99-100).

Yet on rare occasions Jesus did manifest himself as equal with God. Note that he could pronounce that someone's sins were forgiven, which only God can do (Mark 2:5-7). He was self-consciousness that he is God (John 10:30). He proclaimed himself to be divine (Matthew 26:63-65). His death was both human and divine in the sense that he died as a human being dies but in that he died for the sins of all humankind he did a divine act (*BDS*, chap. 2).

4. "God *cannot* act apart from love" (102).

Again this is an over statement and misrepresents God's true nature. While love is always a constant in God's nature, and *The Shack* contributes to our understanding of God as love, the Bible asserts that holiness too (Leviticus 19:2) and righteousness (several times mentioned in Romans 3:21-26) are equally and perfectly eternal attributes of God. Both love and righteousness/justice are found mentioned together in many places: Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 45). Thus God always acts in both love and holiness. Since Paul Young later says things which limit God's holiness or justice, his statement here is a distortion of who God is. But it is in line with the basic tenet of UR that God's justice and holiness are trumped by his love (*BDS*, chap. 2).

5. The Father, the Spirit, and Jesus were together at the cross and together were crucified (95-96, 102, 222).

This teaching clearly constitutes heresy. While the Trinity was indeed present at the cross, and Jesus never ceased to be God and One of the Trinity, yet Jesus alone became human and he alone made the sacrifice of atonement for sin. While the divine nature of the Trinity is the same for all persons in the Trinity, different persons in the Godhead have differing roles. Countless Scriptures make this clear—that God the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (among many, note John 3:16;

Romans 3:21-25-26; note again the Biblical texts cited under #2 above). Indeed, the prophecy of the death of Jesus, found in Isaiah 53, reveals the role of the Father as the One who brings forth the sacrifice of Jesus (almost every verse in this great text affirms this truth). God planned the sacrifice of Jesus, and Jesus was the One sacrificed (*BDS*, chap. 2).

6. God says: “I am not who you think I am” (120).

The next point (#7) is in the immediate context where this statement is made. It is Papa’s reply to Mac when he asks whether God is a God of wrath and punishes sin. It follows a discussion in earlier pages (107ff.) where holiness and love are discussed. In light of the following chapters in the novel and scenes in the film, the words are meant to portray God to be supremely love, that he doesn’t judge people in hell, that all are his children. Thus this statement, as other reviewers have also recognized, is the bedrock of the whole story of *The Shack*. Paul Young is seeking to redefine God as UR consistently does. All of God’s other attributes are subjected to his attribute of love. Yet this redefinition of God destroys God as revealed in the Bible where all his attributes, including love and holiness and righteousness, are in perfect balance, are equal, and are in harmony. Indeed, the Apostle John, who expands the direct speech of Jesus in John 3, describes God who out of love gave his special Son to give eternal life to those who believe (v. 16), also describes God as the God of wrath for unbelievers (v. 36) (*BDS*, chaps. 3-4).

7. “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my joy to cure it” (120).

This statement is in the context of #6 above. While this statement is true it is not the complete truth. It ignores the fact that people are born in sin and commit sins. The Bible says that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The consequences, the wages, of sin is death for everyone who has not accepted the gift of forgiveness and eternal life found in believing in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). God punished sin when Jesus took the punishment we deserve and bore this in his death on the cross. (*BDS*, chap. 4).

8. In a “circle of relationship” involving God and people there is no authority, no hierarchy, and no submission (122-124).

Yet Jesus claimed that all authority over all creation belonged to him and he commands his followers to obey him (Matthew 28:19-20). While Jesus calls them brothers (Hebrews 2:10-18) and friends (John 15:14-15), in the New Testament his followers never call Jesus by these titles. Jesus also is teacher and Lord to his followers (John 14:13; Colossians 2:6ff.; Romans 10:9-10). Jesus said that our obedience to him proves our love for him and becomes our source of joy (John 14:15-

24; 15:9-17). In many other ways this definition of relationship is false. All pure relationships ultimately betray people and are doomed to failure. Relationships require structure in order to have a stabilizing and positive influence on culture. Finally, the Apostles themselves identify subversives in their day as those who “reject authority” (Jude 8); they pray that God be given glory and authority through Jesus Christ (Jude 25) (see *BDS*, chap. 5 where I note the failures of a “pure relationship”).

9. God cannot send any of his children to an eternity of hell just because they sin against him (162).

This is a summary of what Papa says in several conversations. The problem with this belief is threefold. First, it obscures who his children are. Because all people have been created by God all people can be labelled “God’s children” or “offspring” in a general sense. The Apostle Paul does this in Acts 17:26-28. But in a more exact sense only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are God’s children. Again this is why Paul insists that those who are God’s children in a general sense must repent and believe in Christ who has been raised from the dead: Acts 17:29-32. They believe that Jesus Christ has taken their sin and for them paid the penalty of eternal death. The rest of humanity will experience an eternity in hell. Second, it is the sin of refusing to believe in Jesus that condemns people to an eternity of judgment in hell (John 3:16-18, 36). Jesus himself said that unless a person is born again—spiritually reborn—he cannot see, will not enter, God’s kingdom (John 3:3-8). Finally, hell must exist and be everlasting if heaven exists and is everlasting. See *BDS*, chap. 9.

10. “Your understanding of God is wrong.” I’m not one who will “condemn most to an eternity of torment” (162-164).

This is typical universalist thinking. It goes to the heart of who God is and what he does. UR redefines God. UR believes that the attribute of God’s love trumps his attributes of justice and holiness. By such reasoning God cannot condemn anyone to hell but must rescue all humanity and even the fallen angels from an eternity of judgment. If people don’t believe the gospel about salvation in Jesus before they die they will repent in hell by means of the corrective (not punishing) fires of hell. Yet such teaching effectively destroys who God is—one perfect and complete in all his attributes. And Jesus spoke clearly that there are only two destinies: “eternal life” for his people, who serve him; and “eternal punishment” for those who reject him (Matthew 25:46) (*BDS*, chap. 9). A major fault with UR is that while it sounds reasonable to human thinking it violates Biblical teaching (=God’s thinking).

11. God loves all his children the same, equally, and “perfectly,” but “differently” (154-163).

As pointed out above under #9 not all people are God’s children in the sense that they belong to him on the basis of faith (=the only basis). The Bible says: “To all who received him (=Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become

children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13) (*BDS*, chap. 9).

12. “Mercy triumphs over justice because of love” (164).

This is probably the most central affirmation that universalists make about the actions of God. For them it explains why hell cannot be forever, why God cannot punish sin, why God does not judge, and several other statements in the present list. It is close to a quotation of James 2:13 but is actually a misquote and misinterpretation. Young adds the words, “because of love” (not in the verse) and uses these words to explain God’s actions when in the context James is describing what people should do—they should be impartial and not judge their neighbors. Indeed, Young omits the first part of the verse that actually affirms God’s judgment (something which universalists deny): “For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy.” God will judge believers for showing partiality (note verses 8-11). (*BDS*, chap. 9)

13. “Judgment is not about destruction but about setting things right” (169).

These words are an exact quote of what the early church father, Origen, a universalist, said in the third century. They contradict Jesus’ words that the broad way leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13); and the apostles spoke of the destruction of the wicked (Romans 9:22; Philippians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Thessal. 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1; 3:16). In Romans 8:1 Paul said that there is “now no condemnation [=judgment] to those who are in Christ Jesus.” The implication is that those who are not in Christ are under judgment already (*BDS*, chap. 9).

14. “Every human institution is the matrix, a diabolical scheme” (122-124).

Yet the Bible teaches that God created the institutions of marriage (Genesis 2; Ephesians 5), the government (Romans 13:1-7), and the church (Matthew 16:16-19: it is “his” church). It is a false dichotomy to oppose relationships to institutions. Without institutions there cannot be lasting, meaningful relationships, but “every person will do what is right in his own eyes” (*BDS*, chap. 6).

15. “I don’t create institutions—never have, never will.” The institutions of the church, government and marriage are the “man-created trinity of terrors that ravages the earth and deceives those I care about. It’s all false” (179).

Clearly again this is universalist thinking. Throughout its history the proponents of UR have opposed the evangelical, Christian church as an obstacle to their success. As stated above under #14, God created the three institutions as part of his wonderful plan to bring light to the nations and to stabilize society and relationships. These institutions preserve culture and needful structures. Without these the world would collapse into darkness under the sway of anarchy foisted on the world by Satan, the prince (John 14:30) and god (2 Corinthians 4:4) of this world. Because Young falsifies and opposes the three necessary institutions as “a trinity of terrors” he is an

anarchist, terrorist, and demonic. See a fuller defense of these institutions in *BDS*, chap. 10.

16. About all people Jesus says: “I have no desire to make them Christians” (182).

Again, UR thinking wants to distance itself from Biblical Christianity and thus makes this silly argument. It is true that Jesus never used the word “Christian.” It first comes into play after Jesus ascended and returned to heaven. In Acts 11:26 the disciples, the believers in Christ at Antioch, are first identified as Christians. But it is Jesus’ desire to make disciples from all nations and he commands his followers to do so and to baptize them in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19-20). Disciples and Christians are one and the same group (see further in *BDS*, chap. 10).

17. “I am now fully reconciled to the world. . . . It’s not the nature of love to force a relationship but it is the nature of love to open the way” (192).

Reconciliation means that God has taken the initiative to make peace with sinners. It’s one of the great doctrines of the Bible. But while God has made reconciliation available for all, he has not reconciled anyone until a person believes. Without faith a person remains alienated from God and an enemy (Colossians 1:20-23). Indeed the world hated Jesus and his disciples before and after the cross (John 15:18-16:4). If UR “opens a way” by which the will of some not to believe is voided, how then is this belief not “forcing a relationship” and thus contrary to love (*BDS*, chap. 11)? See #20 below.

18. God has opened “a path of reconciliation” (222).

Again, the Biblical truth is that only believers in Christ are on this path of peace with God. Faith is the condition. People must be “in Christ.” Otherwise, people are on the path to destruction (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; and Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:13-14). Note that the words above are “a path” instead of “the path.” Universalists don’t want to exclude anyone from a destiny with a loving God; they want to include all. They don’t like Jesus’ exclusive claim in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” I devote two entire chapters to the Biblical word “reconciliation” and what it means, in *BDS*, chaps. 11-12.

19. The Holy Spirit says: “I have a great fondness for uncertainty” (203).

While we can appreciate the mystery surrounding how the Holy Spirit works we can be sure of one thing: the Spirit, Jesus said, will never speak independently but will speak and lead in accord with what Jesus has said and says (John 16:12-15). The Bible makes it clear that the Spirit must be in agreement with our Lord’s teaching—in accord with the truth (1 John 2:21-22, 26-27). If Jesus spoke of the certainty of eternal judgment and eternal life (so Matthew 7:13-14; 25:41) the Spirit cannot and

will not contradict this—or breed uncertainty about Jesus’ teaching. One thing of which believers can be certain is the Spirit’s witness to them that they belong to God. He assures us of our salvation (Romans 8:13-16). False, subversive teachers do not have the Spirit (Jude 19 says) (*BDS*, chap. 13).

20. “For you to forgive this man (the murderer) is for you to release him to me and allow me to redeem him. . . . He too is my son. I want to redeem him” (224).

Here the issues of forgiveness, redemption, and sonship are deeply intertwined. It is necessary that Christians forgive those who harm them. But the relationship of being a son or child of God in the narrow sense (see # 9 and 11 above) is reserved only for those who repent (confess that they are sinners; Romans 10:9-10), believe in Jesus Christ and receive him as their Savior (John 1:12). Finally, God’s desire to save or redeem anyone (as 1 Timothy 2:4 expresses it) cannot be accomplished unless that person wishes to be saved. It is here that UR becomes extremely deterministic. It teaches that in the end God overrides a human being’s will not to believe before death to bring one to salvation after death. UR teaches that God voids human will.

21. “In Jesus, I have forgiven all humans for their sins against me, but only some choose relationship” (225).

The Bible teaches that being forgiven by God is to enter relationship with him. Young’s failure to mention faith as the only means whereby one is saved from the judgment for sin (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16) and receives both forgiveness and relationship with God is really the face of non-loving. It is like a scientist withholding the key to a box containing the antidote for a worldwide plague. Universalists doom all humanity to eternal separation and death.

As you view the film in the theaters watch and listen for the above 21 statements. They are there, perhaps slightly reworded. The film is propagating universal reconciliation (UR). And there may be additional statements that correspond to the tenets or beliefs of universalism as given below.

Because the film has these quotes or teaches these doctrines then the movie, like the novel, is a subtle, deceptive advocate of universalism. It seeks by way of subliminal messages to bring the viewer to a different, unbiblical view of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Both the novel and the film constitute a subliminal sell of universalism.

I believe that when one compares this list of statements with the tenets or doctrine of universal reconciliation listed below it is unmistakable that *The Shack* bears the marks of universalism. The universalism is subtle but careful listening reveals it.

WHAT ABOUT THE HELP THAT *THE SHACK* HAS GIVEN TO MANY?

It may well be, you say, that there is the teaching of universal reconciliation in *The Shack*. But so many people have testified that the novel and the film have helped them to deal with their own questions about God.

Let me deal with this in the following paragraphs.

Some people, mainly Christians, find encouragement through Scripture and its proclamation of the gospel—the good news. They recognize that we all live in a fallen world where sin abounds, and this condition was brought about by humans themselves. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and brought a curse upon the existing world. They exercised their will to choose to disobey God and all the rest of humanity were in them making the same choice. The daily choices of people to commit sins validate the teaching of the Bible (Romans 5) that all people were in Adam when he made the choice to sin. Christians believe that God has provided redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-31). God provides new life for those who will believe in Christ (John 3:16). They look for a coming world linked to the return of Jesus Christ at which time he will take them to be with him as he brings the present age to an end (Matthew 24; John 14:1-3). Christians enter an eternal state of bliss (heaven) where sin and the curse are no more.

Jesus will also be the judge of all those who refuse to believe in him (John 5:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Their choice not to believe carries with it the result of being forever alienated from God in a place of everlasting judgment (Revelation 20:10, 14-15).

The Shack was written for those people who are not satisfied with the explanation found in the Christian gospel as taught in the Bible. They would rather believe the idea that God is absolute love; he cannot be a God of judgment; his love overwhelms all resistance and forgives all. God's justice is limited by his love. There is no eternal hell, neither for fallen people nor for fallen angels (including Satan). They want to believe in and come back to this God.

But when these people come back to God who do they discover God to be? What is God like? It's an important question, for, you see, *The Shack* is all about theology—about who God is, who the Trinity is, and who people are. And the big disappointment served forth by *The Shack*, like the skeleton of a fish on a silver platter, is to redefine God—redefined in the image of the creature. The God of UR is a man-centered God.

In many ways it will be discovered that the God of *The Shack* is not the God of the Bible.

WHO IS PAUL YOUNG AND WHAT ELSE HAS HE WRITTEN?

We learn much about an author by what he has written. In Paul Young's case he makes it very clear in speaking engagements that the book and its visual form are autobiographical—about him and his struggles to understand God. And *The Shack* is not the first thing that Paul Young wrote that helps us understand where he is coming from and where he is going.

Paul Young and I co-founded M3 Forum in the 1990's to discuss any issue of Christian belief. For several years Paul was actively involved. Then on a given day in 2004 Paul read a 103-page paper on universal reconciliation (UR). It was a significant defense of this distortion of Christian theology. But what was most surprising was the fact that Paul confessed that he had departed from his "evangelical paradigm" and was embracing UR for himself. He defended this change in the strongest words possible. He cited Scripture and dealt with church history. From his perspective Christians have wrongly understood the nature of God, the Trinity, the church, marriage, government, the atonement and death of Christ on the cross, future judgment, hell and the lake of fire, relationship with God and other Christians, and many other matters.

Paul's basic complaint about Christian belief was that Christians were wrong in interpreting those places in the Bible that speak of God's eternal judgment. Like all universalists Paul asserted that God's mercy and love triumph over his judgment and holiness. The final destiny of all people and of the fallen angels including the Devil is one of bliss—heaven. In the future there will be none left in hell or in the lake of fire. These places are temporal and the judgment experienced there is meant to be corrective, not punishing, to lead all to repent and thus to be accepted into heaven.

When Paul had finished his paper I immediately raised some questions of concern. At the conclusion of our meeting Paul asked: "Jim, do you believe that I am a Christian?" I did not answer directly but answered by saying that a Christian is one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and seeks to obey Scripture and live according to it.

Paul made no other remarks. The following month I presented a 22-page paper to answer the major points of his paper. But Paul was not present. He stopped attending our forum and never returned, although I pursued him with several phone calls. Apparently in that year he began his novel to put the contents of his paper into fiction.

TWO QUESTIONS

With the preceding movie review in mind it becomes necessary to link these 21 questions and statements with the teachings of universal reconciliation. You the viewer may be asking: What is the proof that these 21 statements represent universal reconciliation? Perhaps they are just random, somewhat off-base and extreme comments, but why consider them a cohesive but subtle attempt to sell universalism?

So there are two big questions to deal with. First, just how deeply did Paul Young drink of the teaching of universal reconciliation? Second, is this universalist teaching in the book, *The Shack*, so that we could, even should expect it to be found in the movie, "The Shack"?

In answering the first question, we must first define what universal (Christian) reconciliation is. Then we must examine Paul's earlier writing to see if he did drink deeply at the well of UR.

It is relatively easy to check dictionaries, theologies, even *Wikipedia*, to discover what Christian universalism teaches. There is general agreement.

DISTINGUISHING UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION FROM OTHER FORMS

In summary, universal reconciliation (UR) is the usual Christian form of universalism which insists that all people will be restored to God after a future "correction" in hell. Another form of universalism asserts that restoration takes place immediately after death. In its various forms universalism goes back a long time. In America it has a checkered history that began in the 1760's.

In 1878, at Winchester, N.H., the idea of restoration only after chastisement was declared by the Universalist movement in America to be the "orthodox" view. "Penitence, forgiveness, and regeneration" are all involved.¹ Earlier, due to the influence of the universalist Hosea

¹ Gerstner, "Universalism," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. E. F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 539. See the similar entry in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker).

Ballou, most universalists were persuaded through much of the 19th century that there was no hell for anyone after death but bliss alone. More recently, in 2007, the Christian Universalism Association was formed to separate universal reconciliation from Unitarian universalism. There is also a pagan form of universalism that teaches that all will ultimately be happy since all are, by nature, the creatures and children of God.² This view asserts that Jesus is just one of many ways to God; or that all go to heaven because Christ's death covers all people's sins whether or not they have ever heard of Jesus Christ. In this writing I am specifically focusing on universal reconciliation, what *The Shack* is all about, but much of what I write pertains to all forms of universalism.³

THE BELIEFS OF UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

So what is universalism, and in particular, what is universal reconciliation? The beliefs of universal reconciliation (UR) may be identified from the writings of its adherents, past and present. In strategic ways universalism differs from evangelical faith. In my pursuit of seeking to understand UR I've discovered that the following points are common in the fuller definition of UR. These are the salient points by which one recognizes the language of universal reconciliation.

- 1) God wills all his creatures, people and angels, to be saved and to acknowledge Jesus as Lord; and (this is important) God's will cannot be thwarted (Colossians 1:19-20; 1 Timothy 2:4).
- 2) God's attribute of love limits his attribute of justice. It is unjust for a loving God to send people who have lived a short life to an eternal (everlasting) hell.
- 3) God has already reconciled all creatures—all humanity and all angels—to himself by the atonement of Jesus Christ at the cross.
- 4) This reconciliation will be applied to all people either before death or after death, and to all the fallen angels, including the Devil.
- 5) For those who do not accept salvation by *faith* in this life God will provide salvation by *sight* after they have died. Note that faith is often given scant attention in the writings of universalists.
- 6) Faith is necessary to appropriate reconciliation in this life; God's love delivers unbelievers (and fallen angels and the Devil) from hell in the next life.
- 7) The sufferings of hell and the lake of fire are not punitive, penal, or eternal, but corrective, restorative, purifying, cleansing, and limited in duration.
- 8) Hell and the lake of fire are not forever, but will cease to exist after all people and the fallen angels, including the Devil, have been delivered from them and enter heaven.

² Ibid. See also M. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1026-1028, who cites other forms of universalism (universal conversion by evangelism, universal atonement, universal opportunity to respond) that are not examples of true universalism. In contrast to the classic form expressed by Origen, true universalism may take the forms of universal explicit opportunity (before or after death all place faith in Christ after explicitly hearing the gospel), universal reconciliation (reconciliation is already an accomplished fact for all), and universal pardon (in the end God will change his mind about condemning many and impute not only righteousness but also faith to all, and will forgive all). See also Erickson's discussion of universalism in William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos, eds., *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 23-33.

Paul Young's universalism seems to combine universal opportunity and universal reconciliation.

³ Thus when I use the word "universalism" and "universalist" I have "universal reconciliation" primarily in mind. This wording is not meant to be lacking in precision, for I note that McLaren, Bell, and others repeatedly use the broader term in their works.

- 9) God has acted as the Judge of all at the cross; there is not a future judgment for anyone.
- 10) The work of the Holy Spirit is given little, if any, attention.
- 11) The work of Satan, also known as the devil, is given little, if any, attention.
- 12) Universalism claims that it is the teaching of the Bible, that it is the teaching of Jesus.
- 13) Universalism claims that it was the majority belief of the Christian church for the first five centuries.
- 14) The evangelical church is an obstacle to universalism.
- 15) All institutions including the church, marriage, and the government are systems of hierarchy that use power to control people. Young in *The Shack* has Jesus say that they are diabolical and that he, Jesus, never created any of them.
- 16) Universalists pride themselves of being independent of any creed. They insist that they should not be pinned down regarding their beliefs.

Not all advocates of universal reconciliation would embrace all of these statements, nor the exact wording that I have used. But most do. The chief argument of universalism is the emotive appeal to God's mercy and love so that he could not bring eternal suffering to any of his creatures. Universalists argue: How can a loving God torment billions of people forever in hell, the lake of fire, for failing to believe during a lifetime of a relatively few number of years? God's justice is completely in the service of his love.⁴ Universalists also appeal to Scripture (although this appeal is distorted), and to history (and this appeal is also distorted), but in the end these claims take second place to the appeal to a sense of fairness and justice limited by God's love in his dealing with people. God's love is his supreme attribute. Love and justice are mutually exclusive.

Let's group these many statements together into a shorter list. We can boil down the preceding into the primary teachings and distortions of UR.

1. Love is the supreme attribute of God.
2. There is no eternal punishment for sin.
3. There is an incomplete picture of evil.
4. God's justice is subjected to his love.
5. The person of Jesus is distorted.
6. The nature of God is distorted.
7. Reconciliation is accomplished without exercising faith.
8. Faith is given scant attention.
9. There is no future judgment.
10. All people are equally the children of God because of his love.
11. The institutions of marriage, the church, and government are diabolical.
12. Church history is distorted.
13. There is scorn for commitment to a system of belief (a creed).

By the foregoing statements and distortions UR places itself squarely at odds with Christian beliefs held since the time of Jesus and the Apostles. UR is a subversive attack on the

⁴ Erickson, *Theology*, 1028, citing the universalist Nels Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 228. Ferre asserts that love and justice or punishment, heaven and hell, are mutually exclusive (237). Paul Young, Rob Bell, Brian McLaren and others are simply the most contemporary proponents of this argument.

Christian church and as such is a terrorist group. Is this extreme language? Yes it is. But even Jesus and the Apostles warn of people who are “false prophets” (Matthew 7:13) and “subversives” (Paul in Galatians 2:4; Jude in Jude 4 and the rest of his epistle). Already there were those who were perverting the gospel in the early days of the church. And the Apostles consign them to eternal damnation (Galatians 1:8-9) and the “blackest darkness forever” (Jude 13). The Apostles would have no difficulty in identifying universalists with such words.

And the following section reveals just how subversive Paul Young is.

YOUNG’S STATEMENTS IN HIS STUDY OF 2004 SUPPORT UNIVERSALISM

To complete our answer to the first question above (How deeply did Paul drink of the teaching of UR?) the following statements taken from just one section of 15 pages from his 2004 paper (with the page numbers indicated) provide an easy answer. When we compare the following statements with those just given above is not this person a universalist set on destroying the gospel?

1. Jesus is a lamb who would never harm or torment. His “desire is entirely redemptive” (p. 18).
2. Those who commit the “unpardonable sin” will be pardoned in the coming age, that “a way opens up for even forgiving such a sinner as this” (20).
3. Paul Young asserted that, according to traditional evangelical teaching on hell, “Jesus is fundamentally involved” in the torture of billions of people. “*In one hour*, in a hot searing hell, our Lord will inflict more pain and agony on each person than Satan inflicted on that person during his *entire* life” (italics his). Jesus is involved in “torture and sadism” (22).
4. Paul asserted that, according to his own Christian belief, his compassion “seems greater than God’s” (22).
5. Young asserted that, based on what Christians believe, “God in the end is grossly unjust” (22).
6. Paul asserted that, according to Christian belief, in comparison to Pharaoh, Nero, and Hitler, “the doctrine of eternal torture makes Jesus *a million times* (italics his) more vicious and vindictive than these three put together” (23).
7. Paul asserted that “either those who teach eternal torture are extremely and brutally calloused or *they do not truly believe what they teach*” (italics his) (24).
8. Young asserted that eternal judgment is “unreasonable, illogical . . . wicked and unjust” as punishment for a temporal sin committed within time (24).
9. Young affirmed that, according to Christian doctrine, a sinner commits a “crime which is inherent in his own nature.” People have “no choice but to sin”; they are “slaves” to sin; Adam “already made the choice for each person” (25).
10. Young went so far as to fault Christian understanding of the death of Christ. He said that if death is defined as eternal torment then the traditional view cannot maintain that Christ ever atoned for sin, because he never suffered eternal torment (29).
11. Young slandered Christian understanding of God’s love. He wrote that, while Jesus commands Christians to love their enemies, God himself, in the traditional view, hates

the wicked and torments them forever in hell. If this is so, Young wrote, “then God would require us to be better than He is himself. . . Do we then have a Father whose nature is entirely opposite to ours?” (32).

12. Young maintained that, in his experience of rejecting the “traditional paradigm,” and pursuing universalism he became a more loving person even before he became convinced of the validity of UR (32).
13. Finally, Paul asserted that adoption of universalism affected every area of his perspective, including his theology, such as soteriology, ecclesiology, evangelism, eschatology, etc (33). This suggests that Paul’s belief system is thoroughly universalist.

In light of these questions and statements it is clear that in or before 2004 Paul Young became a convinced believer in universal reconciliation (UR). He also proclaimed that he was abandoning evangelical teaching. These points provide the answer to the first question above.

The statement above (#13) from Paul Young constitutes an invitation for all readers and movie goers to be alert to what extent UR has influenced both the novel and the film in any and all of these areas.

Young’s embrace of UR in his paper was transferred and implanted in his novel and subsequently in the film. It is not difficult to see behind and through the text and the conversations in the film the selling of universalist ideas.

SOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO THE MAKING OF *THE SHACK*

Paul Young was deeply concerned that his novel should be widely accepted by Christians. Yet no evangelical publisher would publish his novel. Thus he agreed with his two editors, who did not want to be associated with universalism, to allow them to remove the universalism. They spent an entire year going through *The Shack* to remove its universalism. They testify to this endeavor on line.⁵

Were they successful? After carefully reading the novel I concluded that UR deeply penetrates the entirety of the novel. This conclusion is based on the comparison of Paul’s earlier writing in 2004, his verbal identification of being a Christian universalist as late as 2007 (after the publishing of the novel), and by comparing statements in *The Shack* with the basic tenets, the beliefs, of universalism.

And by the way, my conclusion is not peculiar to me. Many bloggers and reviewers have come to the same conclusion, even though they are not party to Paul’s earlier writing.

The answer to the second question above (Is there universalism in the novel and in the film?) is: yes. What are the implications of this conclusion?

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY UNIVERSALISM IN THE NOVEL AND IN THE FILM?

(1) IT IS SUBLIMINAL DECEIT WITH IMMEASURABLE CONSEQUENCES

⁵ See the web site of Wayne Jacobsen and Brad Cummings.

We often speak of subliminal messages that advertisers seek to implant in the minds of unsuspecting viewers of film and commercials. This is what the novel and the film do. It is entirely appropriate to identify the novel and the film as the greatest selling of universalist thinking in the last 200 or more years. While other universalists have written in the last decades, including Brian McLaren and Rob Bell, none has had the success that Paul Young has had based on the sales of his novel and the making of this film.

As stated in the subtitle to my book, *Burning Down the Shack*, Paul Young's universalism is "deceiving millions." This is not overstatement.

Christians should be especially jealous and zealous for the truth of the gospel, as the Apostles were (Galatians 1:6-10; 2:4-5, 14; 2 Corinthians 11:10-15; Jude 3-4). Defending the truth of the gospel from false teachers is a repeated concern in the New Testament.

But what is the false teaching that *The Shack* promotes? There are many facets to it. As shown above both the novel and the film falsely portray the Trinity, and the persons of it—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul Young attacks the teaching of the Bible on eternal life and death, on reconciliation and redemption, on who a child of God is. He attacks the institutions that God and Jesus have created.

But the greatest error of the universalism that Young embraces is that it strikes a dagger into the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and why his death was necessary. It makes the atonement of Christ unnecessary. How? By asserting that God's love trumps God's holiness and justice UR is asserting that justice and righteousness are not entirely satisfied. By some other way, on some other basis, people are able to find reconciliation with God (contrary to what Romans 3:26 affirms). Also, since even fallen angels are going to be redeemed, but Jesus did not come to die for angels but only for people (so Hebrews 2:16 asserts), then fallen angels are saved or redeemed by some other means and not by the cross of Christ at all. Angels cannot place faith in Jesus Christ to be saved.

It is no wonder that universalism came to be joined historically in 1961 with Unitarianism to form the Unitarian-Universalist church which denies the deity of Christ, the resurrection, the Trinity, and other core doctrines. This result is the natural course that unfolds when one starts to subvert God's justice to his love, as the teaching of universalism does.

(2) *THE SHACK'S HISTORICAL IMPACT*

But there is another reason why it matters that the universalism in the novel and in the film needs to be exposed. Christians especially should be concerned. It concerns the matter of history and its perspective. *The Shack* is contributing to the resurgence of universalism in contemporary America on a scale not seen since the 1800's.

An overview of the history will give us an informed perspective. The history of the coming of universalism into America begins with John Murray and his preaching in the 1760's. He is called the "founder of universalism" in America. At that time many embraced the new teaching—so many in fact that one out of every five Baptist ministers was converted to it. It soon conquered the fledgling universities such as Harvard and Yale. Fictional writing was one the tools then employed! But strong biblical teaching and writing, such as that from Isaac Backus, turned back the tide.

How or why did universalism become so popular in Colonial America, especially in Puritan New England? Sidney Ahlstrom, a historian of this era, gives three reasons.⁶ New England was wealthy because of its maritime trade; the congregational form of government allowed each church to decide for itself (there was no controlling bishop as in Methodism); and the Puritan mind had a love for reason and the pursuit of knowledge. The Puritans came to exalt reason over revelation as the final authority. I would add a fourth, and from a Christian perspective perhaps even a more important reason. It is the departure from Biblical authority, in spite of the fact that commitment to such authority was an early hall mark of the Pilgrims and Puritans. Perhaps this fourth point was both a result of and a cause for the love of rational thinking. This thinking known as higher criticism attacked the authority of the Bible. It actually began on the Continent of Europe, spread to England, and then to America.

Upon reflection it's easy to connect these reasons to the present. While UR suffered great success in the 1800's it waned in the 1900's. But now it is experiencing a resurgence, especially among Christians/evangelicals, as witnessed by the writings of Bruce McLaren, Rob Bell, as well as the work of Paul Young. Why? Christians have become part of the recognized establishment of America; the church is wealthy; most Christians worship in independent, congregational-type of churches; and there is an unprecedented pursuit of reason and intellectual knowledge. And the challenge to Biblical authority has never been stronger—in the forms of higher criticism, textual criticism, various deviations from orthodox theology, departures from a Biblical world view applied to culture (abortion, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions), and experiments in church forms (for example, the emerging church) that challenge the authority of church leaders and tradition. UR fits well into the present anarchical spirit of this age and encourages it.

Upon reflection it is clear that Paul Young has imbibed all four of the influences listed above.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHT FROM THE HISTORY OF UR IN AMERICA

Additional points from the popularity of UR in 19th century America are instructive for understanding its current resurgence. The parallels between the writings of UR then and what I've cited above from the current writing of Paul Young are striking.

⁶ Sidney Ahlstrom, *Theology in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1967), 40.

Universalism opposed the Great Awakening of the 1730's and 1740's because of the emphasis on repentance to avoid the judgment of God. Regarding the person of Jesus, UR asserted that he did everything as a mere man aided by God. [This is found in the heresy of Socinianism, which rejected the deity of Jesus and asserted that he "obtained divinity by his superior life."⁷ This belief becomes the foundation of the modern Unitarian church.]

Consider these parallels with *The Shack* that come from the most prominent universalist in the early 1800's, Hosea Ballou. It is not surprising that Ballou's reviewers acknowledge that the God of Ballou, "like the God of the Deists, emerges as a man-centered God." God "glorifies himself in making man happy."⁸

Ballou's theology also included the following points, among many others.⁹ (1) Sin is the chief cause of human misery. Indeed, "sin and misery are one."¹⁰ (2) The atonement was done to reconcile man to God, not God to man, since God is not estranged from man. Human love for God is renewed in the atonement, not God's love for man. (3) The sacrifice of Christ demonstrated God's love for man rather than being an act satisfying God's anger toward sin. (4) The atonement of Christ was the effect not the cause of God's love to man (100). (5) "Atonement and reconciliation are the same," a "renewal of love," to cause mankind to "hate sin and love holiness" (119). (6) Christ is a "created, dependent being" (111). Hence there is no Trinity. (7) The atonement was essentially moral: the "literal death of the man, Jesus Christ, is figurative" (122-123). This is close to the Unitarians' idea of salvation as character formation. In "following Jesus, the embodiment of God's love, man can be reconciled to God."¹¹ (8) Hell is not a place of endless punishment; God is not "an enemy to the sinner" (126). (9) Hell is not merely a place of punishment but a state of rebellion against God and unity with him. (10) Hell cannot be endless for then an eternal dualism would deny God's omnipotence. (11) The "consequence of atonement is the universal holiness and happiness of mankind" (138).

In addition, Ballou doubted the existence of the devil. But if he did exist, then God is a worst being than the devil, for the latter only desires to have people miserable but God intended and purposed many for such a destiny.¹² Ballou also maintained that sin punishes itself.¹³

When one reads through these points it is clear that Paul Young has adopted a belief system that parallels many points from this form of universalism. Many of the above statements are exactly replicated in *The Shack*. While Young has not gone so far yet as to deny the deity of Christ and the Trinity, he has certainly created a man-centered God by the way that he has depicted God in *The Shack*. It is idolatry to picture the Trinity, especially God the Father and the Holy Spirit, as humans. This violates the 2nd Commandment. Jesus said that God is spirit (John 4:24).

THE CREEDS OF AMERICAN UNIVERSALISM

⁷ From Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 457.

⁸ Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 21.

⁹ These are summarized from David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1985), 64-66; the numbers in parentheses refer to the pages of Ballou's work. See additional points in this source and the others cited.

¹⁰ Cassara, *Universalism*, 21.

¹¹ Cassara, *Universalism*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 159.

In opposing the institutional church and in seeking a pure relationship with God where there is no authority or subordination Young is thinking like other universalists who decry being bound by a creed. Yet, in contradiction, universalism has issued creeds over the centuries. Here are some summary thoughts. Note the parallels with *The Shack*. It is important to note what is omitted in these creeds as well as what is said.

In the creeds of 1790 universalists stated that all the infinite perfections of God are “all modifications of infinite, adorable, incomprehensible and unchangeable love.” These creeds went on to declare that all people are already reconciled to God.¹⁴ Clearly such statements form the basis of Young’s statements put in the mouth of his trinity in *The Shack* as I’ve cited them above.

The Winchester Profession of 1803 asserted: “There is one God whose nature is love.”

The creed of 1878 asserted the following beliefs among others. (1) “Divine justice” is “born of love and limited by love.” (2) Salvation is “from sin rather than from the punishment of sin.” (3) “Repentance and salvation are not limited to this life.” (4) “Endless damnation would be an act of such manifest injustice as to be in the highest degree inconsistent with the benevolent character of God.” (5) Salvation may be “affected here or in the future life.”

The creed of 1899 affirmed the creed of 1803, and is termed “a masterpiece of theological dexterity.”¹⁵ It affirmed, among other things, that there is no resurrection of the body, no general judgment, no annihilation of the wicked, no endless punishment, no second coming of Christ.

Finally, in the Bond of Fellowship of 1935, universalists affirmed “God as Eternal and All-Conquering Love.”

THE REST OF THE STORY OF UNIVERSALISM IN AMERICA

From its hay-day of popularity from the 1800’s to the 1930’s, UR then declined to one of the smallest denominations. According to universalists this decline was due to the fact that so many in the established denominations had become “closet” universalists and did not need to join with the universalist churches.¹⁶ It could well be the case.

By the 1950’s universalists rejected the idea that they were “Christians.” Reason rather than revelation has become the primary source of authority and belief. The fiction of *The Shack* makes this observation all too obvious. And interestingly, universalists note that fervor for preaching and for mission has waned. Jesus is “no longer the great Savior with a transcendent mission but now a friend and companion.”¹⁷ The antipathy of UR toward creeds has grown over the years. Around 1920 universalists, when asked to tell where they stand, responded that the

¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵ Ibid., 243.

¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷ Ibid.

only true answer to give to this question is that “we do not stand at all, we move.”¹⁸ In interviews Paul Young has similarly refused to state what he believes. He has refused to be pinned down.

So now because of both popular fiction and film, universalism once again is shaking the Christian church with its debased appeal based on a distortion of the teaching of the love of God. Its powerful resurgence is once again facing Christians with the daunting challenge of countering this heresy. But Jesus said: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” Careful discernment will release a believer from the entanglements and slavery that a false view of God, which equals idolatry, brings.

WHAT THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION CAN TELL US

Because this is the year 2017 one more matter of history needs to be discussed. This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. This event had the greatest impact on European understanding of Biblical doctrine, church order, Bible translation, state-church relations and many other matters. Not since the time of Jesus and the Apostles had the Christian church been so awakened to errors in its beliefs and practices.

In its reformation of Christian doctrine the Reformation embarked upon a clarification of the destiny of the unsaved. It rejected Roman Catholic teaching about purgatory and the role of indulgences to secure one’s escape from judgment after death. The Reformation upheld the Biblical teaching about the destiny of the lost—that they will undergo eternal judgment.

When Luther sparked the Reformation with the nailing of his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517, #32 reaffirmed the judgment after death. Luther wrote: “Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.”

As part of his 67 Articles, Zwingli in 1523 wrote (#57): “The true divine Scriptures know naught about purgatory after this life.”

UR runs counter to Protestant teaching and the Reformation.

We in this year 2017 could do no better than to reaffirm our belief in the Biblical teaching about the everlasting judgment of those who are non-Christians, who have not believed in Jesus Christ.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

In the preceding pages I have set forth the reasons why *The Shack* is a subtle but dangerous attack on the truth of the Bible. These pages are a brief attempt to alert the unsuspecting of the dangers that lurk in believing what comes off the screen as they view “The Shack.” I give much more in defense of the truth in the book, *Burning Down the Shack*. The film, “The Shack,” may inspire many to go back to the reading of the novel, or to go to it for the first time. It is my hope that these pages of critique and warning will similarly encourage viewers of the film to take pause and to go to the reading of *Burning Down the Shack*.

¹⁸ Ibid., 44.

THE FINAL THOUGHT

By now it should be obvious to most that the most damning truth against universal reconciliation is this. There is absolutely nothing in all of Scripture that teaches or even suggests that a person's eternal destiny can be altered after death. The failure to believe the gospel, to believe in Jesus Christ, means an everlasting separation from God.

It should also be obvious that it is not overstatement to say that what Paul Young and other universalists believe and proclaim is anarchical, terrorist, and demonic in the spiritual realm; and this realm will infect all other realms of reality.

The most significant quote that can be placed here is from the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-23 which reads in part:

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.”

Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).