

## **The Truth Versus *Lies* or, The Bible and Paul Young**

By Dr. James De Young

The genie is out of the bottle; the cat is out of the bag; the proof is in the pudding; etc.

All of the foregoing sayings are appropriate, I believe, for what has transpired. Thursday, March 9, 2017, will be a significant day in Christian publishing. For on this day the first reviews of Paul Young's newest and seventh book, *Lies We Believe about God*, have appeared and they reveal that Young's book is a bombshell. Reading my own copy confirms that *Lies* is a bombshell for showing what Paul Young really, truly believes.

For thirteen years I and others have been saying that Paul Young embraces the heresy of universal reconciliation, that it is embedded in his novel and now in his movie. I was often rebuffed, even by Paul himself. Now the truth comes out. By Paul's writing *Lies*, he shows that I was correct all along and he was *lying*.

Note that "lies" is his chosen word. He finds it comfortable to use the word abundantly in his novel, *Crossroads* ("lies" occurs 8x), to put down evangelical truth. Now he puts the word in a title of a book that opposes 28 doctrines that Christians have historically believed (although many of these are "strawmen"—beliefs Christians supposedly believe).

This book differs from the three earlier novels (*The Shack*, *Crossroads*, and *Eve*). This one is not a novel, not a story, but a defense, an apology, for what Paul Young believes. Actually *Lies* is a polemic; he aggressively pushes his universalism and makes a bold confession of it.

Paul's format in *Lies* is to introduce 28 topics, one per chapter, of what evangelical faith, Biblical faith, believes (or, supposedly does). Then he seeks to expose why each point of doctrine and practice is wrong. Paul sets forth his supposed corrective of all this doctrine with his own creation (distortion).

I will get into details later, in another review essay of how *Lies* is in error.

For now I want to explain what is behind my title for this essay that places Paul Young in conflict with the truth.

### **The History of Young's Embrace of Universal Reconciliation**

Back in 1996 or 1997, Paul Young and I co-founded a Christian forum or think tank of sorts titled M3 Forum (M3 stands for the third millennium). About 8-12 of us met monthly to discuss various Christian topics. We had just two standards: love alone was our ethic, and the Bible our final authority. In 2004 Paul presented his 103-page paper titled, "Universal Reconciliation." It was a detailed, single-spaced embrace of this heresy (as the church has called it through the ages). He said that he was abandoning his "evangelical paradigm" and embracing UR. In other words this was a conversion for him. He tried to prove that UR is true by arguing from Scripture, reason and emotion, and from church history. He claimed that this new doctrine had changed his life. It had

made him a more loving person. It had affected all his theology—what he believed about God, the Trinity, salvation, the cross, hell, faith—everything.

I was totally surprised by Paul's paper. After several questions that Paul answered, Paul turned to me and said: "Jim, Do you believe that I am a Christian?" I answered: "Paul the only thing that the Bible says that one must do to become a Christian is to believe and accept Jesus Christ as one's Savior from sin and to seek to follow him." Paul said nothing in response.

I asked the group to be able to present a rebuttal to Paul's paper, and was granted this request. For the next meeting I composed and read a 22-page paper ("The Distortions and Dangers of Universal Reconciliation"). But Paul was not present. He never came back to our forum, even though I pursued him with several phone calls.

Unknown to me Paul had embarked on writing *The Shack*. Paul began his novel as a story for his kids. Then two pastor friends saw that it had potential as a novel for adults, but these men were opposed to the blatant universalism in it. So the three of them spent a year trying to remove the UR and making it acceptable to Christians (they have said this on their web site). After the book was turned down by 20 or more publishers, they decided to publish it themselves. *The Shack* appeared in print and took off. Now over 20 million copies have been sold, and translations made, and the film came to the theaters on March 3.

### **Young's Denial of Universal Reconciliation**

Now here's the reason why I've titled this document the way I have.

About the time *The Shack* appeared (2007) Paul came to my home and before several people, including my pastor, requested that I stop circulating his paper. "Why?" I asked. He answered somewhat along the lines that the paper no longer represented what he believed about UR. He no longer embraced universal reconciliation. When I asked: "What do you believe now?" Paul answered that he was a person in flux, that he didn't want to be pinned down. So I agreed not to circulate his paper (I had passed it on to only a few people). I have kept this agreement.

However, when I read *The Shack* I was surprised by the subtle embrace and propagation of UR in it. I determined then to write a rebuttal to it, and this is what I have done chapter by chapter in *Burning Down the Shack*, seeking to expose the subtle UR in it. And now it is in the movie; the latter is a faithful portrayal of the novel. Millions have been impressed by the novel, often led by well-meaning but uninformed pastors.

But now this whole discussion has been elevated to another level. The genie is out of the bottle.

### **The Publication of *Lies*: Young Confesses Universalism**

In his new book, *Lies We Believe about God*, Paul Young now confesses that virtually everything that he embraced in his paper (but he doesn't mention this paper) he does believe after all. The title of his book reflects his belief that Christian beliefs are wrong and in need of changing. His *Lies* is a correction of the "lies" we Christians believe.

Here are some of the lies we evangelical Christians profess, according to Paul Young.

1. "God loves us, but doesn't like us"
3. "God is in control." Paul says that God is not in control of everything.
4. "God does not submit." God does submit to human beings, Paul says.
5. "God is a Christian." In the movie and the novel Jesus says that he is not a Christian.
7. "God is more he than she"
8. "God wants to be a priority"
13. "You need to get saved." Paul confesses that he embraces "universal salvation."
15. "Hell is separation from God"
17. "The cross was God's idea" No, Paul Young says that it was man's idea.
19. "God requires child sacrifice." The death of Christ on the cross was not God's plan.
22. "God is not involved in my suffering"
24. "Not everyone is a child of God." Paul says that everyone is a child of God.
27. "Sin separates us from God." No, Paul says, it does not separate us from God.
28. "God is One alone." Young's understanding of the Trinity departs from "evangelical Christian fundamentalism," Paul says (p. 236).

--Could Paul Young make it any clearer that he is not a believer, not an evangelical?

Specifically, in *Lies*, chapter 13, "You need to get saved," Paul engages in a conversation with himself: "Are you suggesting that everyone is saved? That you believe in universal salvation?" Young immediately replies: "That is exactly what I am saying!" (p. 118). People don't need to "get saved" because they already are.

### **Young Has Deceived Millions**

This declaration of his beliefs means that what he told those of us in my home in 2007 was a lie. He had **not** stopped believing UR. He was **not** a person in flux. He wanted to avoid being pinned down because he didn't want to be open and honest about his beliefs. And now, looking back, it appears that what he said in my home was done to promote sales to uninformed Christians and pastors. He was doing all of this to deceive millions of readers. The subtitle of my book has been true all along: *How a Christian Best Seller Is Deceiving Millions*.

This turn of affairs, this letting of the cat out of the bag, has serious, sober implications. It means that a person who publicly has confessed many moral sins has yet to confess another—that he lied before many witnesses. And he has continued this charade for ten years!

Paul has appeared in several media in which he was asked: "Are you a universalist?" He consistently said "no." Apparently, he "parsed" this word to mean that he was denying general reconciliation, not universal reconciliation, which is what he believes. He could have clarified what he meant. By not choosing to do so he has deceived millions.

In other ways he has deceived millions. Paul has portrayed himself as a Christian, but in both the movie and novel, he rejects the name "Christian" and redefines it as universalists do. He has posed as a friend to many churches and people but really he is stabbing Christianity in the back. In interviews on radio and TV he has openly prayed to God and quoted Scripture, which he now slanders. His piety is betrayed by the fact that he has been hiding the truth, till now. He portrays himself as loving and caring when his character is deeply flawed.

As Christians informed about the Bible we know where deceit comes from. Jesus said they come from the great deceiver, the Devil. Paul talks about the success of his novel as a “God thing” when it now is clearly a “Devil thing.” I could say much more.

### **What Did Paul Young Want to Hide (in *The Shack* and His Other Novels)?**

Let me share here some longer quotes from Paul Young’s paper of 2004. These more scurrilous remarks show just what Paul wanted to hide from Christian audiences and why they are so revealing of him. Here Paul blasphemes God, Jesus Christ and his death on the cross, and his word. His book, *Lies*, takes the same approach to Biblical Christianity.

Paul Young claims that by evangelical faith “the doctrine of eternal torture makes Jesus *a million times* [italics Paul’s] more vicious and vindictive than these three (Pharaoh, Nero, Hitler) put together” (p.22).

Eternal judgment is “sadist humbug” (p. 31), Paul asserts.

According to Paul’s slander of Christian belief and the Bible, Christ never atoned for sin because he never suffered eternal torment. “Calvary was nothing but a farce, a burlesque, a travesty, and a sham. Then Jesus died a failure and in vain, and never redeemed anyone from anything. If eternal torment were the penalty for sin, then Jesus is not the Savior of men, for He failed to take our place, and pay our debt, by being eternally tormented. And if He is not the Savior of men, then He is not even a good man, but a liar, and therefore a rogue and a deceiving rascal. And therefore, if eternal torment is the penalty for sin, then salvation is a mere myth, and the Bible’s the world’s most abominable maze of evil imaginings; for it then merely leads men to trust for deliverance to a concept which will lead to everlasting sorrow” (p. 29).

Is not your heart stricken to read such words? They come not from an open enemy of the gospel but from one hiding under the mantle of one seeking to reach Christians. This is universal reconciliation unmasked! The words of our Lord warning about “false prophets” appearing as “ferocious wolves” and “evil doers” are appropriate here (Matt. 7:13-23).

And all these ideas are now publicly embraced in *Lies*. And, they are pervasive in his other two novels, *Crossroads* (2012) and *Eve* (2015). Paul has consistently propagated his UR in all of his writings. See my website for reviews of his other two novels: [burningdowntheshackbook.com](http://burningdowntheshackbook.com).

### **Why Would Paul Young Become So Bold and Open to Write *Lies*?**

No one can fully explain the distorted thinking that leads people to twist the truth. But we get a hint of what led Paul to do what he has been doing. It is a vision of grandeur about his and others’ influence to change the church. Note the following from a recent interview of Paul Young as reported by Religious News Service, dated March 3, 2017.

“I think readers of the book will recognize the distinction between a book and the movie, but they will not be disappointed in the movie,” he said. But the popularity of “The Shack” is just the tip of the iceberg, Young said. Evangelicalism is changing, returning to an understanding of God in line with the early church fathers and mothers—an

understanding he tried to capture in his book, he said. “As the structures start to crumble, which they are, all of a sudden permission to ask the questions is emerging,” he said. “I think that’s a movement of the Holy Spirit. . . I think we’re on the cusp or inside the beginnings of a reformation.”

In this recent interview Paul appealed to the Spirit of God as bringing a reformation to the church. Now his book makes it clear that he envisions a destruction of the church, and this could only spring from Satan, not the Spirit. It is not a reformation (like that of 1517) but a re-formation along heretical lines.

Do you see what is going on? Paul Young and others are telling Christians that they have believed the wrong doctrines for 2000 years!

The Dutch have contributed a word to our English. It is “foist.” It means to hide in the closed fist what the true or real substance is behind an outward offer. Paul Young and other universalists are foisting on uninformed pastors and Christians what their real message and purpose is.

### **What’s Next? How Should Christians Respond?**

I will make Paul’s original paper available to anyone who would like it. The most disturbing part is section 2, pages 21-37: his “Arguments from Reason and Emotion.” The most alarming section of these pages is what I’ve quoted in my introduction to *BDS*, especially pages xvi-xxvi, which include part of the longer quotes cited above.

Also, anyone can obtain from me my 22-page paper from 2004 which quotes the most blasphemous statements from Young’s paper. It’s on my web site, [burningdowntheshackbook.com](http://burningdowntheshackbook.com).

The evangelical church needs to wake up (as in the message to the church of Ephesus, Rev. 2), repent, and return to its first love. As part of this renewal the church needs to expose the UR not only of Paul Young, but also of others including Brian McLaren and Rob Bell. It needs to stop enriching and encouraging them by buying their books and supporting the movie. Christians need to read other books with real Biblical substance, both to reinforce what we believe and also to grow in genuine relationship with Christ. Above all, the church needs to return to an intense preaching and study of the Bible.

In other words, in this the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, it needs to re-embrace what the Reformation stood for—the authority of the Bible in the lives of Christians.

Christian lay people and pastors who have supported *The Shack*, and Young’s other novels, should apologize to their people. Writers and other media people likewise should do so.

The genie is out of the bottle to reveal what Paul Young truly believes. There is no longer any excuse for defending Young or being uninformed so that he can obfuscate what he believes.

The last word should go to the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 2:14-17). The last verse says: “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.” The text of 2 Cor. 4:1-4 also warns about those who distort the word of God.