**THE SHAKTI OF THE SHACK: FINDING HINDUISM IN THE SHACK**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction – The Truth about *The Shack*…from a Biblical perspective

Chapter 1 – THE SHACK, or THE SHAKTI? - Parallels to the 'Shakti' of Hinduism

Chapter 2 - EASTERN MYSTICISM: The (Un-) 'Holy' Trinity

Chapter 3 - EAST MEETS WEST: (In the "Shack")

Chapter 4 - KUNDALINI: ('Serpent' Power, Rev. 12:9)

Chapter 5 - SOPHIA: (True 'Wisdom'?)

Chapter 6 - Kundalini, 'Wisdom' & The Serpent

Chapter 7 - 'PAPA': The First Person of the 'Trinity' of The Shack

Chapter 8 - 'JESUS': The Second Person of the 'Trinity

Chapter 9 - 'SARAYU': The Third Person of the 'Trinity' –

Conclusion – CHRISTIANITY vs. HINDUISM: Which is It?

Prologue – The Role of Emotion in Blinding Discernment

**Back Cover:** *The Shack*, the popular ‘Christian’ novel written by Wm. Paul Young, has brought comfort to many who have read it. However, from a Biblical point of view, there are many doctrinal problems with the spirituality presented in his book.

While ‘just’ a novel, *The Shack* claims to be based on Christian spirituality, but more closely resembles that of the Hindu religion. “The *Shakti* of The Shack” sets out to show how the characters in *The Shack* are actually that of the Shakti Trinity of Hinduism.

One is invited to draw their own conclusions from the evidence that will presented in these pages. Those who have found the spiritual insight and ‘comfort’ that has been offered in the story of *The Shack* may be better off finding it from the true Comforter, the Holy Spirit of the one true God of the Bible**:**

*“But the* ***Comforter****, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26)

*“But when the* ***Comforter*** *is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”* (John 15:26)

**INTRODUCTION:** The truth about The Shack…from a Biblical perspective

I didn't initially set out to write an exposé such as the one that follows. However, after reading *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young and following with further research, I felt led to put forth some information uncovered on the subject in regard to the particular ‘spirituality’ presented in this novel.

As a work of bible-based ‘fiction’ the book is intended to be based mainly on Christian belief and faith. It is very problematic then to find that upon closer examination, there are numerous unscriptural elements throughout *The Shack* that run contrary to biblical doctrine.

In most stories of fiction, even those based on historical fact, some 'artistic license' is allowable. However, when you are writing a novel based on Christian principles, it is very ill-advised to stray from true Biblical teaching lest you come into grave error and lead yourself, and others, astray.

To be sure, there are both positive and negative elements in this book, and both stand out upon first reading it: It makes you laugh; it makes you cry; it makes you fear – and most of all to grieve alongside with the main character, especially if you have ever lost someone very close to your heart.

These elements however tend to cause the reader to temporarily suspend some of their spiritual reason and discernment due to the highly emotional aspects in the story: from the shocking depths of loss and despair to the awe-inspiring heights of newly found peace and restoration.

Join me on this journey into *The Shack* to look beyond the ‘shock and awe’ in the storyline and uncover some of the hidden deeper meanings in its spirituality … and decide for yourself if there is more to this book than initially meets the eye.

**CHAPTER 1:** THE SHACK - Parallels to Hinduism and the coming One-World Church

The juggernaut of a 'new-age', 'new world order' religion is earnestly bearing down and headed our way. Several ecumenical and 'New-Age' elements were immediately noticeable upon first reading *The Shack.* But, with deeper investigation, further parallels with a 'new-age' and pagan belief system soon became apparent.

These pagan and 'New Age' elements in *The Shack* may or may not be intentional; however, the parallels are very striking. If they are indeed intentional, it is just one more sign of the infiltration of eastern mysticism and New Age belief into the Christian church at large.

The following excerpt from an article by author Roger Oakland of *Understand the Times* is a fitting introduction to the dangers of some of the beliefs contrary to biblical Christianity that are entering the modern Christian church through many new practices and teachings.

Mr. Oakland states: (emphasis mine)

*"Christianity based on faith in the Word of God continues to be under attack from all angles. The emerging church continues to promote Roman Catholic experiences and* ***contemplative eastern meditative practices*** *('Christian' mysticism). The gospel of Jesus Christ is clearly being redefined in order to prepare for a wide path that is open to people of all faith. This wide path is leading towards an ecumenical union with the Roman Church."*

*"Not only are the 'separated brethren' being drawn back into the fold, it is apparent that the religions of the world are being drawn into a global plan that is* ***uniting all religions*** *for the cause of peace with headquarters in Rome. It is also important to note the role that 'Mary - the mother of the Eucharist' and her son, the 'Eucharistic Jesus' play in this global ecumenical agenda."* [1]

Many of the elements mentioned in the quote by Mr. Oakland - particularly that of Eastern Mysticism and Ecumenical Union - are found deeply woven within the storyline and characters of *The Shack*. As mentioned above, Mary - the mother of the Eucharist" and her son, the "Eucharistic Jesus" will play a role in the coming global ecumenical agenda.

Likewise, two of the main characters in *The Shack* seem to typify the emphasis on this relationship between the 'Mother of Jesus' and 'Jesus the son'. The character of ‘God’, who goes by the name of 'Papa' in the book, is portrayed as a large black woman who points out that the 'Jesus' in this story is "**her** son". [2]

This is, of course, in direct contrast to the Holy Bible which states very clearly that God is the Father – very clearly a male figure - and that Jesus is **his** one and *“only begotten son.”* [3]

Yes, the Bible does tell us that Mary was indeed the mother of Jesus – but it certainly does **not** tell us, however, that ‘God’ was his mother. While *The Shack* is purportedly ‘just a novel’, it should still stick to the basic truth of the story of God, Jesus and Mary without blurring the important biblical distinctions made about these relationships.

Does *The Shack* perhaps seek to 'deify' Mary in making her, the human mother of Jesus, into 'God'? Or does it seek to possibly now give God the role of being Jesus' mother in place of Mary? Or, further, perhaps to let God share in that role... Yes, perhaps, but I think that there's even more to this.

Rather than just the blending of these separate roles - a bringing together of these identities – it may be intended to make them more or less **‘one and the same’**, an all-inclusive ‘God’, the reasons for which will become increasingly clearer as we continue further with our study here.

**CHAPTER 2:** EASTERN MYSTICISM - The (Un-) 'Holy' Trinity of *The Shack*

In Eastern Mysticism, and particularly that of Hinduism, the all-inclusive nature of ‘god’ is seen in its emphasis on the belief that God is all, and that he is in all. In *The Shack*, the character of ‘Jesus’ describes ‘God’ in this way: *“God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through* ***all things****….”* [4]

This is clearly against biblical scripture, which tells us that God exists apart from creation, including man, and can only be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. However, it is in perfect alignment with the Hindu belief system whose view of ‘God’ is, *“panentheistic, as existing in and giving life to all things.”* [5]

In further considering the connection in *The Shack* with 'Eastern Mysticism', let's take a look at the very name of the book itself. On the surface of the story, the ‘Shack' refers to just that: a remote shack in the Oregon wilderness, while also being a metaphor of the main character, Mack's (Mackenzie Allen Philips’), 'darkest nightmare'.

It is in this shack that his youngest daughter, Missy, may have been brutally murdered. As the story unfolds, *The Shack* becomes a moving allegory of God's grace in the midst of great tragedy and sadness. I am not without empathy for the character of 'Mack'. I can certainly imagine the deep emotion that the loss of a child would bring, especially under the horrific circumstances of abduction and murder.

All the truly heart-rending emotion aside, though, if this story is viewed in a somewhat more objective manner, elements of a different sort begin to appear that transcend a mere story about a father's loss and suffering, and subsequent reconciliation with God. While this story is indeed a work of fiction, it is however meant to be based on Christian belief and faith.

However, many elements in this book point to a very different kind of 'faith' than that put forth in the true Word of God. While I am willing to give the author, William Paul Young, some benefit of the doubt, there is much more in the story of *The Shack* akin to a 'New Age' belief system than there is to the Bible itself.

In the story’s narrative, there are far too many 'coincidental' parallels that can be drawn with many of the New Age influences currently entering the Church - particularly those such as Eastern Mysticism, Universalism and Ecumenism, as we have discussed, for it to be a mere 'coincidence'.

One of these many 'coincidences’, is the name on the cover of the book, *The Shack* – one of the very first things most readers will encounter. This name bears close resemblance to the Sanskrit word ‘Shakti’ – also known as ‘Shaci’ – which is the name for the Hindu trinity, and is just one more possible connection to Hinduism seen in *The Shack*.

An article entitled *'Hidden Heresies of The Shack'* asks:

*"Is it pure luck that "The Shack" and Shaci sound alike, and that Kali in the form of Elousia (the Black Madonna), her daughter Sara-La-Kali (Saryu or Sarayu), and Indra (a false 'Christ' who makes his appearance in India), all meet together in the form Shaci like they meet in The Shack?"* [6]

This may seem at first to be rather far-fetched and just perhaps ‘chance’ until you observe the many parallels between the 'Shack' of this story, and the ‘Shakti’ (or Shaci) of Hinduism. For instance, two of the three characters in the (un-) holy 'trinity' of the Shakti, and that of *The Shack*, have nearly - and even exactly - the same name.

Another name used in *The Shack* for the character of ‘Papa’ (God) is Elousia. This is also the name of the Hindu goddess Kali of the Shakti trinity in the form of Elousia the Black Madonna, or ‘Sara-La-Kali’ (Sara the Black). Sara, also known as Saryu or Saranyu, is the Hindu name for the ‘spirit’ of Kali and also the ‘daughter’ of Kali.

Additionally, Sarayu is the name used for Holy Spirit (of God) in the story of *The Shack*. We can easily see the similarity between these names and that of the ‘Holy Spirit’ character of Sarayu in *The Shack*. Both the word Saranyu and the name Sarayu mean ‘wind’ in Sanskrit, which is a word also used for ‘spirit’.

These names for the ‘daughter’ of Kali are used to denote ‘Kali-in-the-Spirit’ (Kali's Spirit), or Sara-La-Kali. So, Sarayu (*meaning flowing or ‘wind’ in Sanskrit*) is the name of the ‘holy’ spirit of Kali, just as it is used as the name in *The Shack* to represent the ‘holy spirit’ of God. But, again, not the true God - or Holy Spirit - of the Bible. [7]

The Hindu concept of the Shakti is a ‘trinity’ of these male-female/god-goddess deities - that meet together in a ‘Shakti’ or ‘sacred force’. This is exactly what we see in *The Shack* where the three male/female deity characters of ‘God’, the ‘Holy Spirit’ and ‘Jesus’ all meet together in the ‘shack’.

The following definitions of this Hindu concept of the Shakti as a ‘sacred force’ and a ‘divine mother’ further show its connection to 'The Shack' -

*"Shakti, from Sanskrit shak – ‘to be able,’ meaning sacred force or empowerment, is the primordial cosmic energy and represents the dynamic forces that move through the entire universe.* [5]

*Shakti is the concept, or personification, of divine feminine creative power, sometimes referred to as* ***'The Great Divine Mother'*** *in Hinduism. On the earthly plane, Shakti most actively manifests through female embodiment and fertility - while also existing in males in its potential, unmanifest form."* [6]

As portrayed in *The Shack*, the female embodiment of the sacred force in ‘Shakti’ is manifested in the female form of 'Papa' (as well as 'Sarayu,' a female personification of the Holy Spirit). As previously stated, *“Shakti most actively manifests through female embodiment, while also existing in males."* [7]

This male embodiment in *The Shack* is seen in the character of 'Jesus’ while 'Papa' (God) often refers to herself as ‘The Mother’, and to Jesus as her son. As we also saw above, Shakti is the concept sometimes referred to as *'The Great Divine Mother'.* The female Papa-God, or *Elouisa*, is just exactly that.

It is also notable that the male character of Jesus in *The Shack* takes on a secondary role just as in the worship of Shaktism:

*“Shiva, the masculine aspect of divinity, is considered solely transcendent, and Shiva's worship is usually secondary.”* [7]

In The Shambhala Encyclopedia, Georg Feuerstein gives further insight into the Shakti:

*"In Shaktism, Shakti is worshiped as the Supreme Being... Shakti embodies the active feminine energy. Not only is the Shakti responsible for creation, it also the agent of all change. Shakti is cosmic existence as well as liberation... Shakti exists in a state of dependence on no-one, being interdependent with the entire universe.”* [8]

The Shakti – The Shack – is a ‘force’of predominantly female energy. It is an un-holy trinity forged from the ‘union’ of Kali *(Papa/God/Elouisa),* Sarayu *(Saryu/Saranyu)*, and Indra *(‘Jesus’/a false 'Christ')*, who meet together in the form of Shakti, or Shaci, just like they meet in *The Shack.*

**CHAPTER 3** - EAST MEETS WEST: (In the "Shack")

The ‘Western’ concept of a Holy Trinity, held by true Bible believers throughout the world, has been superseded by one more closely resembling that of a trinity found in ‘Eastern’ religious practice: the Shakti of Hinduism.

As described in Chapter 2, the Shakti trinity is worshiped as the Supreme Being... Shakti embodies primarily the active feminine energy consisting of Kali and Saryu (Kali in the Spirit), in addition to the more subordinate male energy in the form of Indra.

Shakti as further defined as follows:

*"Shakti exists in a state of …dependence on no-one, being interdependent with the entire universe."* [9]

*“Not only is the Shakti responsible for creation, it also the agent of all change. Shakti is cosmic existence as well as liberation...”* [10]

These same aspects - those of being creation's caretaker, an agent of change, having cosmic existence, liberation, and interdependence with the entire universe - are all clearly seen in the descriptions that 'Papa' (God) gives of herself *The Shack*; but they are not at all consistent with the description of God Almighty in the Bible. [11]

It is, however, consistent with the description of the Shakti concept in Hinduism – the ‘god’ who merges with itself and with all of creation - and even the entire universe itself. This vague universalism is at complete odds with the distinct personage of the God of the Holy Bible as well as with the biblical concept of the Holy Trinity.

In *The Shack,* we have a ‘trinity’ consisting of a female personification of God in the form of a black woman named Papa, a young Jewish carpenter who is a handyman named 'Jesus', and an Asian woman in blue-jeans who is a gardener named Sarayu (incidentally, a word from the Sanskrit for 'wind'), who personifies the Holy Spirit.

These three live together in a ‘Shack', just as the three - the 'trinity' - meet in the shakti,; they are independent of each other, while at the same time interdependent - not only with each other, but the entire universe - this is the Hindu 'panentheistic' concept of God manifested "in and through all things." [12]

The "trinity" of the Shakti is described as, *"The Tridevi (three Goddesses, who can also manifest as male) - the conjoined forms of Lakshmi , Parvati and Saraswati - who are considered Shaktis of the Trimurti- Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma respectively."* [13]

These three - the 'trinity' - the Tridevi - meet in the shakti; or, in The 'Shack' as do the three characters of the 'trinity' in the book of this name. Furthermore, the Shakti Tridevi is worshiped as the Supreme Being; the ‘three-in-one’, a direct counterfeit to the Holy Trinity of the Bible.

At this point we should stop to ask ourselves if we are possibly being introduced to another view of God through *The Shack* - one that is contrary to the God of the Bible - who exists in 'The Shakti' in the form of a Trinity as the Tridevi (the Triple Goddess), who also can manifest as either male or female, as they do in the book.

Consider the following:

*"Adi Shakti is a Hindu concept of the ultimate Shakti, the ultimate feminine power inherent in all Creation. This is especially prevalent in the Shakta denomination within Hinduism, which worships the Goddess Devi in all Her manifestations. Shaktism regards Devi (lit., 'the Goddess') as the Supreme Brahman itself, the 'one without a second', with all other forms of divinity, female or male, considered to be merely Her diverse manifestations."* [14]

Papa, 'God', is portrayed as a woman throughout most of the book, however she is also portrayed as a man later on at the end – …*in all her ‘diverse manifestations’*. This then is not the God of the Bible who states throughout the scriptures, *"I am he..."*, but rather the Supreme Being of the Hindu religion in disguise.

Let's look further:

*"Like Shiva-associated Shaktism, Shakti embodies the active feminine energy and power of male supreme deity Vishnu. As Vishnu is the Father who stands for absolute justice, Sri is the Mother of the universe and is considered to be an important element in the redemption of mankind, and is the interceder with Vishnu on behalf of spiritual seekers."* [15]

In Hinduism, many names are used for the same ‘gods’ depending on the language or culture of a distinct area. The article Basics of Hinduism explains: *“Hindus of various sects may call the one God by many different names, according to their denomination or regional tradition.”* [16]

In *The Shack*, Papa is also known by the name of ‘Elousia’. Papa is seen to have an intercessory role as ‘Mediatrix’ – just as the Black Madonna, who is also known as ‘Elousia’. The Black Madonna, or Elousia, is an icon also worshipped by the Greek Orthodox Romani Gypsies.

In the above quote from the article on Shakti, *'Sri, Mother of the universe'*, is considered to be an important element in the redemption of mankind. In the book, Papa is shown to have this exact same redemptive role, even showing scars from the Crucifixion as 'Jesus', therefore portraying 'her' to be co-redeemer with Jesus.

'Co-redemptrix' is one of the titles also given to 'Mary', mother of Jesus, in the Catholic faith. So again we see the gospel being redefined in order to prepare a wide path that is open to people of all faith - a wide path that is leading towards an ecumenical union with the Roman Church, and an eventual union with all the religions of the world.

**CHAPTER 4** - KUNDALINI: ('Serpent' Power, Rev. 12:9) -

A fourth entity, in addition to the 'trinity' of *The Shack* (Papa, 'Jesus', and Sarayu) is Sophia. Sophia, or 'wisdom', portrays the mysterious 'psycho-spiritual force' of the Shakti. She is also connected in the book to a Kundalini type of experience – which is yet another Hindu concept.

The relation of Kundalini to Shaktism is described in this definition of the Shakti:

*"A cosmic existence as well as liberation, its most significant form being the Kundalini-shakti, a mysterious psychospiritual force. Shakti Force is described as, ‘Devi Prakriti’ (a Shakti) in the context of Shaktis as forces unifies Kundalini, Kriya, Itcha, Para, Jnana, Mantrika Shaktis. Each is in a chakra."* [17]

Shakti is then, in part, defined as 'Liberation'. This aspect of the Shakti is portrayed in the book as well. It is after the main character, Mack’s, meeting with this mysterious person *Sophia* that he finally begins to feel 'liberated', or set free, from his great burden of sadness.

In addition to this 'Liberation' there is also a connection to the Kundalini force, the 'Kundalini-Shakti' mentioned above. This connection to a Kundalini type of experience is seen in the interaction between Mack and Sophia upon their meeting in the dark cave near the shack.

Pastor Larry DeBruyn exposes this connection in the following *Herescope* article entitled, The Shack: 'Elousia' and the Black Madonna:

*"Kundalini is Sanskrit for ‘snake’ or ‘serpent power’, named as such because of the belief that it lies coiled within the body ready to strike at any moment. (see Gen 3:1) Kundalini describes the mystical experience when energy enters the body and arouses the ‘sleeping serpent’ via the chakras, vortices that penetrate the body and the body’s aura, through which various energies, including the universal life force, are received, transformed, and distributed.”*

*“When that happens this transient moment of arousal is defined to include 'physical sensations, clairaudience, visions, brilliant lights…ecstasy, bliss, and transcendence of self.”* [18]

With this description in mind, let’s look at an incident where this Sophia is described as ‘sensual’ to see if Mack, the novel’s main character, experienced kundalini and its ‘ecstasy, bliss, and transcendence of self’:

*“Upon hearing the sensual Sophia ask him, during his journey into the darkness, 'Do you understand why you’re here’? He shivered (physical sensations) and decided that he never wanted to speak again (transcendence of self). He only wanted her to talk (bliss) . . .'*

In an article by Kathy Beardsley entitled *The Ungodly Truth About The Shack,* she records again that in the novel,

*“The word used in The Shack to describe Mack’s impression of Sophia is ‘sensual’… he could almost feel her words (clairaudience) rain down on his head first (the 7th chakra) and melt into his spine (the 1st chakra), sending delicious tingles everywhere.” (the 2nd chakra).”*

*“What do you think? Did Mack experience kundalini? If so, then it came to him at a spontaneous moment in the darkness via the voice of the goddess-like Sophia."* [20]

**CHAPTER 5** - SOPHIA: ('Wisdom')

In this chapter, we’ll explore the meanings and uses in both history and the occult of the name Sophia itself. Sophia is known as the Greek and occult goddess of wisdom:

*"Sophia* (Greek for 'wisdom') *is a central term in Hellenistic philosophy and religion, Platonism, Gnosticism, Theosophy, and Esoteric Christianity, as well as Christian mysticism. Sophiology is a philosophical concept regarding wisdom, as well as a theological concept regarding the wisdom of God."* [21]

*"Sophia, or Sofya, is one of the four cardinal virtues of Plato's Protagoras.* (Wisdom is also personified in the deities of Minerva and Athena.) *In Mesopotamian religion and mythology, Enki, also known as Ea, was the God of wisdom and intelligence. Wisdom was achieved by restoring balance. In Norse mythology, the god Odin is especially known for his wisdom."* [22]

In the Bible, Paul refers to this concept deconstructing worldly wisdom, and sets worldly wisdom against a higher wisdom of God:

*"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"* (1 Corinthians 1:20)

*"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."* (1 Corinthians 2:7)

Conversely, the wisdom of 'Sophia' in *The Shack* is a worldly wisdom that encourages Mack to 'use his own imagination' and to 'judge for himself', in contrast to our admonition to, *“Cast down imaginations”* (2 Corinthians 10:5) and to *"Try the spirits whether they are of God..."* (1 John 4:1)

Mack meets Sophia in a cave - in a place of 'darkness' - the darkness of the soul. Author Gregory Reid expounds on this in his article, *The Dark Night of the Shack: A Parable of Illusions* and relates it in regard to the occult roots of 'Sophia':

*"Two decades ago, the New Age began to partner with the dead, carnal Western organized church denominations. That melding, in part, took place through both the 'Gaia' (mother earth) concept and the 'Sophia' movement – and the Sophia conferences, which were designed to rewrite the gender specific references in the Bible concerning God, emasculate and feminize God, destroy church Patriarchy, and as a result, introduce 'new ways' of worshipping 'God' – through a variety of New Age and occultic means, including Wiccan worship, crystal healing, etc."*

*"Thankfully it didn’t get widespread acceptance, but the Sophia concepts and conferences are still going on, and if you do a little internet searching, you will find that most of the sites are New Age and occult websites. Because* ***Sophia is an occult concept****, she is the acknowledged goddess of wisdom in the occult world, and even they trace her origins back to the days of Solomon, when his marriage to pagan wives (which became his downfall) caused him to bring the worship of the goddess Asherah into the house of the Lord."*

*"She is known by many names in the occult and pagan worlds, and one of the most well-known is Sophia. In other words, the Sophia concept and movement is the deliberately designed incursion of goddess worship into the house of God today – even if disguised as 'Papa'. All the occult, Wiccan and Pagan world acknowledges Sophia as the one known originally as Asherah."* [23]

Asherah, also Ashteroth or Ashtaroth as it was known in the Bible, is incidentally just another of the many names for Satan himself (who manifests as both male and female; a familiar concept in Hindu theology) - the one who those in the occult believe gave us 'wisdom' by opening our eyes to the knowledge of good and evil....

The Bible tells us however that to serve Ashtaroth is to forsake the Lord: *“And they forsook the* Lord*, and served Baal and* ***Asht****aroth.”* (Judges 2:13) And describes Ashtoreth as an abomination: “…*Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians.”* (2 Kings 23:13)

**CHAPTER 6** - Kundalini, 'Wisdom' & The Serpent Together -

In Part 5 of our study on *The Shack*, by Wm. Paul Young, we discussed the character of Sophia met briefly in the book. In it, Sophia is portrayed as wisdom - as God's wisdom, in fact. However, Sophia is in actuality an occult concept and is the Greek and occult goddess of 'wisdom', not God's true wisdom.

The female deity of Sophia also has a connection to the 'Serpent' through Gnostic and occult Wisdom traditions. Sophia is linked to the 'Serpent Power' within known as Kundalini in Yoga and Hinduism. The following definition of Kundalini is from the Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia:

*"Kundalini (Sanskrit for 'coiled'), is an unconscious, instinctive or libidinal force, or Shakti, envisioned either as a goddess or else as a sleeping serpent coiled at the base of the spine. When Kundalini Shakti is conceived as a goddess, then, when it rises to the head, it unites itself with the Supreme Being."* [24]

In *Secrets of the Serpent: In Search of the Sacred Past*, researcher and author Philip Gardiner posts the theory that mankind's history began with a cult that worshipped snakes and serpents. His book uses mythology to make its case and he posits that Serpent worship was widespread in ancient tradition.

(This has been true since the fall of Man in Genesis, and will be to the end of the present age. We are informed as to who exactly the ‘snake’ is in Revelation 12:9: *"...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan."*)

According to Gardiner, a foremost expert and researcher in ancient serpent worship, many methods were used by ancient man to access this Serpent Power within and his own 'internal world' - known as the Kundalini. However, there is danger in this as Gardiner informs us:

*"This access into the 'internal world', if uncontrolled, can cause serious mental problems. Even today, the Kundalini experience, linked to the 'road to enlightenment' can and has caused psychosis."* [25]

He continues,

*"The snake was worshipped and revered across the globe in ancient times and in every instance, the practice and rituals of worship were the same and based on the same core 'truths'. Early Gnostics, 'Ophites', worshipped the Serpent for his 'wise' attributes. They drank from the ritual cup of their 'good serpent'. This was an early Eucharist Ritual."*

*"The connection of the Serpent to Gnostic and occult wisdom traditions is seen through the hidden female deity symbol of Sophia. This is all based around the belief in the 'Enlightenment' experience through the inner serpent which was quite simply expressed as the access to the core center of reality."* [26]

This enlightenment experience is not unlike Mack's experience with Sophia in the cave nearby to the Shack. This process of ‘enlightenment’ is revealed in the balancing out of two serpentine elements or energies known together as the Kundalini which itself means 'Coiled Serpent'.

The wisdom of the serpent was seen as the internal dialogue within man whereby he must unite the male and female principles of himself in order to be whole – as seen in the Shakti principle of god and goddess union. However, the Bible states that, *"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."* (Proverbs 9:10)

In quoting Philip Gardener again, and though I would not base my theology on his beliefs, has very succinctly noted that, *"It's time to decide where our true history lies…"* Indeed, does our history lie with the 'Serpent', or with the one true God of the Bible? How about our future?

Yes, many cultures did worship this Serpent and it has woven itself throughout history, but truly the Serpent is the one *"...who didst weaken the Nations!"* (Isaiah 14:12) This ‘serpent’ is yet again beguiling many through his subtlety and deceit, just as we see in Genesis 3:

*“Now the serpent was more* ***subtil*** *than any beast of the field which the* Lord *God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said…?”* (Genesis 3:1)

The novel *The Shack* has done just this. It is a very ‘subtle’ story that is leading many to question the validity of the Bible and what God has said in His word about the true nature of the Holy Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and of the very foundations of Christianity itself.

**CHAPTER 7** - 'PAPA': The First Person of the 'Trinity' in *The Shack*

In our discussion of *The Shack*, and its resemblance to the Shakti of Hinduism, we have noted that the character of ‘Papa’, portrayed in the book as a black woman, is actually a more apt representation of the goddess Kali than it is of the God of the Bible.

Rather than a racial designation, in Hinduism, the color black is one of the symbolic aspects of Kali. In this description of her from author Thomas Coburn, we can see the parallel to 'Papa' and the 'Shakti' goddessKali, both who are represented as a ‘black’ woman:

*"Kali is represented as a Black woman...Kali's blackness symbolizes her* ***all-embracing****, comprehensive nature, because black is the color in which all other colors merge; black absorbs and dissolves them.”*

*'Just as all colors disappear in black, so all names and forms disappear in her'. Black is said to represent the total absence of color, again signifying the nature of* ***Kali as ultimate reality****."*

*"This in Sanskrit is named as nirguna (beyond all quality and form). Either way, Kali's black color symbolizes her transcendence of all form. The origin of the name Kali, which is the feminine form of 'Kala', is the* ***Sanskrit term for Time****.*

*“Kali dwells where dissolution takes place. In terms of devotion and worship, this denotes* ***the dissolving of attachments, anger, lust, and other binding emotions, feelings, and ideas****. The heart of the devotee is where this burning takes place, and it is in the heart that Kali dwells. The devotee makes her image in his heart and under her influence burns away all* ***limitations*** *and ignorance..."* [27]

In fact, the article, Kali, Divine Mother tells us of this dual, changing nature of Kali:

*"Kali’s name derives from the Sanskrit meaning ‘she who is black’ or ‘she who is death’.* *While being associated with violence and destruction, ‘Kali also embodies shakti - feminine energy, creativity and fertility and is considered a strong mother-figure and symbolic of motherly-love.”* [28]

In The Shack, we see Mack being 'embraced' by the all-encompassing 'Papa' and he is asked by her to 'dissolve' his attachments of 'anger, binding emotions, feeling, and ideas'. This is exactly what is mentioned above in the description of Kali herself. This ‘dissolving of emotion’ is what is meant here by the 'taking of her into his heart' –

But this is not at all the same as receiving Jesus into our hearts and into our lives as Lord and Savior. When one comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us at the Cross, it is through Him alone and not an act of a ‘dissolution of emotion’ through our own imperfect efforts.

Do you really want to find your salvation in the arms of a Hindu ‘devi’ goddess of death and damnation? It is at best a ‘false salvation’ from a ‘false idol’ with an apparent identity crisis. This not-so-benevolent Kali is represented in association with death and violence as a fearful fighting figure with a garland of skulls, skirt of dismembered arms and a lolling tongue.

She is further shown with a knife in one hand, and a severed head in the other, both dripping with blood. She is also said to be the wife of Shiva, who himself is the *"destroyer of all things and leader of evil spirits, ghosts and vampires and master of thieves, villains and beggars."* [29]

The Bible has this to say about a 'lolling tongue' and ‘false idols’ in Isaiah 57:3-5:

*"But draw near hither, ye sons of the* ***sorceress****, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom make ye a wide mouth, and* ***draw out the tongue****? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of* ***falsehood****... Enflaming yourselves with* ***idols****."*

The quote below is worth keeping in mind as well in regard to the Hindu concept of ‘salvation’ which is man-centered and devoid of belief in sin and therefore any true atonement:

*"In Hinduism, they don't believe that you're a sinner, they believe you are ignorant of your divinity."* [30]

The following description of Elousia further brings together the identities of ‘Papa’ with Kali and Elousia, the Black Madonna:

*"****Elousia*** *is Greek for tenderness. It is also the title of a* ***Catholic icon*** *depicting the Madonna and the baby Jesus. The icon shows the tenderness between Our Lord and His Mother, emphasizing the humanity of the Son of God. If you look up Elousia or Elousea she is always the Virgin Mary, in the form of the* ***Black Madonna****, not God the Father.”*

*“This particular Elousia, The Black Madonna, came from the Middle-East and* ***is the same Character as The goddess Kali/Surga/Durga****. The miraculous image of Our Lady of Vladimir, is known as an Elousea, the Greek word meaning Mother of Tenderness. The icon of the Virgin Mary and Christ child is ...In the Greek Orthodox traditions, called elousia, and that word comes to mean a* ***universal, loving kindness****, that reaches out to the* ***entire world****."* [31]

"Ousia is the Ancient Greek noun formed on the feminine present participle for the Greek verb "to be" (remember that **Shakti**, from the [Sanskrit](/wiki/Sanskrit) ***shak*** meant "to be able," meaning **sacred *force*** or ***empowerment***, is the ***primordial cosmic energy*).** When you add the word **el** in front, you are now speaking of the Black Madonna, the cultic symbol of the Madonna and Child, the Babylonian symbol of Isis and Osiris." [32]

In *The Shack* itself, Papa says to Mack*, "You may call me Elousia; it is just a name I am rather fond of and* ***has particular meaning to me****"*. (I would suppose it also had 'a particular meaning' to the author, Wm. Paul Young as well!) [33]

Later in the book 'Jesus' explains to Mack, *"Elousia, that is a wonderful name. El is my name as Creator God, but ousia is 'being' or 'that which is truly real', so the name means the Creator God who is truly real and the* ***ground of all being****.* From "The Shack" [34]

'Ground of all being' is a New-Age term that has its roots in ancient and pagan philosophy. The following is a brief background of the philosophical roots for this term:

*"Plotinus, a Neo-Platonic philosopher, saw all forms of existence as emanating from 'The One',* *a* ***non-sentient*** *power or 'force'. The concept of the Absolute, either under that name, or as the* ***'Ground of Being****', in one form or another include* ***Hinduism****, Jainism, Taoism, and existential or metaphysical forms of Christianity.”*

*The Absolute is conceived of as a single all-encompassing experience, rather along the lines of Shankara and Advaita Vedanta. Recently, certain philosophers have attempted to reconceive Christianity as a Gnostic religion. Here 'the Absolute' is referred to as 'the All'.*

*The human vital essence - soul, spirit, spark of awareness, is said to have originally derived in each case from the Absolute, and to be indestructible after the nature of the Absolute, and to be capable of returning to its source. This returning is the goal of those* ***Eastern religions*** *that have such a concept."* [35]

So, again we see a term, and concept, from Hinduism and other Eastern religions being used in *The Shack*. This term has also been borrowed from the writings of esoteric 'theologian' Paul Tillich who said,

*“God is not a being, not even the highest of all beings; he is being itself, or the ground of being, the internal power or force that causes everything to exist.”* [36]

This conception of God compliments the conception of deity amongst devotees to the New Age Spirituality. Even though Tillich’s assertions about deity were esoteric and complex, Young presents a Tillich-like scheme of deity ('Papa') who describes herself in *The Shack* as:

*“The ground of all being”* that dwells *“in, around, and through all things . . .”* [37]

Such a view of God is acknowledged to be panentheistic (i.e., God dwells ‘through all things’). In an article entitled *The Shack or the Outhouse?,* we are offered further insight into the Black Madonna of Elousiathat is being portrayed by the character of ‘Papa’:

*"This book is nothing more than a clever re-telling of the Black Madonna heresy:* ***The Black Madonna - Kali of the Black Queen and her daughter Sara-la-Kali (the Black Queen in the spirit), and finally Christ as the grown Osiris of Babylonian text****.”*

*“In Reverend Dr. Matthew Fox's article on the Black Madonna, available on his website, the coincidences are too close. Upon research on the Cult of Sara, the picture becomes clear.* ***'Papa' the black female and male god/goddess****,* ***Sarayu, Sara-la-kali****, and* ***Osiris, from the Madonna and Child as Jesus****.”*

*“No wonder the emergent church is moved by this work. It is classic icon worship wrapped in a veil of Christianity. They move from the concrete foundation of the Rock to the instability of a Shack on the sand."* [38]

This next statement, though originally used as a support for the message in *The Shack*, is actually very telling:

*"****Elousia****…is* ***the title of a Catholic icon depicting the Madonna and the baby Jesus****. Critics jump all over this saying that* ***Mr. Young is trying to sneak in some Marianism, attempting to water down God by inserting Mary****. I find this interesting because it would seem to me that a book attempting to plead the case of a merciful and good God might use a name that reveals just that. We must go back to the definition of the word tenderness. This is a trait that the God of The Shack is soaked in."* [39]

This is indeed true, but it is a very one-sided view of the true God. He is both merciful and just; one cannot exist without the other. Psalm 116:5 tells us that, *“Gracious is the* Lord*,* ***and*** *righteous; yea, our God is merciful.”* (Emphasis mine.)

So, we see that El-Ousia, or Elousia, **is** the Black Madonna. I found the meaning of the word ‘Papa’, also used for the name of ‘God’ in *The Shack* to be very interesting as well, showing yet another connection to Catholicism. TheEnglish to Spanish Translation of the word 'Pope' revealed this definition:

**Pope:** papa (m) 1. *"Papa, la cabeza suprema de la Iglesia católica romana*. (The Supreme Head of the Roman Catholic Church.)" [40]

The word for Pope in Italian, as well as in Spanish is also, incidentally, Papa (il Papa, or el Papa). So, Papa means Pope. Hmm ...nothing Catholic here, so I'm sure there wouldn't be any 'Marianist' overtones either.

Yet there are in fact further Marianist overtones in *The Shack*, even in addition to the use of the word 'Papa' for God. In the book, Papa is portrayed as a woman, and states that Jesus is her son. The character of Papa is also shown to have the same scars on her body as Jesus from the Crucifixion.

She is therefore portrayed as not only the Mother of Jesus (Mary, the Mother of the Eucharist), but also Co-Redemptrix with Christ having suffered with Him at the Cross, and therefore as Mediatrix, mediator of Divine Grace.

 Similarly, the Pope (il Papa) is said to be the mediator between man and God. However, the Bible states that, *"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Timothy 2:5)

This inclusion of Catholic concept and dogma in *The Shack* further points to the assertion that the elements of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Mysticism, the New Age, and an Ecumenical Union are to be found throughout its pages.

It is important to remember again at this point the assertion made earlier by Roger Oakland:

*"It is apparent that the religions of the world are being drawn into a global plan that is* ***uniting all religions...****It is also important to note the role that* ***"Mary - the mother of the Eucharist"*** *and her son, the* ***"Eucharistic Jesus"*** *play in this global ecumenical agenda."* [41]

In his article entitled, THE SHACK & Its New Age Leaven: God IN Everything?, Warren Smith states that,

*"In The Shack, Wm. Paul Young uses the person of 'Jesus' to suddenly introduce the foundational teaching of the New Spirituality/New World Religion — God is “in” everything. Using the New Age term 'ground of being” to describe 'God,' the 'Jesus' of The Shack states, of 'Papa': 'God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things….'* (p. 112)

*This false teaching about a “God” who 'dwells in, around, and through all things' is the kind of New Age leaven that left unchallenged could leaven the church into the New Age/New Spirituality of the proposed New World Religion. And while many people have expressed a great deal of emotional attachment to The Shack and its characters, this leaven alone contaminates the whole book."* [42]

Well said, that alone would indeed contaminate the entire book, and does. Add to that the fact that this same idea of a new-age spirituality is being presented through the guise of outright Hinduism.

**CHAPTER 8 - 'JESUS': The Second Person of the 'Trinity –**

We now turn our attention to the second person of the ‘trinity’ as portrayed in *The Shack*. In this case, the character retains the biblical name of ‘Jesus’. This is, however, another Jesus and another Gospel as we are warned about in the Bible:

*“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto* ***another******gospel****.”* (Galatians 1:6)

*“For if he that cometh preacheth* ***another*** *Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive* ***another*** *spirit, which ye have not received, or* ***another******gospel****, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”* (2 Corinthians 11:4­)

*“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:3­)

In *The Shack*, the character of Jesus is presented as a friendly, humble fellow who also sometimes stumbles and makes mistakes. During one scene in the book, **Jesus drops a bowl** and splashes food all over the 'black goddess' (Papa). This bears striking similarity to the ‘false Christ’ of Indra as seen, once again, in Hinduism:

“*Lord Indra* (the 'False Christ') *is the king of the cosmic gods, according to Indian mythology. On the one hand, according to tradition, he is most powerful. On another hand, because* ***he makes mistakes****, he does not remain fixed in his own transcendental height. The so-called modern world is not guided or shaped by Indra."* [43]

Indra is the male form of Kali as the Supreme Goddess. Conversely, Kali is the female form of Indra. As Supreme Goddess, Indra is subject to Kali. The ‘False Christ’ appears in India as Indra:

***"****In legend,* ***Christ*** *made an appearance in India in the form of Indra, the husband of Kali (in the legend of Osiris, Isis is both the Mother and the wife of Horus). Kali is the Supreme Vedic Goddess* ***Shachi****, or Indrani, the female form of Indra the supreme Vedic divinity.”* [44]

Is it pure luck that 'The Shack' and Shaci sound alike, and that Kali, in the form of **Elousia**, her daughter Sara-La-Kali (Saryu or **Sarayu**) and Indra all meet together in the form 'Shaci' just as they meet in the book, in **'The Shack'..."** (It can't be!)

In regard to Indra being both the son and husband of Kali, noted mythologist Donald Alexander Mackenzie tells us that,

*"The Indian father-slaying myth appears to be connected with the doctrine of reincarnation. In the Laws of Manu it is stated that 'the husband, after conception by his wife, becomes an embryo and is born again of her; for that is the wifehood of a wife that he is born again by her.”*

*“In the famous story of* ***Shak****untălā, the husband is similarly referred to as the son of his wife, the son being a reincarnation of the father. This belief resembles the Egyptian conception which is summed up in the phrase 'husband of his mother'."* [45]

In Indian myth, Indra is then the 'son of Kali' just as Horus is the son of Isis, and just as the 'Jesus' of The Shack is the son of 'Papa' - Papa states in the book that ‘Jesus is her son.’ The Polynesian creator-mother goddess, also known as Papa, is said to have birthed the ‘gods’:

*"In the Pacific, the goddess Papa both created the earth and gave birth to the gods."* [46]

The similarity in name to a Polynesian goddess named Papa, or Papahanaumoku, to the Papa ‘God’ character is likely not coincidence. The author of *The Shack*, Wm. Paul Young, grew up in the South Pacific with his missionary parents in Papua New Guinea and would most likely have been familiar with this deity that is worshipped throughout the region.

This type of tie-in to another religion with Christianity will help give rise to the belief that all religions are basically the same. And, this is actually true, with the exception of true Biblical Christianity, in that, among many other things, they are works based and deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

While ‘God’ is made into a female goddess in *The Shack*, Jesus is made into a bumbling lesser deity who is clumsy and often makes mistakes. These are not the qualities of the Jesus of the Bible, but rather of the false-Christ god Indra in the Hindu Shakti. Indra is shown as …

The human qualities of Indra are illustrated in this epic Hindu narrative where Indra’s warrior son Arjuna pays him a visit at the Celestial City atop Mount Meru:

*"…Where pretty nymphs dance to pleasure battle-slain warriors. Indra thereupon embraced his son (Arjuna), with his round and plump arms. And, bending in humility, even took him upon his lap. Moved by affection, the wielder of the thunderbolt (Indra), patting and rubbing him gently with* ***his own hands****, which* ***bore the marks of the thunderbolt****, began to console him… Indra is attended in his heaven by vague spirits, called Vasus, who appear to act as his counselors.”* [47]

In this passage, we see Indra, the false-Christ, as being associated with many attributes that are far from the perfect and sinless attributes of the true Christ: as participating in lasciviousness, bearing the mark of the thunderbolt, being moved by affection, and in need of counselors.

 However, we see that the true Lord Jesus Christ is the Wonderful Counselor:

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called* ***Wonderful****,* ***Counsellor****, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6)

And we are warned not to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, as is being done by the ungodly ideas behind *The Shack*:

*“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation,* *ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into* ***lasciviousness****, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Jude 1:4)

As for the ‘marks of the thunderbolt’, in *The Shack*, we also see 'Jesus' being portrayed as bearing the ‘marks’ in his hands as well. Are they referring to the Crucifixion, or perhaps something more in line with the marks also borne by Indra?

According to author Randal Chase, it was common practice for devotees of heathen god, such as Zeus, to mark their foreheads (or hands) with the symbol of the lightning bolt. The Bible again tells us who it is that is associated with lightning and the ‘thunderbolt’ in Luke 10:18: *“…I beheld Satan as* ***lightning*** *fall from heaven.”* [48]

Author Donald A. Mackenzie also notes the connection in Hindu lore with the character of Indra to that of Sarayu and Papa. In his works, Indra is said to be the god of **Craftsmen**, **Rebirth** and **Creation**, while Kali is said to be a symbol of **wholeness** and **healing,** and Saranyu of earth, air, growth and nature.

Many of these are familiar themes repeated in *The Shack*. In the passage below, theRibhusand Twashtri were the **artisans of nature, the spirits of growth,** the genii of the **seasons,** the elves of **earth** and **air -** all indicativeof **gardening,** as with the character of **Sarayu** (note also the reference again to the thunderbolt):

*"The* ***Sanskrit*** *word "Ribhu" is sometimes compared with the Germanic word ‘Elf’, likely that the Ribhus were originally* ***terrestrial or aerial elves****. They are evidently of common origin with the Teutonic elfin artisans who are associated with* ***Thor, the Germanic Indra****.*

*The mother of the Ribhus was* ***Saranyu,*** *daughter of Twashtri, the ‘master workman’. Twashtri forms the organism in maternal wombs and supports the races of man. As we have seen, he was the fashioner of Indra's thunderbolt: similarly the Teutonic elfin artisan Sindre makes Thor's* ***hammer****.”* [49]

In the quote above, Saranyu -or Sarayu - is said to be the mother of the Ribhus ‘elven’ spirits of earth and air – artisans of nature and ‘spirits’ of growth, all indicative of gardening. This brings us now to the third person of the ‘trinity’, Sarayu, who has also been portrayed as a ‘gardener’ in *The Shack*.

**CHAPTER 9 - 'SARAYU': The Third Person of the 'Trinity' –**

Sarayu is the name given by author Wm. Paul Young to the character of the ‘Holy Spirit’ in *The Shack*. It is also the name of a Hindu goddess mentioned in the Rigveda, one of the oldest existing Sanskrit texts. She is the goddess of clouds in Hindu mythology.

*“Saranya (Saraṇyū) goddess of clouds in Hindu mythology...Saraṇyū is the female form of the adjective saraṇyú, meaning "quick, fleet, nimble", used for rivers and* ***wind*** *(compare also Sarayu).”* [50]

Sarayu, or Saranyu, which can both mean ‘wind’ or ‘flowing’ is additionally the name of a sacred river in India that is associated with the legend of Lord Rama, or Sri Ram:

*“The disappearance of Sri Ram from earth happened when he entered voluntarily into the* Sarayu River*. This divine event is described as the death of Lord Rama.”* [51]

‘Wind’ is also a word used to describe the Holy Spirit in the Bible:

*“The* ***wind*** *bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8)

*“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty* ***wind****, and it filled all the house where they were sitting…And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”* (Acts 2:2, 4)

That being said, though, the use of a Hindu name with spiritual overtones from a false religion is not a good name to be used in the personification of the Holy Spirit of the Bible. The Bible tells us in fact to make no image of the Trinity, or the ‘Godhead’:

*“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.”* Acts 17:29

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* Colossians 2:8-9

Sadly, this is not the view taken by writer, Belinda Elliott, in an article which appeared on the CBN website: *What’s So Bad About The Shack?*

(Rest of Chapter 9, and remaining chapters, to come.)

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