



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

"So, do you have plans for the summer?" The question is being asked - and, answered - as the Memorial Day and its requisite picnics and family gatherings serve notice that the summer is upon us... and you only live once.

Only live once? That is a factor to consider, you know. The arrival of the Recession of '08 may be, at this point, inevitable, but you - and the people around you - should not put life on hold just because the economic backdrop is fluttering. Summer - the break from the action that demands your full attention, all year long, is like stopping at the station to refill your tank. It may be \$4/gallon, but you've still got to fuel-up for the road ahead. You only go around once in life; making Summer '08 the best ever is among your strategic initiatives. Down at the sweat shop, tell 'em Shank sent you... **AWAY!**

I've decided to make these Monday musings adaptable to your summer agenda. For the next few weeks - from now until the end of August - I'm going to shift from "current events" to "memorable reads" in my selection of topics. Unless something really demanding presents itself into our cultural stream, I want to challenge your summer reading with some one-page book reviews that may taunt you into literacy while you step away from the daily grind.



It starts today. Has anyone put a copy of **The Shack** into your hands yet? Self-published by author William P. Young, it has been bouncing around in the best seller lists for the last few months. Eugene Peterson - the wise sage from Regent College who gave us the paraphrase **The Message**, says this: *"When the imagination of a writer and the passion of a theologian cross-fertilize the result is a novel on the order of 'The Shack.'* This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" did for his. It's that good!" Wow. He's not an easily impressed non-sophisticate...

Have you ever wrestled with the profound philosophical question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Has that tough dead-end debate ever become personal when the bad things happened to you, and the "good people" in the query became *your* people? If the theories have seemed shallow, **The Shack** will bring the truths into a context that seems like it could be the family next door... or, *yours*.

Not a book of trite doctrine, Young has framed a supernatural encounter with a plausible situation, and the effect will bring your cognitive belief system(s) into lockstep with your emotional sensibilities. It isn't literary excellence, but it has a unique value to offer...

You can catch reviews aplenty on Amazon for **The Shack**. They are not universally positive; the challenge to Young's theological orthodoxy is recurrent (and, I might say, occasionally justified). But that isn't the reason to pick it up. We need to believe that our God is aware of - and, touched by - the pain that life in a fallen world will create. Build your theology with your Bible, but allow for an occasional fiction to move your heart with the reminder that God loves to be surprising. The means of God's encounter with Mack Phillips (the book's main character) will rattle your Sunday School sensibilities and suggest to you that there really is more going on around us than will ever find its way into the **New York Times** or the nightly news. It's worth a read...

Any good books *you'd* like to point *my* way?

Bob Shank

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