



SPECIAL REPORT

JESUS CALLING

A REVIEW

THE BOOK HAS taken the Christian community by storm over the past 10 years, and continues to find new readers who affirm its positive influence in their spiritual lives. *Jesus Calling*, by Sarah Young, is a series of inspirational writings that the author compiled over many years after having had what she calls a conversion experience while at a Christian community in an Alpine village in Switzerland. The community is associated with L'Abri Fellowship, an international ministry founded by Francis and Edith Schaeffer in 1955 as a place for people to find "satisfying answers to their questions and practical demonstration of Christian care."

L'Abri is the French word for "shelter," to describe shelter from the pressures of modern life. Several branches of L'Abri have been established throughout the world, each having similar yet unique approaches to their work. Each branch is staffed by one or more L'Abri families and single people, called "workers," who look after the "students" who engage in the conferences, public speaking, book writing, and other pursuits.

Young says it was at L'Abri that she first experienced what she calls "the Presence of God":

One night I found myself leaving the warmth of our cozy chalet to walk alone in the snowy mountains. I went into a deeply wooded area, feeling vulnerable and awed by cold, moonlit beauty. The air was crisp and dry, piercing to inhale. Suddenly I felt as if a warm mist enveloped me. I became aware of a lovely Presence, and my involuntary response was to whisper, "Sweet Jesus." This utterance was totally uncharacteristic of me, and I was shocked to hear myself speaking so tenderly to Jesus. As I pondered this brief communication, I realized it was the response of a converted heart; at that moment I knew I belonged to Him.

Young doesn't set a date for her conversion, but she relates that the following year she again experienced "the Presence of peace and love" after reading Catherine Marshall's book, *Beyond Ourselves*, while alone in an Atlanta hotel room when on assignment to attend a conference as a technical writer.

Over the next sixteen years Young met and married her husband, Steve, worked with him in Japan doing church-planting work, and had two children. Although thankful for her husband and children, Young laments that not once during those sixteen years did she vividly experience the Presence of Jesus. Ready for a new spiritual quest, she delved into a devotional book, *The Secret of the Abiding Presence*, by Andrew Murray.

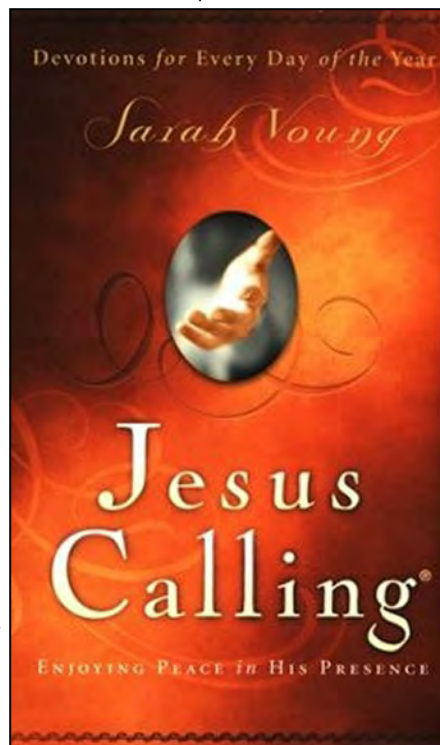
I began seeking God's Presence in earnest. My days started alone with God, equipped with Bible, devotional book, prayer journal, pen, and coffee. As I waited in His Presence, God began to reveal Himself to me.

Moving to Australia with her husband, Young began her own ministry of counseling Australian women who she says came out of terrible abuse and spiritual bondage. In order to function against the intense spiritual warfare she sensed around her, she began to engage in visualization techniques, visualizing

"God's protective Presence, which looked like golden light" encircling her family.

Her spiritual warfare included inner healing methods, walking together with her clients into the darkness of their memories.

A turning point in her work came when she began reading *God Calling*, a devotional book written by two anonymous "listeners"—women who, like Young, would wait for God to give them messages which they wrote in the first person, with "I" designating God.



Soon, she began to wonder if she, too, could receive messages directly from God, which she could put to paper. She states that she knew God communicated with her through the Bible, but, she says, “I yearned for more.”

Increasingly, I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day. I decided to listen to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying.

The result over time is this book, *Jesus Calling*, her personal inspirational journal of daily readings which has been published in various forms including gift editions. It is among the best sellers in Christian book titles.

The author included Scripture references after each daily reading, and encourages readers to approach her words slowly, preferably in a quiet setting, and to keep a journal to record any thoughts or impressions they receive as they wait in God’s Presence.

IS THIS GOD’S WORD?

Young says that these are Jesus’ words given to her to share with others. This presents readers with a dilemma: either Jesus did speak directly to Sarah Young, or He didn’t. There are no other alternatives to these two possibilities. It is up to the reader to judge whether or not Young is telling the truth, or what she thinks is the truth, or if she is lying. There are also no alternatives to these three scenarios.

Is Sarah Young lying?

There is no evidence that Young is a liar or purposeful deceiver. God alone knows the heart, and without empirical evidence to prove she is lying, we cannot and will not judge that she is. I do not think she is lying, but, again, only God knows the heart; He must be the judge. This leaves us with the only other possibilities: Jesus did speak to her directly, or she is self-deluded and/or deceived by another spirit to think that He spoke directly to her.

Did Jesus speak directly to her?

If it is true that Jesus spoke directly to Sarah Young, then her book is on a par with the Bible—it is God’s Word no less than the Bible. And if it is God’s Word, then it must be obeyed.

Some might say, “Oh, it’s not quite the same as the Bible.” To which I would ask, “In what way does it differ other than in content?” A Word from the Lord is a Word from the Lord. It is all truth, and nothing but truth. Don’t be fooled into thinking that He gives His Word carelessly or in a manner that does not require obedience. If Sarah Young was inspired by Jesus to write these words, then they are no less than Scripture. It is true prophecy, and Sarah Young is a true prophetess, whether or not she claims to be one. But how can we know?

It is generally believed among Christians that if a word spoken in the name of the Lord agrees with Scripture, then that word must be from the Lord. But that is not necessarily the case.

A person may speak truth in the name of the Lord Jesus and still be a deceiver:

And God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul so that handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his

body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We charge you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims.”

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?”

And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them and overcame them, and prevailed against them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:11-16)

These seven sons of Sceva were only some among the Jewish exorcists that invoked the name of Jesus. They believed that the name of Jesus had power, which it does, but they were not of God. They spoke the correct words, but the devils knew they had no authority to invoke the name of Jesus. What happened to the sons of Sceva is recorded, and Luke doesn’t mention any similar fate befalling the other Jewish exorcists, so it may be reasonably assumed that for the most part they got away with their deception. But this is not the only example of someone not of God speaking truth:

And it happened that as we went to prayer, a certain girl possessed with a spirit of divination, who brought her masters much gain by fortune telling, met us. The same followed Paul and us and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the most high God, who show the way of salvation to us.”

And she did this for many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”

And he came out the same instant. (Acts 16:16-18)

This demonized girl spoke the truth—she proclaimed the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Some think the demon in her spoke sarcastically, and thus could be discerned as an evil spirit. But there is nothing to suggest this. Whether sarcastic or not, the devil was aligning the demonized girl with Paul and his company of believers, which might have caused listeners to reject Paul’s Gospel. In any case, someone unaware of the girl’s demonized condition might conclude that she, too, was speaking under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning Sarah Young, she demonstrates no evidence of being demonized, and I don’t believe she is. By all accounts she is at the least a nominal Christian, and at best a true believer in Jesus. Does that not qualify her as a true prophetess and her book as a book of prophecy, again, equal to the Bible?

Even the most sincere believer in Jesus may be susceptible to suggestion and even deception. Witness the condition of believers that are following after the many winds of doctrine that are emanating from the pulpits and the Christian media. Jesus even said that false christs and false prophets would arise showing such great signs and wonders that if it were possible even the

very elect would be deceived. The only way the very elect might almost be deceived is if the deception came in the name of Jesus, agreed greatly with God's Word, and demonstrated what appeared to be supernatural phenomena from God.

Certainly Sarah Young is not demonstrating signs and wonders.

Or is she?

If one believes that Jesus truly spoke to Sarah Young on a personal basis, one would have to admit that she engaged in miracles on a daily basis; what she describes as her personal experience is not in the ordinary course of life, and requires the Lord's intervention.

None of this proves that Sarah Young did not hear directly from the Lord. There are only two ways to know for sure: 1) if anything she says came from the Lord is contrary to Scripture, even in the slightest, then it is not from the Lord; 2) if anything she says in relation to what she claims is of the Lord leads one into a false religious or philosophical belief, then it is not from the Lord.

Is anything contrary to Scripture?

If there arises among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, by which he spoke to you saying, "Let us go after other gods that you have not known, and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for YHWH your God tests you, to know whether you love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 13:1-3)

Other gods are not always heathen idols; they may be gods of one's imagination that leads one away from God's truth.

Does anything not agree with Scripture?

Jesus Calling is essentially a positive affirmation of God's love and protection for His children. It is a one-note composition that allows nothing evil to enter into the lives of those who read it. There is no judgment, nor is the reader to judge himself, but is encouraged to trust in the "unconditional love" of God.

As early as the January 3 reading, we find: "*I have conquered the world and deprived it of power to harm you.* In Me you may have confident Peace" [Emphasis in original].

The world certainly can harm us. Witness the countless martyrs for Christ throughout the ages, including the apostles of the Lord. The Pollyannaish attitude that just because we have faith in Jesus no harm can come to us is contrary to Scripture.

But, it may be argued, Jesus is speaking spiritually; nothing can harm us spiritually.

If that is true, why are there so many warnings in Scripture against leaving ourselves open to spiritual deception?

James speaks to his brethren in Christ:

Blessed is the man who endures adversity, for when he is tested he shall receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When he is tempted, let no one say, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does

He tempt any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. (James 1:12-16)

Paul's words are also to the brethren in Christ:

Let no one deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather rebuke them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done by them in secret. But all things that are rebuked are revealed by the light, for whatever reveals is light.

Therefore he says, "Awake, you who sleeps, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

See then that you walk diligently, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:6-16)

Such warnings are not to be found in *Jesus Calling*. Rather, "Jesus" takes all the burden upon Himself, as if the believer need not do anything on his own part to make his salvation sure:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to both will, and to do, of His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

God works out His will in us by allowing us to be tested by the world, the flesh and the devil. Do not think that He will not allow you to fail. Although, if you do fail, you will not be utterly cast down (Psalm 37:24; 2 Cor. 4:9).

But is it enough not to be utterly cast down? Should we not be diligent to resist the deceptions that come upon us through those three means? Failure on our part hinders our work for the Kingdom of God. And that is what we must be about. Why allow the world or the devil to harm us through foolish thinking that we have automatic protection against them?

January 10 has this suggestion:

Every time you affirm your trust in Me, you put a coin into My treasury. Thus you build up equity in preparation for days of trouble. I keep safely in My heart all trust invested in Me, with interest compounded continuously. The more you trust Me, the more I empower you to do so.

Practice trusting Me during quiet days, when nothing much seems to be happening. Then when storms come, your trust balance will be sufficient to see you through. Store up for yourself treasure in heaven through placing your trust in Me. This practice will keep you in My Peace.

Young's "Jesus" uses an accounting term that is also used in psychological counseling. A "trust balance" in psychology is the amount of trust one person has toward another based on how they relate to one another. If a person proves trustworthy in the relationship he has a high trust balance; if he does or says something to hinder the trust, his trust balance suffers loss.

In this case, "Jesus" is saying that as we trust Him in small things, we will learn to trust Him in big things. That may be true, but it doesn't depend on any "trust balance" that He keeps for us. If that were true, certainly He would have said so in His Word.

Our trust in the Lord grows as we struggle through life, true. But there are no guarantees that we will not fail to trust Him in difficult circumstances just because we came to trust Him when things were going well. Trust is just that—assurance that He will make a way through whatever difficulty in which we find ourselves:

Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

No adversity has overtaken you but such as is common to man. But God, who is faithful, will not allow you to be tried beyond your ability, but with the adversity will also make a way to go through it so that you may be able to bear it.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:12-14)

Some translations say that God will make a way of "escape," which implies that He will give us a way out of the test. But that is not what the Scripture is saying. It is telling us that God will help us to get through the testing, not escape it.

Sarah Young's "Jesus" may be a good pop psychologist, but his advice is sorely lacking in biblical precedent.

Not only that, his advice is often contrary to God's Word:

When you bring Me prayer requests, lay out your concerns before Me. Speak to Me candidly; pour out your heart. Then thank Me for the answers that I have set into motion long before you can discern results. When your requests come to mind again, continue to thank Me for the answers that are on the way. If you keep on stating your concerns to Me, you will live in a state of tension. When you thank Me for how I am answering your prayers, your mind-set becomes much more positive. Thankful prayers keep your focus on My Presence and My promises. (January 11)

So it is a matter of positive thinking vs. the true Jesus' words:

And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to despair, saying, "There was in a city a judge who did not fear God, nor did he regard man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came to him, saying, 'Avenge me of my adversary.'

"And he would not for awhile. But afterward, he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God, or regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she wearies me.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" (Luke 18:1-7)

The Lord wants us to exercise importunity with Him. After teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus said:

"Which of you will have a friend, and will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves because a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?'

"And he shall answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me. The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give to you.'

"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him just because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needs.

"And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. (Luke 11:5-10)

Young's "Jesus" also says that His love is unconditional. What does Scripture say?

"As the Father has loved Me, I have loved you also. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:9-10)

In that day you shall ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father for you, because the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. (John 16:26-27)

These are the conditions to enter into God's love: love Jesus and keep His commandments.

But what about Romans 5:6-8?

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous man (yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die) but God exhibits His love toward us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God set no conditions to sending His only-begotten Son into the world to die for the sins of mankind. There were no conditions based on anyone's performance for that act. No angel pleaded the cause of mankind. Nor has God ever stopped loving mankind any more than He loves all of His creation. But He has set terms for individuals to enter into His love, and to remain in His love. The idea of "unconditional love" as expressed by Christian mystics is unbiblical.

March 5:

I can fit everything into a pattern for good, but only to the extent that you trust Me. [Emphasis in original]

The Lord is not limited by our trust in order to work all things for good. Otherwise, He would never be able to accom-

plish the full redemption of His creation. Certainly Jonah never trusted God when he was forced to go to Nineveh. Even after God spared Nineveh for its repentance Jonah sulked.

Peter did not trust the Lord when he denied Him three times; Thomas did not trust the Lord until he saw Him standing before him. Scripture is replete with examples of God working good in spite of the lack of trust on the part of believers.

March 9:

I am not subject to limitations of time or space. I am everywhere at every time, ceaselessly working on your behalf.

Jesus has limited Himself, at least for the present, to Heaven. He is in His resurrected body at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit moves throughout creation to work the will of the Father among men, and indwells the believer. Young's "Jesus" makes the common error of ignorant Christians who equate Jesus with the Father and, or, the Holy Spirit.

February 28:

Stop Judging and evaluating yourself, for this is not your role.

But the apostle Paul tells us that we must examine and judge ourselves:

Therefore, whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord irreverently, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks irreverently, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord so that we would not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

March 16:

Don't take yourself so seriously. Lighten up and laugh with Me. You have Me on your side, so what are you worried about?

Does Scripture tell us not to take ourselves so seriously?

But you, speak the things that become sound doctrine so that the aged men are sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.

The aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things so that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, so that the word of God is not blasphemed.

Likewise, exhort young men to be sober minded, in all things showing yourself a pattern of good works. In doctrine showing soundness, honesty, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that he who is

against may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say about you. (Titus 2:1-8)

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:2-5)

Those close to me know my sense of humor, and that I enjoy a good laugh as much as anyone else. But when it comes to matters of faith and our walk with the Lord, soberness and a sense of sorrow over the fallen condition of the world, and recognition of our own sinfulness should keep us humble.

Nowhere in Scripture can mirth be found except when describing fallen men in their feasting. Joy in worship, such as that expressed by David and other saints, is not the same as mirth or merrymaking. In the house of the Lord, joy is accepted, but laughter apart from joy has no place.

Yes, God will laugh at the calamity that comes upon His enemies (Proverbs 1:26), but it is not a laugh of merriment; it is a laugh of scorn.

Coupling the advice of Young's "Jesus" to not take ourselves seriously with the encouragement to laugh with him trivializes the joy we are to have in the true Jesus.

Young's Jesus adopts Bob Marley's Rastafarian philosophy immortalized in the song, "Don't Worry; Be Happy."

Young's "Jesus" often speaks words contradictory to the Scriptures:

January 14:

...Remember that your relationship with Me is saturated in grace. *Therefore, nothing that you do or don't do can separate you from My Presence.* [emphasis in original].

Young tells us that we must "practice the Presence of Jesus," which means entering into contemplative prayer, meditation and visualization. It is only when she "feels the Presence" of Jesus that she is assured that He has entered into her presence. So if it is not necessary to enter into these exercises in order to have the "Presence" of Jesus, why does she stress their importance? Are feelings the true key to spiritual growth? Considering these contradictory words from Young's "Jesus," it would seem so.

Does Jesus Calling lead to other gods or beliefs?

We have addressed only some of the instances where *Jesus Calling* contradicts Scripture, thus failing the test for true prophecy. The other test for prophecy (any word from God) is whether or not the hearer (or reader) is led to other gods or belief systems, even if the words are true.

One clue that Sarah Young is on shaky ground is her testimony of being inspired by the book, *God Calling*, which led her to journal what she believes is Jesus speaking to her, and the pattern of which she follows in presenting the allegedly inspired thoughts as a daily reader. Conveniently, in both these books

“God” and “Jesus” gave exactly 366 inspired messages to the respective journalists, being careful to cover February 29 for leap years. Perhaps “God” and “Jesus” have no more than 366 thoughts left. At least not until some other mystic decides he hears the voice of deity and writes another journal.

God Calling

God Calling, written in the 1930s by two anonymous “listeners,” is nothing more than a mishmash of biblical thought with New Age musings. In it, “God” calls himself the “Universal Spirit”:

Do not be too ready to *do*, just *be*. I said, “Be ye therefore perfect” not “do” perfect things. Try and grasp this. Individual efforts avail nothing. It is only the work of the Universal Spirit—My Spirit—that counts.

The term “Universal Spirit” originated in Hinduism and refers to Brahman in its aspect as the sacred syllable Om, the eternal and spiritual principle that permeates the universe. It is also called the “Universal Soul,” and is described in Sanskrit as Sat-cit-annanda (being-consciousness-bliss) as the highest reality. According to Advaita Vedanta, a school of thought within Hindu philosophy, an enlightened human being will self-realize Brahman as his own true self.

New Age Philosophy

There are certain beliefs and practices, as well as buzzwords, that originated in pagan philosophy and have been adopted by New Age practitioners of inner healing and the meditative and contemplative disciplines. These disciplines have entered the churches through false brethren who combine them with biblical truth to deceive others into believing they are of God. The concept of meditation, visualization and contemplative prayer originated in Hinduism and Buddhism, and first entered Christianity through Gnosticism and eventually Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholic mysticism has been expressed in the contemplative and meditative disciplines of Brother Lawrence, Catherine of Sienna, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Francis Assisi. Their influence came into non-Catholic churches through men such as Francis McNutt, a leading member of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal which began in 1967.

The contemplative and meditative philosophy of Roman Catholic mysticism was adopted by non-Catholics such as Agnes Sanford, John and Paula Sandford, Ruth Carter Stapleton, and others, who also melded New Age thought and practice into their works of inner healing. (See Media Spotlight’s special reports *Inner Healing* and *Renovaré*.)

One of the evidences of Sarah Young’s having been influenced by the New Age mysticism is her “Jesus” telling us to “Learn to live from your true Center in Me....I want you to live increasingly from your real Center, where My Love has an eternal grip on you (February 20). This term is used elsewhere in the book to signify the need for Centering prayer.

Among the pagan mystical practices adopted by the New Age Movement, and now Christian mysticism, is the idea of Centering oneself, or “finding one’s Center.” Centering prayer is synonymous for contemplative prayer or meditation. The earliest written example of centering prayer is found in the 4th-century

writings of the monk John Cassian who learned it from a group of Catholic mystics called “the Desert Fathers.” The Trappist monk Thomas Merton (1915-1968) popularized the concept in his writings that formed the foundation for modern Christian mysticism, often cited by the most influential personages mentioned above. Merton was decidedly influenced by Zen Buddhist meditation, and was closely associated with Buddhist meditation master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh. He also praised Chogyam Trungpa who funded Shambhala Buddhism in the United States. Merton’s theology was a unification of existentialism with Roman Catholic faith.

Another New Age buzzword adopted by Young’s “Jesus” is “paradigm shift,” originally coined by Thomas Kuhn to describe a change in basic assumptions or paradigms within the ruling theory of science. It was subsequently adopted to characterize a coming New Age consciousness that would lead humanity from the old paradigm of faith in God to faith in the evolutionary process of man coming into perfect cosmic consciousness.

The term has been adopted by other Christians to describe their particular philosophy of change within Christianity from the old norm to a new norm into which they want to lead believers in Jesus. John Wimber, C. Peter Wagner and others, particularly in the World Christian Movement, have used the term extensively. (See my book, *The World Christian Movement*, Sword Publishers, 2001.)

Knowledgeable Christians will refrain from using such New Age buzzwords to influence others lest they confuse those with whom they are communicating.

Jesus Calling is leading Christians into the same contemplative and meditative ecstasy that characterizes New Age occultism.

Thus, it fails the second test for true prophecy. This would be bad enough had Sarah Young written it as her own words of wisdom and encouragement. But to present the deception as a direct word from Jesus is blasphemy.

Harsh words, true. But what else can it be called?

Jesus is Lord?

But what about the test of the true Spirit of God vs. the anti-Christ spirit?

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is how you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God—and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, of which you have heard that it should come, and even now already it is in the world. (1 John 1:3)

Sarah Young says that Jesus is Lord. Does that not prove that her words are from Jesus as she claims?

When John wrote this the faith was clearly delineated from all other philosophies. There was a palpable enmity between the world, particularly the unbelieving Jews, and the Lord’s disciples. No one other than His true disciples would proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Over the centuries many deceptions have crept into the

Body of Christ, melding truth with error that has come in the name of Jesus.

I recall some time ago seeing a car that had two bumper stickers attached. One read, "Jesus is Lord." The other read, "Read the Book of Mormon."

Word-faith guru Kenneth Copeland has over the years ended every program with the words, "Jesus is Lord," as if to assure his listeners that his teachings are from God.

Every false teacher I know of today would say the words, "Jesus is Lord," when, in truth, Jesus is not the Lord of their lives or of their so-called ministries.

Clearly, today we cannot trust someone just on their acclamation that "Jesus is Lord."

Of course, not everything in *Jesus Calling* is untrue. In fact, most of what Young writes can be supported by Scripture. But the greatest deceptions are those that contain the most truth. And a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

I am certain that many who have read, or are reading, *Jesus Calling* will take offense at the audacity they believe I have displayed by critiquing such a pleasantly worded book. It's so filled with what seems the love of Jesus that no one could possibly be offended by it.

But is it not more audacious to think that one can summon Jesus into his presence by conjuring feelings of euphoria via New Age meditative and contemplative techniques? Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Should He choose to enter into the presence of any of His people on the earth, such as He did with Saul on the road to Damascus, it is certainly His

prerogative to do so. But we are at His beck and call; He is not at ours.

Those who need to conjure feelings of euphoria in order to recognize the Lord's presence are immature in their faith. They may know a good amount of truth; they may even be able to teach truth, at least to some degree. But mature faith operates apart from feelings. It rests on the assurance that the Lord is present with us at all times through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Granted, we cannot expect all true believers to have matured to the same degree. But we can expect that immature believers not be given such wide platforms for their infantile expressions.

Feelings are fine if they come to us without effort to achieve them, but those who need to experience feelings of God's presence because God's Word is insufficient, as does Sarah Young, are babes in Christ. They have no business teaching their baby ways to the Body of Christ, especially when their baby ways include unbiblical and even pagan methodologies.

Let us consider again that Sarah Young says these pleasant words were given to her directly by Jesus Himself. Yet her book fails both tests for true prophecy. (The word "prophecy" does not apply only to foretelling future events; it applies to every word spoken by God directly, or indirectly through men or angels.) This alone makes *God Calling* a serious deception.

And for those who may think me audacious, I would ask, which is the greater audacity—to say "thus saith the Lord," when the Lord has not spoken, as does Sarah Young, or to say that her particular "thus saith the Lord" was not spoken by the Lord?

I'll take the latter position, thank you. ❖

AGREE OR NOT

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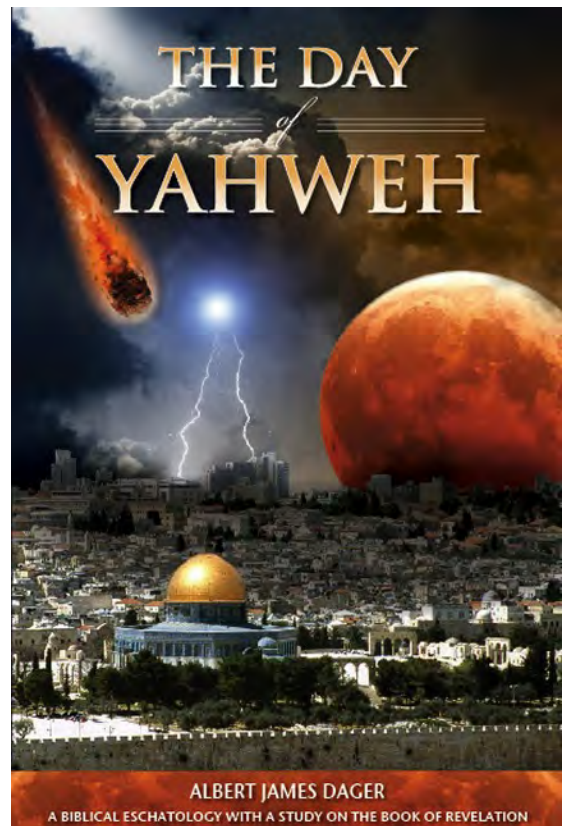
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