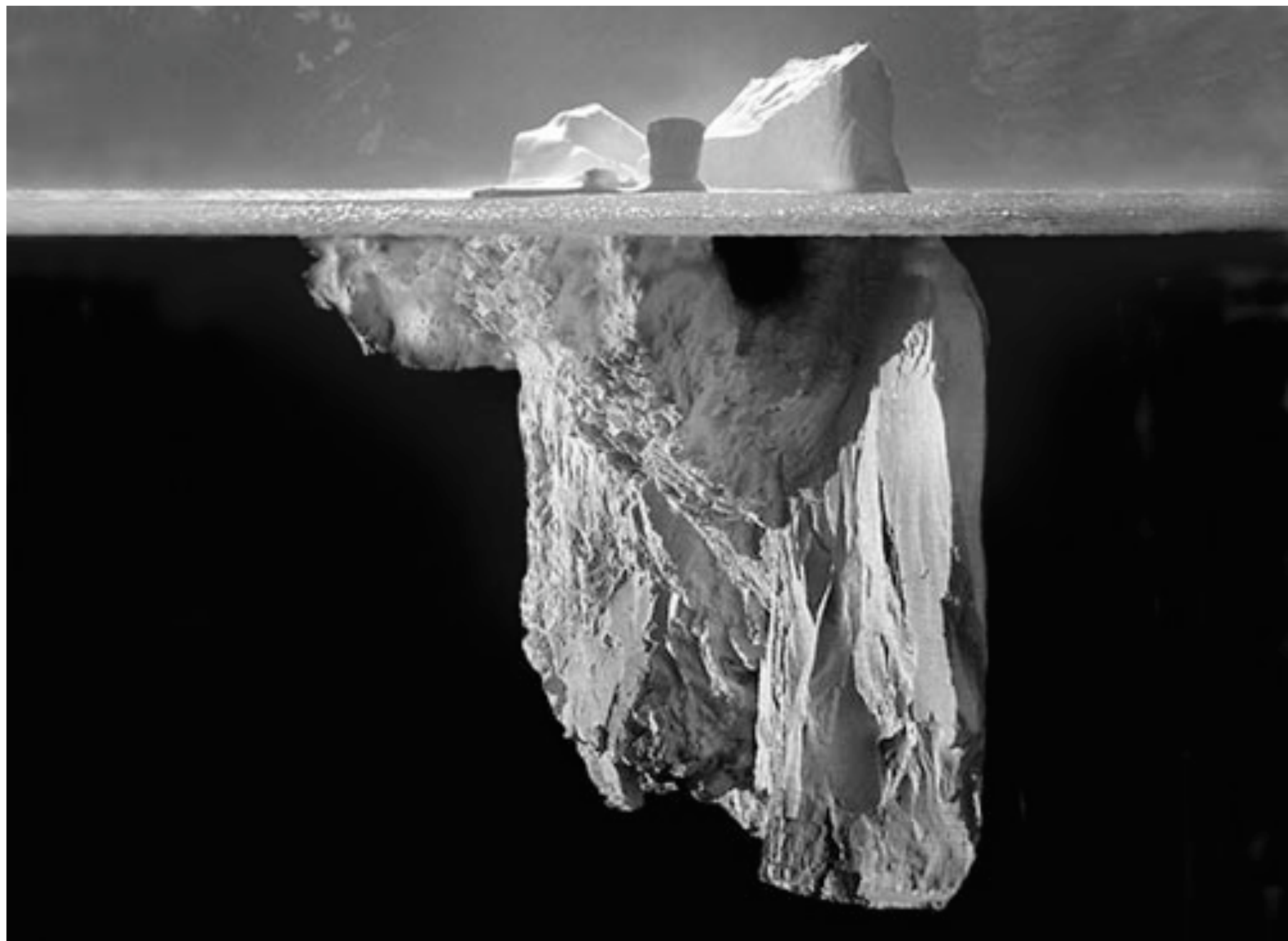




Part Three: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity

# **CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE SHACK**





# Problem of Evil

- God is all powerful, all knowing, and good.
- An all powerful, all knowing, and good God would do everything possible to eliminate evil.
- Evil exists.
- Therefore, there is no such God.

# A Typology of Evil

- Natural Evil
- Moral Evil
- Satanic Evil (a sub-category of moral evil)
- *The Shack* is interested principally in the presence of moral evil and its consequences for the life of faith.



# A Few Quotations

- Rabbi Abraham Heschel: "The man who has not suffered, what can he possibly know, anyway?"
- Francis Fenelon: "The work of God begins upon the ruin of our lives."
- John Wesley: "We must be cut off from dependence upon ourselves, before we can truly depend upon Christ."



# Settling the Trust Issue

- *The Shack* deals with the problem of evil on the level of relationship. It is not interested in arguing philosophically about the existence of God. It assumes God's existence. It deals instead with the affect of evil upon the relationship between God and individual people.



## Mack's Dilemma

- “The real underlying flaw in your life, Mackenzie, is that you don't think that I am good. If you knew I was good and that everything—the means, the ends, and all the processes of individual lives—is all covered by my goodness, then while you might not always understand what I am doing, you would trust me. But you don't”



## Mack's Dilemma

- "I don't?" asked Mack, but it was not really a question. It was a statement of fact and he knew it"...
- Sarayu spoke. "Mackenzie, you cannot produce trust just like you cannot 'do' humility. It either is or is not. Trust is the fruit of a relationship in which you know that you are loved. Because you do not know that I love you, you *cannot* trust me." (p. 126, Papa, Sarayu, and Mack)



## Describing Mack's Dilemma

- “You don't know that we love you. The person who lives by their fears will not find freedom in my love. I am not talking about rational fears regarding legitimate dangers, but imagined fears, and especially the projection of those into the future. To the degree that those fears have a place in your life, you neither believe I am good nor know deep in your heart that I love you. You sing about it; you talk about it, but you don't know.” (142, Jesus speaking)



# Free will defense

- Why didn't Papa save Missy?
- "He doesn't stop a lot of things that cause him pain. Your world is severely broken. You demanded your independence, and now you are angry with the one who loved you enough to give it to you. Nothing is as it should be, as Papa desires it to be, and as it will be one day. Right now your world is lost in darkness and chaos, and horrible things happen to those that he is especially fond of."(Sophia, 164)



## Free will defense

- “But I still don’t understand why Missy had to die.”
- “She didn’t have to, Mackenzie. This was no plan of Papa’s. Papa has never needed evil to accomplish his good purposes. It is you humans who have embraced evil and Papa has responded with goodness. What happened to Missy was the work of evil and no one in your world is immune from it.”
- (Mack and Sophia, 165)



## The Shack's Freewill Defense

- “If only it were that simple, Mackenzie. Nobody knows what horrors I have saved the world from ‘cuz people can’t see what never happened. All evil flows from independence and independence is your choice. If I were to simply revoke all the choices of independence, the world as you know it would cease to exist and love would have no meaning. This world is not a playground where I keep all my children free from evil. Evil is the chaos of this age that you brought to me, but it will not have the final say. Now it touches



# The Shack's Freewill Defense

- everyone that I love, those who follow me and those who don't. If I take away the consequences of people's choices, I destroy the possibility of love. Love that is forced is no love at all." (Papa, 190)



# Development of the Soul

- “This life is only the anteroom of a greater reality to come. No one reaches their potential in your world. It’s only preparation for what Papa had in mind all along.” (Sophia, 167)

# God's Work in Response to Evil

- “Mack, just because I work incredible good out of unspeakable tragedies doesn’t mean I orchestrate the tragedies. Don’t ever assume that my using something means I caused it or that I need it to accomplish my purposes. That will only lead you to false notions about me. Grace doesn’t depend on suffering to exist, but where there is suffering you will find grace in many facets and colors.” (185, Papa speaking)

# God's Work in Response to Evil

- "It's all part of the timing of grace, Mack," Jesus continued. "If the universe contained only one human being, timing would be rather simple. But add just one more, and well, you know the story. Each choice ripples out through time and relationships, bouncing off of other choices. And out of what seems to be a huge mess, Papa weaves a magnificent tapestry. Only Papa can work all this out, and she does it grace (176-77, Jesus and Mack)



# Toward a Biblical Response to Evil

- 1) God permits the possibility of evil because of his desire for authentic and genuine relationship and fellowship with His Creation.
- 2) Through God's grace as demonstrated definitively in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, suffering is not the final word and suffering itself may be redemptive on this side of eternity.



# Evil and the Mission of God

- Understanding the Biblical Epic
- Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation
- God allows for the possibility of evil, but immediately after its appearance, God works for the full salvation of Creation


*NIV Romans 8:18-23 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 **He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**" 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."



# Toward a Biblical Response to Evil

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# Jesus serves to demonstrate God's love and understanding

- *John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
- *Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

## Hebrews 4:14-16

- “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

# A Life in Jesus Subverts Suffering and Transforms It into Soul Development

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

# A Life in Jesus Subverts Suffering and Transforms It into Soul Development

1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.



# A Way Forward

- Answering the Trust Question:
- *Do I trust that God has my best interests at heart?*
- A vital relationship with God rooted in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection
- *Am I walking moment by moment with Jesus?*
- Community
- *Am I part of a community that embodies a deep love for one another?*