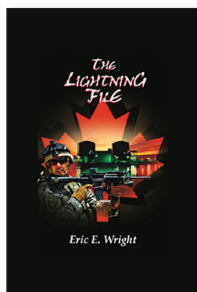


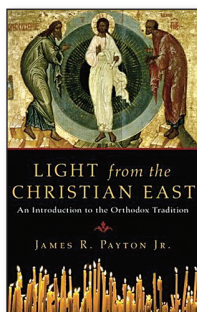
CANADIAN AUTHORS AWARDED

The Word Guild, a national association of Christian writers and editors, recently announced the winners of its annual contest for the best publications of 2007.

Four of the winners won in multiple categories, including Jennifer Green of Ottawa (news, long and general reader-ship articles), Eric Wright of Colborne, Ont. for his book *The*



Lightning File (suspense, independently published), James Payton of Mount Hope, Ont. for *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (biblical studies book, leadership/theoretical) and Paul Beckingham of Vancouver (inspirational, personal experience article). *Faith Today* writers James Beverley and Karen Stiller tied for best column series.



A complete list can be seen at www.thewordguild.com/contestsawards/index.html.

The awards gala was June 13 in Mississauga, Ont. Thirty-eight first-place awards plus 22 awards of merit were presented in various genres.

The 20th annual Leslie K. Tarr Award for outstanding career achievement was presented to Connie Brummel Crook of Peterborough, Ont., an award-winning writer of nine Canadian history novels for young adults.

Kevin Dautremont of Moose Jaw, Sask., won Best New Canadian Christian Author for his unpublished fiction manuscript, *The Golden Conquest*. He earned a cash prize and a publishing contract with Castle Quay Books.

—BILL FLEDDERUS/TWG

THE SHACK: WHERE TRAGEDY CONFRONTS ETERNITY

Author: William P. Young

Most truth, it seems, comes to us through story. The vast majority of the Bible is in narrative form. *The Shack* is a great new bestseller that conveys Christian truth using fiction, somewhat like a contemporary descendant of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Word of mouth enthusiasm has led to hundreds of thousands of sales in the past year, and a movie is reportedly in the works. In May it was the top-selling book at Amazon.ca.

Author William Young was born in Alberta but grew up in New Guinea and various places in Western Canada. He now lives in Oregon.

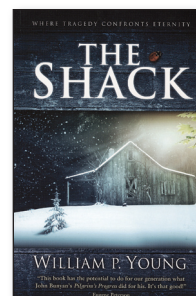
The Shack is a story about a middle-aged man named Mack. Mack left home at the age of 13 after a devastating

encounter with his alcoholic father. He lives a reasonably normal life until world-crushing and world-shaping events push his life into a spiral of bitterness and despair. About four years later, he receives a note: “Mackenzie, It’s been a while. I’ve missed you. I’ll be at the shack next weekend if you want to get together. —Papa.”

Mack’s hesitant return to the shack leads to a two-day encounter with God. In fact, it is an encounter with the Trinity, but not in the way you might expect. Mack learns some important truths, especially about pain and God’s apparent indifference: “It’s so easy to get sucked into the if-only game, and playing it is a short and slippery slide into despair.” “Rights are where survivors go, so that they won’t have to work out relationships.” “Faith does not grow in the house of certainty.” “Every time you forgive, the universe changes.”

The Shack is a great story and a worthwhile read. Many readers find it a profound experience of laughter and tears.

However, a warning is necessary. The deepest Christian truth is in some ways a mystery. Sometimes when we read great books like *The Shack* we are tempted to think a writer has successfully explained mystery to us. Let’s keep in mind that, for now, we see in a mirror dimly. —DALE DIRKSEN



Windblown Media, 2007. 248 pages. \$14.99 (paper)

HOPE FOR THE SMALL CHURCH: REVITALIZING THE SMALL CHURCH THROUGH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Author: Abe Funk

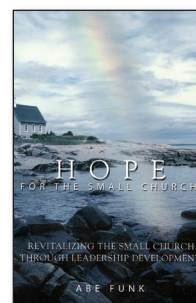
Abe Funk is no stranger to small Canadian churches, having served as the executive director of the Baptist General Conference of Canada for some 18 years and having pastored small churches as well.

Funk wrote this book to give congregational leaders, especially newly elected board members, the basics about leadership in a small church.

It will help small churches come closer to being — in their smallness — the very best they can be. Its wisdom and passion can also help pastors develop a leadership philosophy conducive to health and successful ministry.

The first three chapters do a fine job clarifying the nature and mission of the Church, the differences between mega churches and small-town and rural churches and, finally, what it means to be a healthy church.

The rest of the book is 13 lessons (short discussions about seven pages each) examining the basic, key dynamics involved



Essence Publishing, 2007. 128 pages. \$12.95 (paper)