praying prior to practice. The team, composed of different tribal and cultural backgrounds, was attempting to create unity between team members in a country torn apart by years of civil unrest. COVER: Members of the Sierra Leone National Amputee Football Team hold hands after

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EDITION

Philip Yancey

creative direction by mark arnold

andArnold books

ZONDERVAN

Grace

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Introduction to Visual Edition BY PHILIP YANCEY

I MUST ADMIT, it took me a while to warm up to the idea of someone messing with my book! As I thought about it, though, I realized that people encounter grace in ways other than words. As I have written, I experienced grace first through nature, music, and romantic love, and only later found words to interpret and express what I had felt. Why not let some very skilled designers select passages from my book and interpret them visually? (Okay, I secretly hope that if you like this book you'll look up the full-text version of What's So Amazing about Grace? It may seem boring in contrast to this edition, but it may also fill in some gaps.)

Almost a million copies of my book have been sold, which says something about our thirst for grace. I have received thousands of letters from readers, some grateful, some desperate, some furious. One of my favorites thanks me profusely for my book What's So Annoying About Grace? I'm sure, from the tone of the letter, that the reader meant to write "Amazing" and typed "Annoying" by mistake. Many other letters, however, come from readers who truly do find grace annoying.

Must we forgive everyone? Shouldn't people have to pay for their mistakes? Would God forgive Saddam Hussein or Hitler? What about justice and fairness? How can you keep people from taking advantage of grace? These are some of the questions readers have tossed back at me. I imagine some readers will find this visual edition even more annoying because it presents the scandal of grace more directly, more "in your face."

I cannot claim that grace is fair. By definition, it's unfair: We get the opposite of what we deserve. I wrote my book to make a simple point, the same point a slave trader named John Newton made several centuries ago. Grace is amazing-the most amazing, perplexing, powerful force in the universe, I believe, and the only hope for our twisted, violent planet. If you catch a mere whiff of its scent, it could change your life forever.

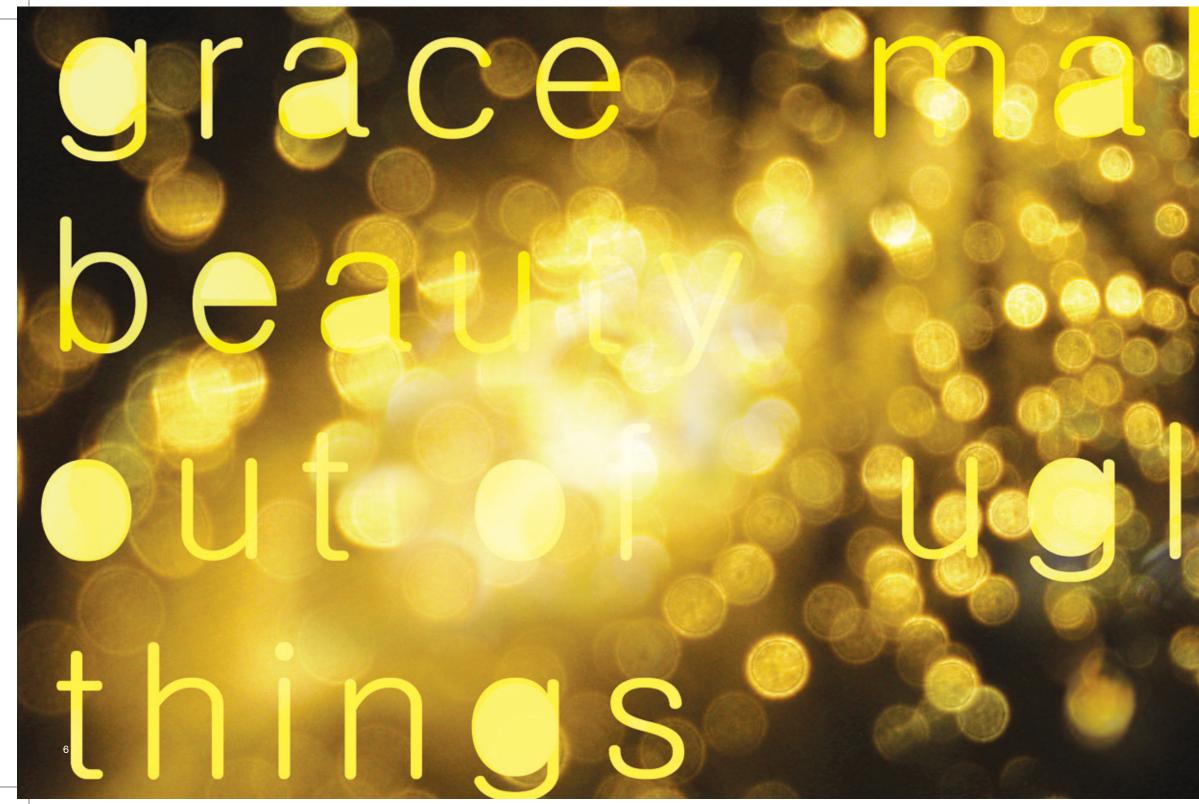
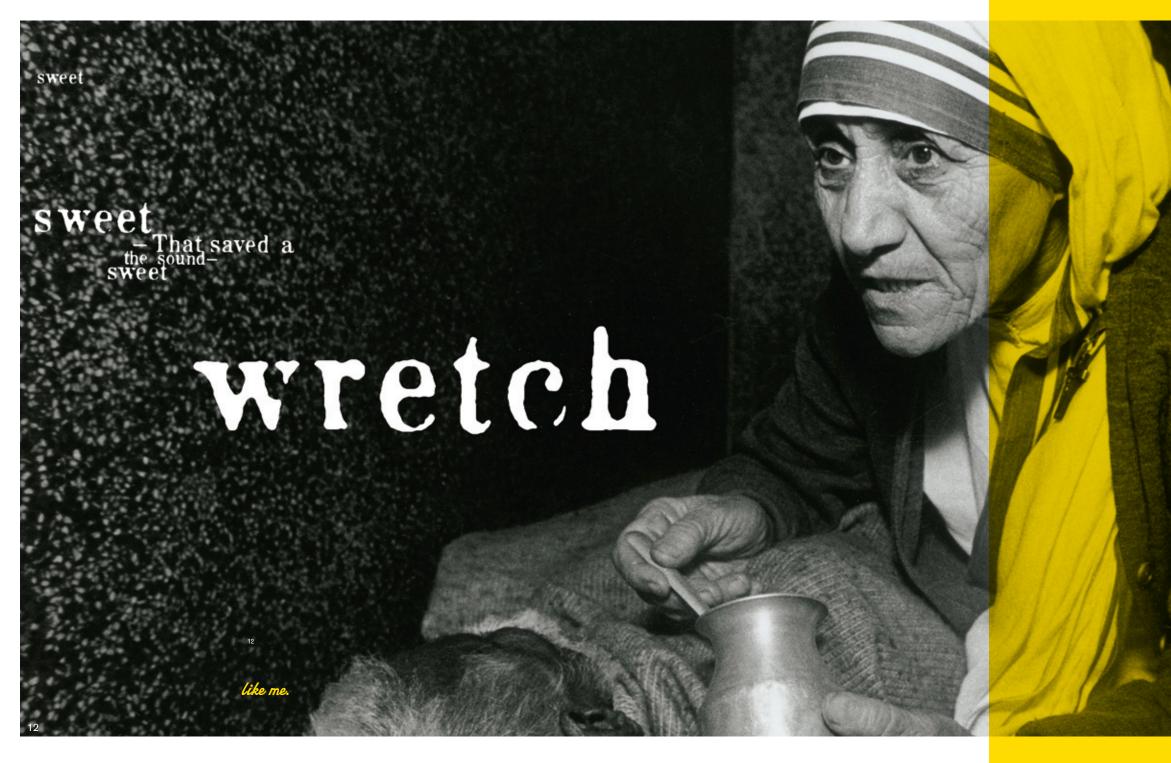


PHOTO: Rain on a windshield at night











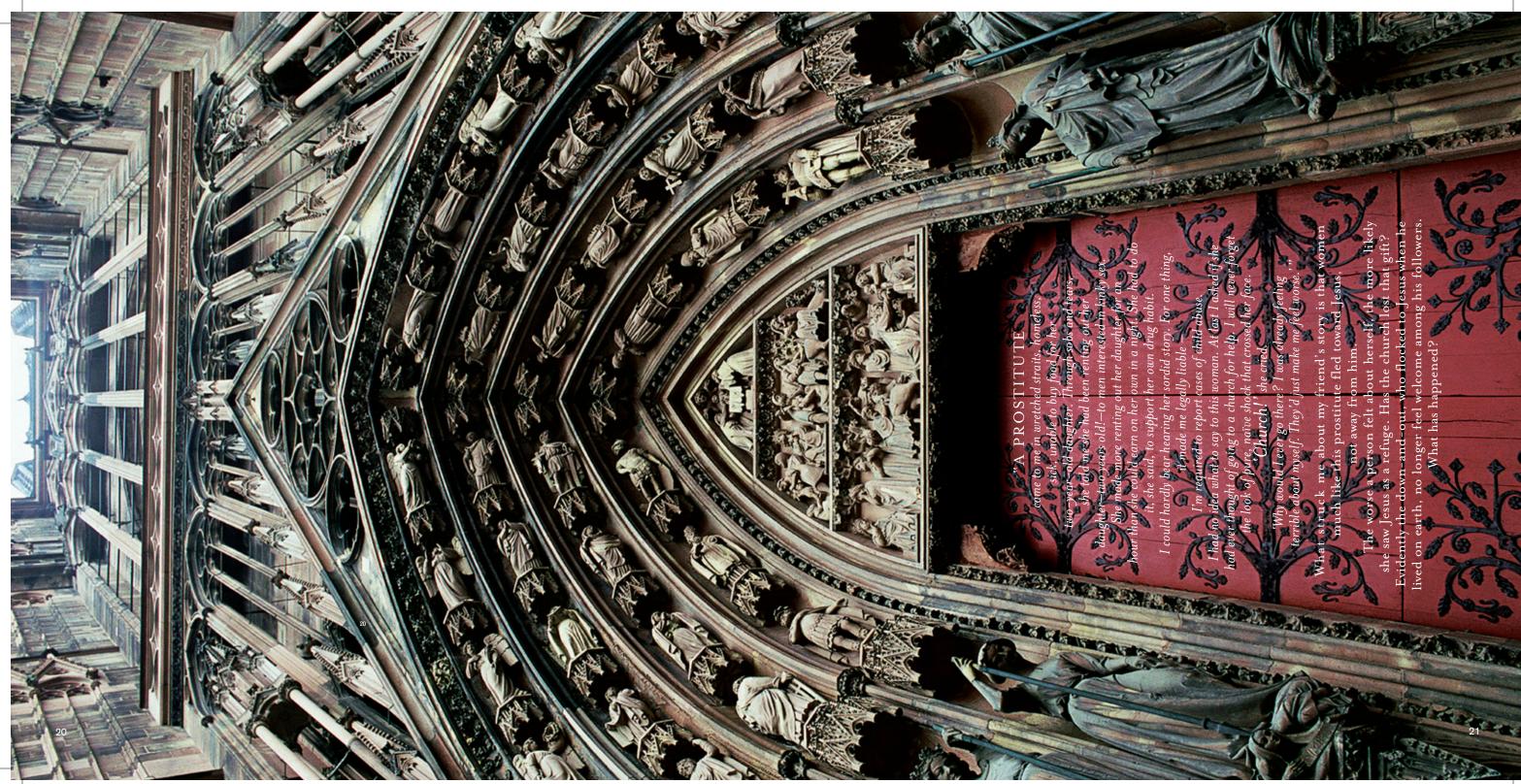


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"Jesus did not identify the person with his sin, but rather saw in this sin SOMETHING ALIEN, something that really did not belong to him, something that merely chained and mastered him and from which he would free him and bring him back to his real self. Jesus was able to love men because he loved them right through the layer of mud." ---HELMUT THIELICKE



SPAIN. GAILICA. Santiago Cathedral. A group of ex-drug addicts arrive at the Cathedral after fifteen days walking. On arrival they are given a letter from their parents and family; the letter is unexpected and most of them burst into prolonged crying. The group is part of Encorde 98, a charity based in Valencia who run a one-and-a-half-year program.



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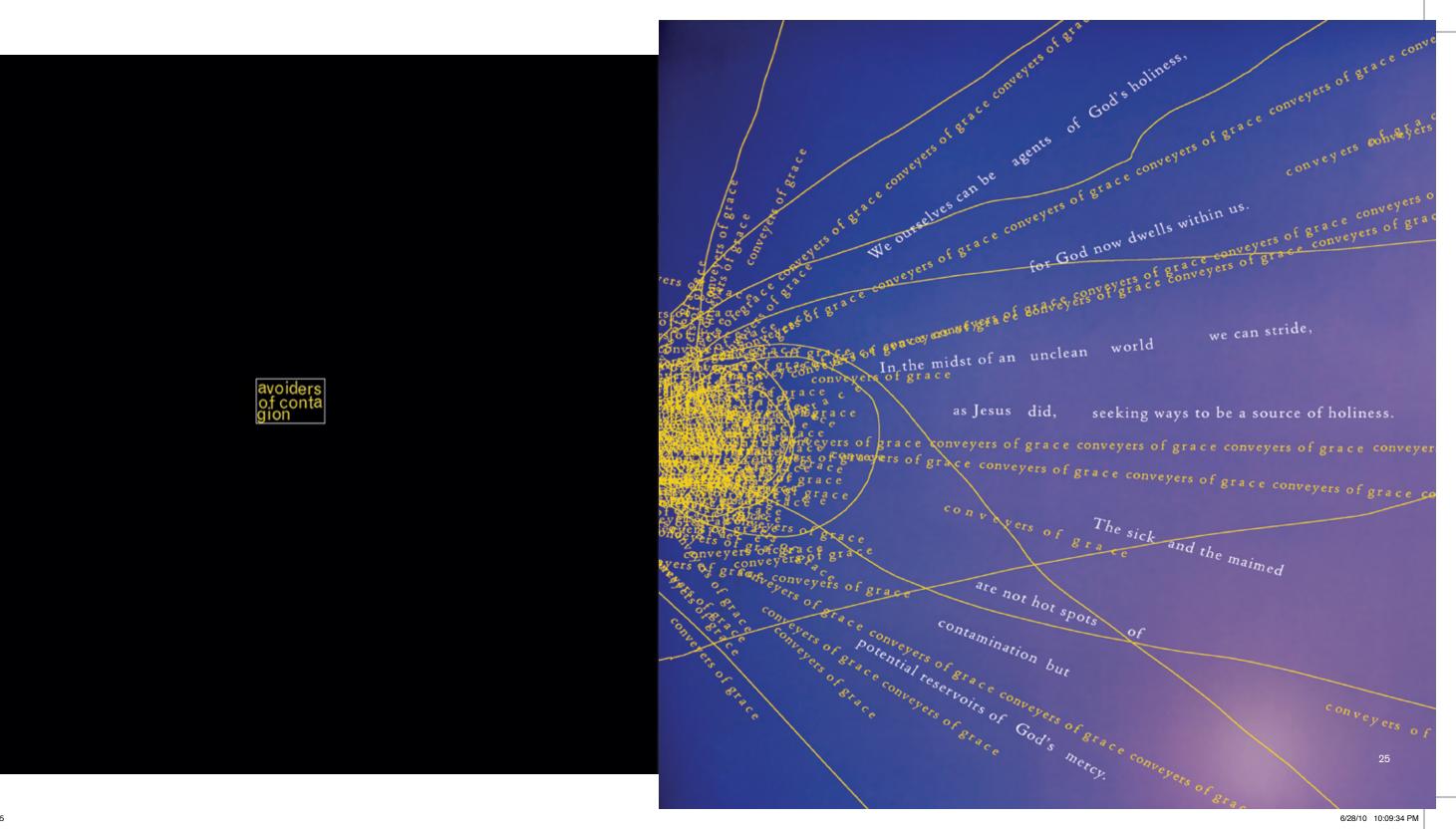
PART ONE ⇒IN 1898 DAISY was born into a working-class Chicago family, the eighth child of ten. The father barely earned enough to feed them all, and after he took up drinking, money got much scarcer. Daisy, closing in on her hundredth birthday as I write this, shudders when she talks about those days. Her father was a "mean drunk," she says. Daisy used to cower in the corner, sobbing, as he kicked her baby brother and sister across the linoleum floor. She hated him with all her heart. One day the father declared that he wanted his wife out of the house by noon. All ten kids crowded around their mother, clinging to her skirt and crying, "No, don't go!" But their father did not back down. Holding on to her brothers and sisters for support, Daisy watched through the bay window as her mother walked down the sidewalk, shoulders adroop, a suitcase in each hand, growing smaller and smaller until finally she disappeared from view. I Some of the children eventually rejoined their mother, and some went to live with other relatives. It fell to Daisy to stay with her father. She grew up with a hard knot of bitterness inside her, a tumor of hatred over what he had done to the family. All the kids dropped out of school early in order to take jobs or join the Army, and then one by one they moved away to other towns. They got married, started families, and tried to put the past behind them. The father vanished—no one knew where and no one cared. A Many years later, to everyone's surprise, the father resurfaced. He had guttered out, he said. Drunk and cold, he had wandered into a Salvation Army rescue mission one night. To earn a meal ticket he first had to attend a worship service. When the speaker asked if anyone wanted to accept Jesus, he thought it only polite to go forward along with some of the other drunks. He was more surprised than anybody when the "sinner's prayer" actually worked. The demons inside him quieted down. He sobered up. He began studying the Bible and praying. For the first time in his life he felt loved

accepted. He felt clean. ⊰ And now, he told his children, he was looking them up one by one to ask for forgiveness. He couldn't defend anything that had happened. He couldn't make it right. But he was sorry, more sorry than they could possibly imagine The children, now middle-aged and with families of their own, were initially skeptical. Some doubted his sincerity, expecting him to fall off the wagon at any moment. Others figured he would soon ask for money. Neither

happened,

and in time the father won them over, all except Daisy. 😒 Long ago Daisy had vowed never to speak to her father--"that man" she called him-again. Her father's reappearance rattled her badly, and old memories of his drunken rages came flooding back as she lay in bed at night. "He can't undo all that just by saying 'I'm sorry,'" Daisy insisted. She wanted no part of him. \Rightarrow The father may have given up drinking, but alcohol had damaged his liver beyond repair. He got very sick, and for the last five years of his life he lived with one of his daughters, Daisy's sister. They lived, in fact, eight houses down the street from Daisy, on the very same row house block. Keeping her vow, Daisy never once stopped in to visit her dying father, even though she passed by his house whenever she went grocery shopping or caught a bus. \Rightarrow Daisy did consent to let her own children visit their grandfather. Nearing the end, the father saw a little girl come to his door and step inside. "Oh, Daisy, Daisy, you've come to me at last," he cried, gathering her in his arms. The adults in the room didn't have the heart to tell him the girl was not Daisy, but her daughter Margaret, He was hallucinating grace. continued

on page 58







• • A U.S. DELEGATE to the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Berlin in 1934 sent back this report of what he found under Hitler's regime: "It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish and communistic libraries." The same delegate defended Hitler as a leader who did not smoke or drink, who wanted women to dress modestly, and who opposed pornography.

It is all too easy to point fingers at German Christians of the 1930s, southern fundamentalists in the 1960s, or South African Calvinists of the 1970s. What sobers me is that contemporary Christians may someday be judged as harshly. What trivialities do we obsess over, and what weighty matters of the law-justice, mercy, faithfulness—might we be missing? DOES GOD CARE MORE about nose rings or about urban decay? Grunge music or world hunger? Worship styles or a culture of violence?

Author Tony Campolo, who makes a regular circuit as a chapel speaker on Christian college campuses, for a time used this provocation to make a point. "The United Nations reports that over ten thousand people starve to death each day, and most of you don't give a shit. However, what is even more tragic is that most of you are more concerned about the fact that I just said a bad word than you are about the fact that ten thousand people are going to die today." The responses proved his point: in nearly every case Tony got a letter from the chaplain or president of the college protesting his foul language. The letters never mentioned world hunger.





Famine in Somalia.

No. STATE TO A

Not long ago I received in the mail a postcard from a friend that had on it only six words, "I am the one Jesus loves." I smiled when I saw the return address, for my strange friend excels at these pious slogans. When I called him, though, he told me the slogan came from the author and speaker Brennan Manning. At a seminar, Manning referred to Jesus' closest friend on earth, the disciple named John, identified in the Gospels as "the one Jesus loved." Manning said, "If John were to be asked, 'What is your primary identity in life?' he would not reply, 'I am a disciple, an apostle, an evangelist, an author of one of the four Gospels,' but rather, 'I am the one Jesus loves.'"

What would it mean, I ask myself, if I too came to the place where I saw my primary identity in life as "the one Jesus loves"? How differently would I view myself at the end of the day?

Sociologists have a theory of the looking-glass self: you become what the most important person in your life (wife, father, boss, etc.) thinks you are. How would my life change if I truly believed the Bible's astounding words about God's love for me, if I looked in the mirror and saw what God sees?

Brennan Manning tells the story of an Irish priest who, on a walking tour of a rural parish, sees an old peasant kneeling by the side of the road, praying. Impressed, the priest says to the man, "You must be very close to God." The peasant looks up from his prayers, thinks a moment, and then smiles, "Yes, he's very fond of me."

mirrored paper

The one Jesus loves.

God dispenses gifts,

not wages.

Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more—no amount of SPIRITUAL CALLISTHENICS and RENUNCIATIONS, no amount of KNOWLEDGE gained from SEMINARS and DIVINITY SCHOOLS, no amount of CRUSADING on behalf of RIGHTEOUS CAUSES.

> And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less no amount of **HACISM** or **PRIDE** or **POR**or **PRIDE** or **POR**-





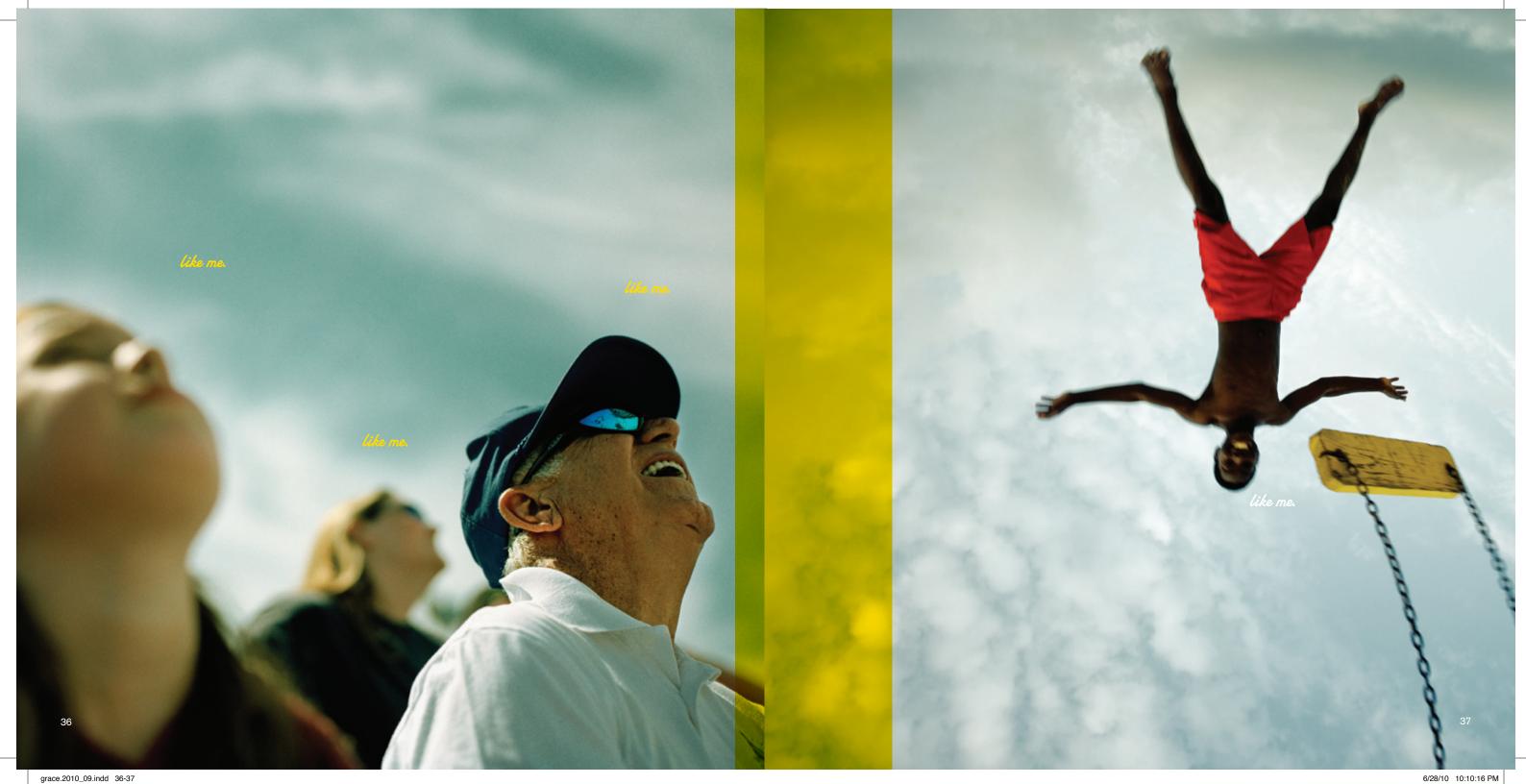


WE HAVE MANY VIVID DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE LAW OF UNFORGIVENESS. IN SHAKESPEARE'S AND SOPHOCLES' HISTORICAL TRAGEDIES, BODIES LITTER THE STAGE. Macbeth, Richard III, Titus Andronicus, AND Elektra MUST KILL AND KILL AND KILL UNTIL THEY HAVE THEIR REVENGE, THEN LIVE IN FEAR LEST SOME ENEMIES HAVE SURVIVED TO SEEK COUNTER REVENGE.

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA'S Godfather TRILOGY AND CLINT EASTWOOD'S Unforgiven ILLUSTRATE THE SAME LAW. WE SEE THE LAW AT WORK IN IRA TERRORISTS WHO BLOW UP SHOPPERS IN DOWN-TOWN LONDON IN PART BECAUSE OF ATROCITIES COMMITTED BACK IN 1649-WHICH IN TURN WERE ORDERED BY OLIVER CROMWELL TO AVENGE A MASSACRE IN 1641.

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IN CHURCH THE OTHER SUNDAY

I was intent on a small child who was turning around smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting, humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals, or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling. Finally, his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theatre off Broadway said, "Stop that grinning! You're in church!" With that, she gave him a belt and as the tears rolled down his cheeks added, "That's better," and returned to her prayers.... Suddenly I was angry. It occurred to me the entire world is in tears, and if you're not, then you'd better get with it. I wanted to grab this child with the tear-stained face close to me and tell him about 📶 . The God who had to have a sense of humor to have created the likes of us... By tradition, one wears faith with the solemnity of a mourner, the gravity of a mask of tragedy, and the dedication of a Rotary badge. What a fool, I thought. Here was a woman sitting next to the only light left in our civilizationthe only hope, our only miracle-our only promise of infinity. If he couldn't smile in church, where was there left to go? 💶 💶 - ERMA BOMBECK





"Jesus gained the power to love because he saw through the filth and crust of degeneration, kear





because his eye caught THE DIVINE ORIGINAL which is hidden in every way—











- in every man! . . . First and foremost he gives us new eyes." --- HELMUT THIELICKE

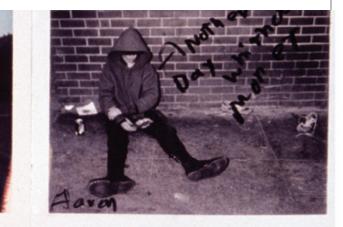






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THE SCANDAL OF FORGIVENESS // PART 1

Will Campbell grew up on a hardscrabble farm in Mississippi. Bookish, never really fitting in with his rural surroundings, he worked hard at his studies and eventually made his way to Yale Divinity School. After graduation he returned south to preach and was named director of religious life at the University of Mississippi. This was the early 1960s, when proper Mississippians circled the wagons against assaults from civil rights activists, and when students and administrators learned of Campbell's liberal views on integration, his stint at the school abruptly ended.

Campbell soon found himself in the thick of the battle, leading voter registration drives and supervising the idealistic young Northerners who migrated south to join the civil rights crusade. Among them was a Harvard Divinity School student named Jonathan Daniels, who had responded to Dr. King's call for supporters to descend on Selma. Most of the volunteers went home after the big march, but Jonathan Daniels stayed, and Will Campbell befriended him.

> Campbell's theology was undergoing some testing in those days. Much of the opposition to his work came from "good Christians" who refused to let people of other races into their churches and who resented anyone tampering with laws favoring white people. Campbell found allies more easily among agnostics, socialists, and a few devout Northerners.

"In ten words or less, what's the Christian message?" one agnostic had challenged him. The interlocutor was P.D. East, a renegade newspaper editor who viewed Christians as the enemy and could not understand Will's stubborn commitment to religious faith. We were going someplace, or coming back from someplace when he said, 'Let me have it. Ten words.' I said, "We're all bastards but God loves us anyway." He didn't comment on what he thought about the summary except to say, after he counted the number of words on his fingers, 'I gave you a ten-word limit. If you want to try again you have two words left.' I didn't try again but he often reminded me of what I had said that day.

The definition stung P.D. East who, unbeknown to Campbell, was indeed illegitimate and had been called "bastard" all his life. Campbell had chosen the word not merely for shock effect but also for theological accuracy: spiritually we are illegitimate children, invited despite our paternity to join God's family. The more Campbell thought about his impromptu definition of the gospel, the more he liked it.

> P.D. East put that definition to a ruthless test, however, on the darkest day of Campbell's life, a day when an Alabama deputy sheriff named Thomas Coleman gunned down Campbell's twenty-six-year-old friend. Jonathan Daniels had been arrested for picketing white stores. On his release from jail he approached a grocery store to make a phone call to arrange a ride when Coleman appeared with a shotgun and emptied it in his stomach. The pellets hit one other person, a black teenager, in the back, critically injuring him.

Campbell's book <u>Brother to a Dragonfly</u> records the conversation with P.D. East on that night, which led to what Campbell looks back on as "the most enlightening theological lesson I ever had in my life." P.D. East stayed on the offensive, even at this moment of grief:

(con't)

"Yea, Brother. Let's see if your definition of the Faith can stand the test." My calls had been to the Department of Justice. to the American Civil Liberties Union, and to a lawyer friend in Nashville. I had talked of the death of my friend as being a travesty of justice. as a complete breakdown of law and order. as a violation of Federal and State law. I had used words like redneck, backwoods, wool hat, cracker, Kluxer, ignoramus and many others. I had studied sociology, psychology, and social ethics and was speaking and thinking in those concepts. I had also studied New Testament theology.

P.D. stalked me like a tiger. "Come on, Brother. Let's talk about your definition." At one point Joe (Will's brother) turned on him, "Lay off, P.D. Can't you see when somebody is upset?" But P.D. waved him off, loving me too much to leave me alone.

> "Was Jonathan a bastard?" P.D. asked first.

> > Campbell replied that though he was one of the most gentle guys he'd ever known, it's true that everyone is a sinner. In those terms, yes, he was a "bastard."

"All right. Is Thomas Coleman a bastard?"

> That question, Campbell found much easier to answer. You bet the murderer was a bastard.

Then P.D. pulled his chair close, placed his bony hand on Campbell's knee, and looked directly into his red-streaked eyes. "Which one of these two bastards do you think God loves the most?" The question hit home, like an arrow to the heart.

SUDDENLY everything became clear. EVERYthing. It was a revelation. The glow of the malt which we were well into by then seemed to illuminate and intensify it. I walked across the room and opened the blind, staring directly into the glare of the streetlight. And I began to whimper. But the crying was interspersed with laughter. It was a strange experience. I remember trying to sort out the sadness and the joy. Just what I was crying for and what I was laughing for. Then this too became clear. I was laughing at myself, at twenty years of a ministry which had become, without my realizing it, a ministry of liberal sophistication. . . I agreed that the notion that a man could go to a store where a group of unarmed human beings are drinking soda pop and eating moon pies, fire a shotgun blast at one of them, tearing his lungs and heart and bowels from his body, turn on another and send lead pellets ripping through his flesh and bones, and

that God would

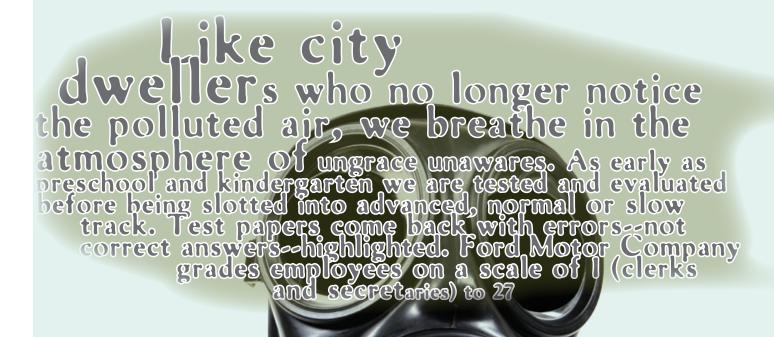
SET HIM FREE is almost more than I could stand. But unless that is precisely the case then there is no Gospel, there is no Good News. Unless that is the truth we have only bad news; we are back with law alone.

What Will Campbell learned that night was a new insight into grace. The free offer of grace extends not just to the undeserving but to those who in fact deserve the opposite: to Ku Klux Klanners as well as civil rights marchers, to P.D. East as well as Will Campbell, to Thomas Coleman as well as Jonathan Daniels.

> This message lodged so deep inside Will Campbell that he underwent a kind of earthquake of grace. He resigned his position with the National Council of Churches and became what he wryly calls "an apostle to the rednecks." He bought a farm in Tennessee, and today is as likely to spend his time among Klansmen and racists as among racial minorities and white liberals. A lot of people, he decided, were volunteering to help minorities; he knew of no one ministering to the Thomas Colemans of the world.



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(chairman of the board). You must be at least Grade 9 to qualify for a parking space: Grade 13 brings with it such perks as a window, plants and an intercom system: Grade 16 Offices come equipped with private bathrooms. Justice departments and mortgage companies cannnot operate by grace.

A sports franchise rewards those who

> passes, throw strikes, or make

> > the names of the five

complete

baskets, and has no place for those who fail. Fortune Magazine annually lists the five hundred richest; no one knows

hundred

poorest

Grace is not

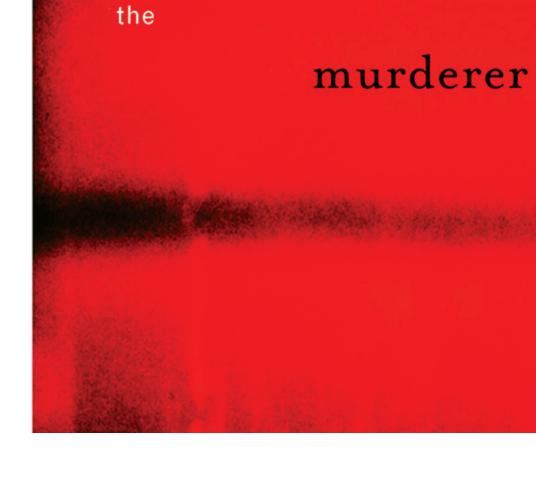
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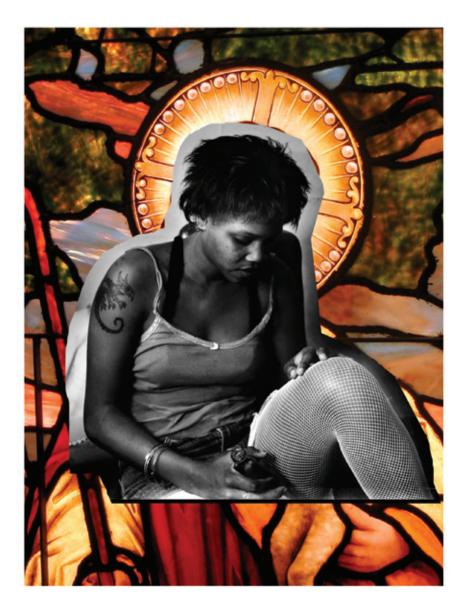
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Which one does God love the most?

OR





It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start. Each one of them is Jesus in disguise. —MOTHER TERESA

PART TWO < ALL HER LIFE Daisy determined to be unlike her father, and indeed she never touched a drop of alcohol. Yet she ruled her own family with a milder form of the tyranny she had grown up under. She would lie on a couch with a rubber ice pack on her head and scream at the kids to "Shut up!" "Why did I ever have you stupid kids anyway?" she would yell. "You've ruined my life!" The Great Depression had hit, and each child was one more mouth to feed. She had six in all, rearing them in the two-bedroom row house she lives in to this day. In such close quarters, they seemed always underfoot. Some nights she gave them all whippings just to make a point: she knew they'd done wrong even if she hadn't caught them. 🛪 Hard as steel, Daisy never apologized and never forgave. Her daughter Margaret remembers as a child coming in tears to apologize for something she'd done. Daisy responded with a parental Catch-22: "You can't possibly be sorry! If you were really sorry, you wouldn't have done it in the first place." \Rightarrow I have heard many such stories of ungrace from Margaret, whom I know well. All her life she

determined to be different from her mother, Daisy. But Margaret's life had its own tragedies, some large and some small, and as her four children entered their teenage years she felt she was losing control of them. She too wanted to lie on the ouch with an ice pack and scream, "Shut up!" She too wanted to whip them just to make a point or maybe to release some of the tension coiled inside her. Her son Michael, who turned sixteen in the 1960s, especially got under her skin. He listened to rock and roll

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1.2

"granny glasses," let his hair grow long. Margaret kicked him out of the house when she caught him smoking pot, and he moved into a hippie commune. to threaten and scold him. She reported him to a judge. She wrote him out of her will. She tried everything she could think of, and nothing got through to Michael. The words she flung up against him fell back, useless, until finally one day in a fit of anger she said, "I never want to see you again as long as I live." That was twenty-six years ago and she has not seen him since. ⊰ Michael is also my close friend. Several times during those twenty-six years I have attempted some sort of reconciliation between the two, and each time I confront again the terrible power of ungrace. When I asked Margaret if she regretted anything she had said to her son, if she'd wike to take anything back, she turned on me in a flash of hot rage as if I were Michael himself, "I don't know why God didn't take him long ago, for all the things he's done!" she said, with a wild, scary look in her eye. Her brazen fury caught me off guard. I stared at her for a minute: her hands clenched, her face florid, tiny muscles twitching around her eyes. 😒 "Do you mean you wish your own son was dead?" I asked at last. She never answered. continued on page 88

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

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Then God ties n,

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"FAGGOTS GO HOME!"

their leader screamed into a microphone, and the others took up the chant:

Faggots go home! Faggots go home!

Faggots go home! SHAME-ON-YOU-**FOR-WHAT-YOU-DO!**

Between chants the leader delivered brimstone SERMONETTES about God reserving the hottest fires in hell for sodomites and other perverts.

IS. IT'S COMIN' YOUR WAY! S, AIDS, IT'S COMIN' YOUR V



We had just seen a sad procession of several hundred persons with AIDS: many in wheelchairs, with the gaunt bodies of concentration camp survivors. Listening to the chant, I could not fathom how anyone could wish that fate on another human being.

For their part, the gay marchers had a mixed response to the Christians. More than a thousand marched under the banner of the Metropolitan Community Church, a denomination that professes a mostly evangelical theology except for its stance on homosexuality. This last group had a poignant reply to the beleaguered Christian protesters: they drew even, turned to face them, and sang,

'Jesus loves us, this we know, for the Bible tells us so."

The abrupt ironies in that scene of confrontation struck me. On the one side were Christians defending pure

doctrine. On the other side were "sinners," many of whom openly admit to homosexual practice. Yet the more orthodox group spewed out hate and the other group sang of Jesus' love.

"We get such hatred and rejection FROM THE CHURCH that there's no reason to bother with church at all unless you really do believe the gospel is true."

"I truly pray that one day, you will truly repent, truly desire freedom from the sin that enslaves you, and renounce the false teaching of the so-called "gay. church." IF YOU DON'T, THANKFULLY you will receive what you deserve, an eternity in Hell, reserved for all who are enslaved to sin and refuse to repent."

"WE*UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU-STAND, AND KNOW THAT YOU DO NOT AGREE. WITH US. BUT YOU STILL SHOW THE LOVE OF JESUS, AND WE'RE DRAWN TO THAT."

To many AIDS patients in Grand Rapids, the word Christian now carries a very different connotation than it did a few years age. Dobson's experience has proved that Christians can have firm views about ethical behavior and still demonstrate love. "I would feel proud, if I die and someone stands up at my funeral and says nothing but,



"AS A GAY MAN, I'VE FOUND IT'S EASIER FOR ME TO GET SEX ON THE STREETS THAN TO GET A HUG H₩ CHURCH."

"Well," the mother answered in a sweet, quavery voice, "he may be an abomination, but he's still our pride and joy."

> ***IN SOME WAYS WE ARE ALL ABOMINATIONS TO? GOD_ALL HAVE SINNED...AND YET SOMEHOW, ****** AGAINST ALL REASON, GOD LOVES US ANYHOW.*****WE ARE **STILL GOD'S PRIDE AND JOY.***'

SUCH PROFOUND DIFFERENCES, in | them in the past. Some take on the task whatever arena, form a kind of crucible of reconciling with rednecks and of grace. Some must grapple with how | Kluxers. Still others contend with the to treat fundamentalists who wounded arrogance and close-mindedness of

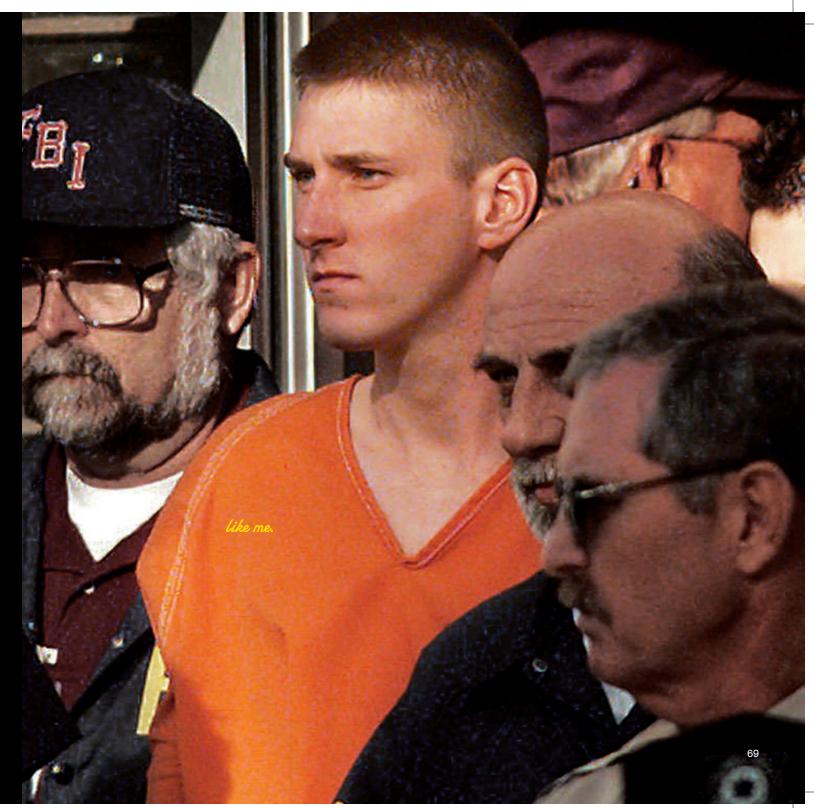
and Koreans.

"politically correct" liberals. Whites | occurred within the evangelical church must deal with how they differ from in my lifetime over the issue of divorce, African-Americans, and vice versa. an issue on which Jesus is absolutely Inner-city blacks must also sort out clear. Yet today a divorced person is complicated relationships with Jews i not shunned, banned from churches, spit upon, screamed at. Even those An issue like homosexuality presents who consider divorce a sin have come a special case because the difference to accept the sinners and treat them centers on a moral, not a cross-cultural, | with civility and even love. Online issue. For most of history the church SINS ON WHICH THE BIBLE IS has overwhelmingly viewed ALSO CLEAR-GREED, FOR homosexual behavior as a serious sin. EXAMPLE-SEEM TO POSE NO Then the question becomes, "How do BARRIER AT ALL. We have learned we treat sinners?" to accept the person without approving I think of the changes that have of the behavior.

My study of Jesus' life convinces me that WHATEVER BARRIERS WE MUST OVERCOME IN TREATING "DIFFERENT" PEOPLE CANNOT COMPARE TO WHAT A HOLY GOD - who dwelled in the Most Holy Place, and whose presence caused fire and smoke to belch from mountdintops, bringing death to any unclean person who wandered near overcame when he descended to join us on planet Earth.



Bud Welch lost his twenty-three-year-old daughter, Julie Marie, in that Oklahoma City bombing at the hands of Timothy McVeigh. He says he went through a period of rage when he wanted Timothy dead. "I wanted him to fry," he says. "I'd have killed him myself if I'd had the chance." But there was a moment when he remembered the words of his daughter, who had been a courageous advocate for reconciliation. She used to say, "Execution teaches hatred." It wasn't long before Bud decided to interrupt that cycle of hatred and violence and arranged a visit with McVeigh's dad and family. As they met, Bud says he grew to love them dearly and to this day says he has "never felt closer to God" than amid that union. He decided to travel around the country speaking about reconciliation and against the death penalty, which teaches that some people are beyond redemption, and pleading for the life of Timothy McVeigh. He began to look in the eyes of Timothy McVeigh, the murderer, and see the image of God. He longed for him to experience love, grace, and forgiveness. —SHANE CLAIBORNE





News about the Nickel Mines school massacre in the heart of Amish country faded quickly in the U.S., but not worldwide. International readers were fascinated by a group who eschewed modern dress and conveniences and who responded in such an un-American fashion to an act of violence.

Indeed, 2,400 articles in the world press featured the theme of forgiveness. More than half of those who attended the murderer's funeral were Amish. "We sin, too," they said, embracing the widow of the man who killed their children. "Didn't Jesus tell us to forgive others as God has forgiven us?"





The opposite of sin is easing, not virtue.

ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES of the spiritual life is to

receive God's forgiveness. There is something in us humans that keeps us clinging to our sins and prevents us from letting God erase our past

and offer us a completely new beginning. Sometimes it even seems as though I want to prove to God my darkness is too great to overcome. While God wants to restore me to the full dignity of

SONSHIP,

I keep insisting that I will settle for being a hired

BUT

do I truly want to be restored to the full responsibility of the son

Do I truly want to be so totally forgiven that a completely new way of living becomes possible

Do I want to break away from my deep-rooted rebellion against God and surrender myself so absolutely to God's love that a new person can emerge

As a hired servant, I can still keep my distance, still revolt, reject, strike, run away, or complain about my pay. As the beloved son, I have to claim my full dignity and begin preparing myself to become the father.

> -Henri Nouwen, THE RETURN OF THI PRODIGAL SOM



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proportionally the surface of the earth is smoother than a billiard ball \bigcirc The heights of Mount Everest and the troughs of the Pacific Ocean are very impressive to those of us who live on this planet $\bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc$ But from the view of Andromeda, or even Mars, those differences matter not at all \bigcirc That is how I see the petty behavioral differences between one Christian group and another \bigcirc Compared to a holy and perfect God, the molehill OOO You cannot earn God's must receive it as a gift

Juriday School

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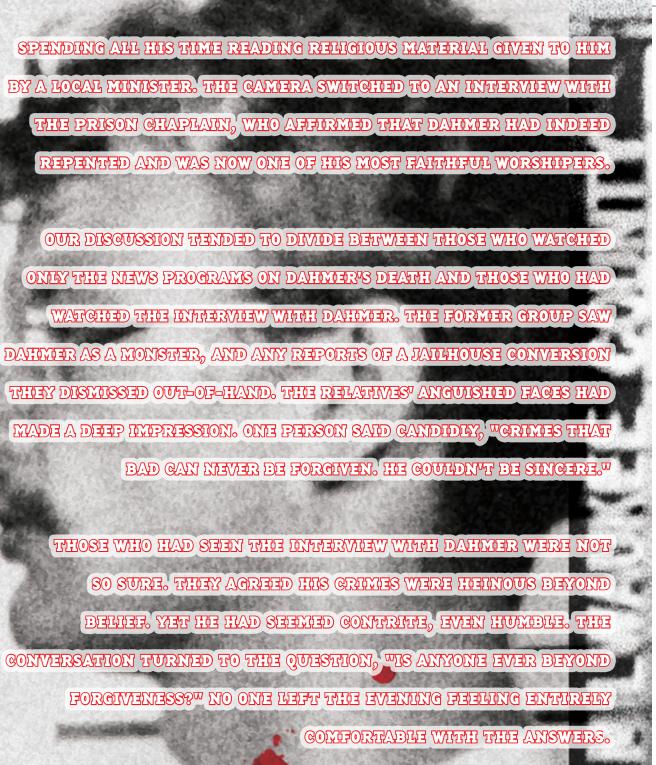


The Family of GRACE GROWING United Methodist Church IN NOVEMBER OF 1994, MASS MURDERER JEFFREY DAHMER HIMSELF WAS MURDERED, DEATEN TO DEATH WITH A BROOM HANDLE WIELDED BY MOST OF WHOM SAND TH STECTORIE THE EXCLOSED FILLS ভাৰে চিৰিয়াল মন্তাতিবেল মন্ত্ৰীয় বিষয়ে বিষয়ে প্ৰথম আৰম্ভ প্ৰমান আৰু প্ৰমান আৰু প্ৰমান প্ৰমান মন্ত্ৰা হয় হয

THUNGS HE HAD DONE.

ONE NETWORK SHOWED A TELEVISION PROGRAM TAPED A FEW WEEKS BEFORE DAHMER'S DEATH. THE INTERVIEWER ASIGED HIM HOW HE COULD POSSIBLY DO THE THUNGS HE HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF. AT THE TUYE HE DIDNYT DELLEVE IN COD, DAHMER SAID, AND SO HE FELT ACCOUNTADLE TO NO ONE. HE DECAN WITH PETTY CRUMES, EXPERIMENTED WITH MALL AGTS OF GRUTHERY, AND THIEN JUST LEEPT COUNC, FURTHER AND WRITHER. NOTHING RESTRAINED HIM.

DAHMER THEN TOLD OF HIS RECENT RELIGIOUS CONVERSION. HE HAD BEEN BAPTHAED IN THE PRISON WILLIAD WAS



n one of his last acts before death,

_a thief dangling on a cross, knowing full well the thief had converted out of plain fear. That thief would never study the Bible. never attend synagogue or church, and never make amends to all those he had wronged.

HE SIMPly said "Jesus, remember me,"

and Jesus promised, "Today you will be with me in paradise." It was another shocking reminder that grace does not depend on what we have done for God

- Ask people what they must do to get to heaven and most reply, "Be good."

Jesus' stories contradict that answer.

All we must do is cry,



ANV one who will



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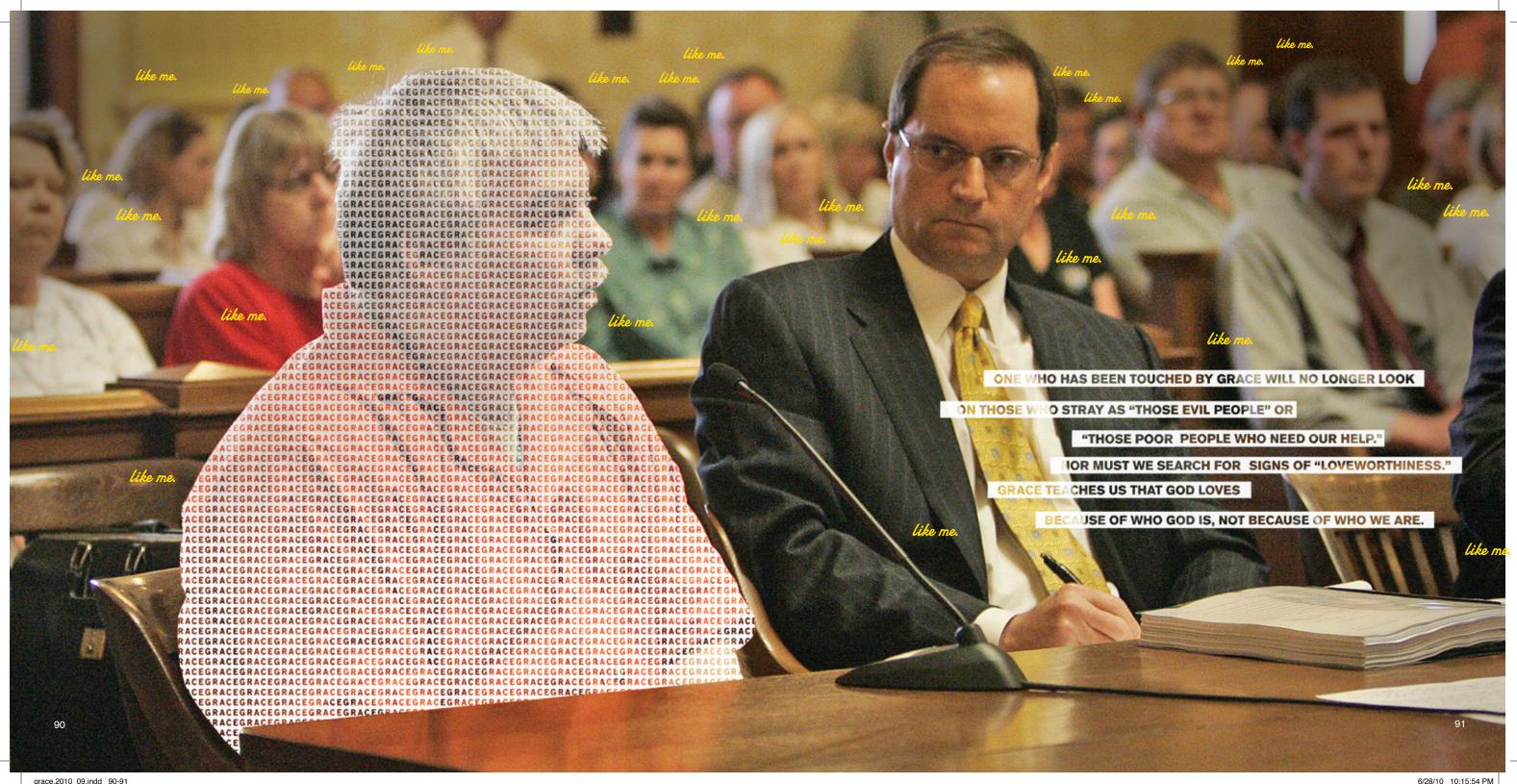




PART THREE > MICHAEL EMERGED FROM the sixties mellower, his mind dulled by LSD. He moved to Hawaii, lived with a woman, left her, tried another, left her, and then got married. "Sue is the real thing," he told me when I visited him once. "This one will last." \lhd It did not last. I remember a phone conversation with Michael, interrupted by the annoying technological feature known as "call waiting." \supset The line clicked and Michael said, "Excuse me a second," then left me holding a silent phone receiver for at least four minutes. He apologized when he came back on. His mood had darkened. "It was Sue," he said. "We're settling some of the last financial issues of the divorce." \rightrightarrows "I didn't know you still had contact with Sue," I said, making conversation. "I don't!" he cut in, using almost the same tone I had heard from his mother, Margaret. "I hope

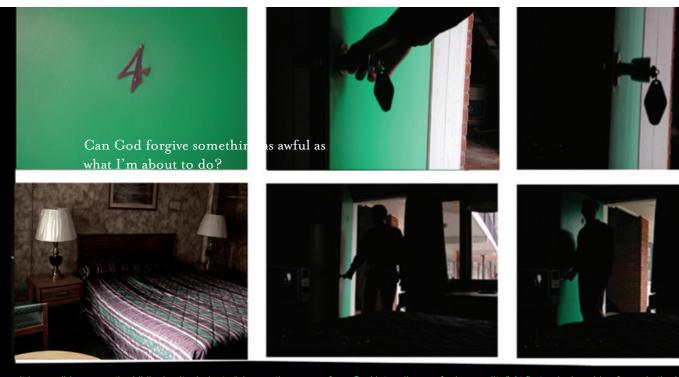
never See her again as long as I live!" \Rightarrow We both staved Silent for a long time. We had just bean taking about Margaret, and although I said taking about Margaret, and although I said taking about Margaret and although I said taking about Margaret for me that Michael had to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to me that to me that to me that to to me that to to me that to to me that to

chain. Ungrace does its work quietly and lethally, like a poisonous, undetectable gas. A father dies unforgiven. A mother who once carried a child in her own body does not speak to that child for half its life. The toxin steals on, from generation to generation. 🔿 Margaret is a devout Christian who studies the Bible every day, and once I spoke to her about the parable of the Prodigal Son. "What do you do with that parable?" I asked. "Do you hear its message of forgiveness?" ightarrow She had obviously thought about the matter, for without hesitation she replied that the parable appears in Luke 15 as a third in a series of three: lost coin, lost sheep, lost son. She said the whole point of the Prodigal Son is to demonstrate how human beings differ from inanimate objects (coins) and from animals (sheep). "People have free will," she said. "They have to be morally responsible. That boy had to come crawling back on his knees. He had to repent. That was Jesus' point." continued on page 138

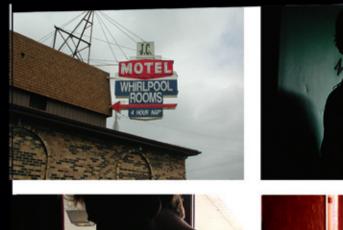


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It is possible, warns the biblical write Jude, to "change the grace of our God into a license for immorality." At first a devious idea forms in the back of the mind. *It's something I want.* Yeah, *I know, it's wrong. But why don't I just go ahead anyway? I can always get forgiveness later.* Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the phrase "cheap grace" as a way of summarizing grace abuse. His book *The Cost of Discipleship* highlights the many New Testament passages commanding Christians to attain holiness. Every call to conversion, he insisted, includes a call to discipleship, to Christlikeness.







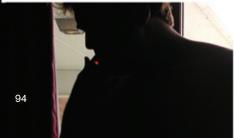


It was altogether in character for the apostle Peter to pursue some mathematical formula of grace. "How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?" he asked Jesus. "Up to 7 times?" Peter was erring on the side of magnanimity, for the rabbis in his day had suggested 3 as the maximum number of times one might be expected to forgive.

ot 7 times, but 77 times," replied Jesus in

Peter's question prompted another one of Jesus' stories, about a servant who somehow iles up a debt of several million dollars. The fact that realistically no servant could ocumulate a debt so huge underscores Jesus' point: confiscating the man's family, hildren, and all his property would not make a dent in repaying the debt. It is thorgivable. Nevertheless the king, touched with pity, abruptly cancels the debt and lets e servant off scot-free.

more I reflect on Jesus' parables, the more tempted I am to use the word "atrocious" describe the mathematics of the gospel. I believe Jesus gave us these stories about the in order to call us to step completely outside our tit-for-tat world of ungrace and the in to God's realm of infinite grace.



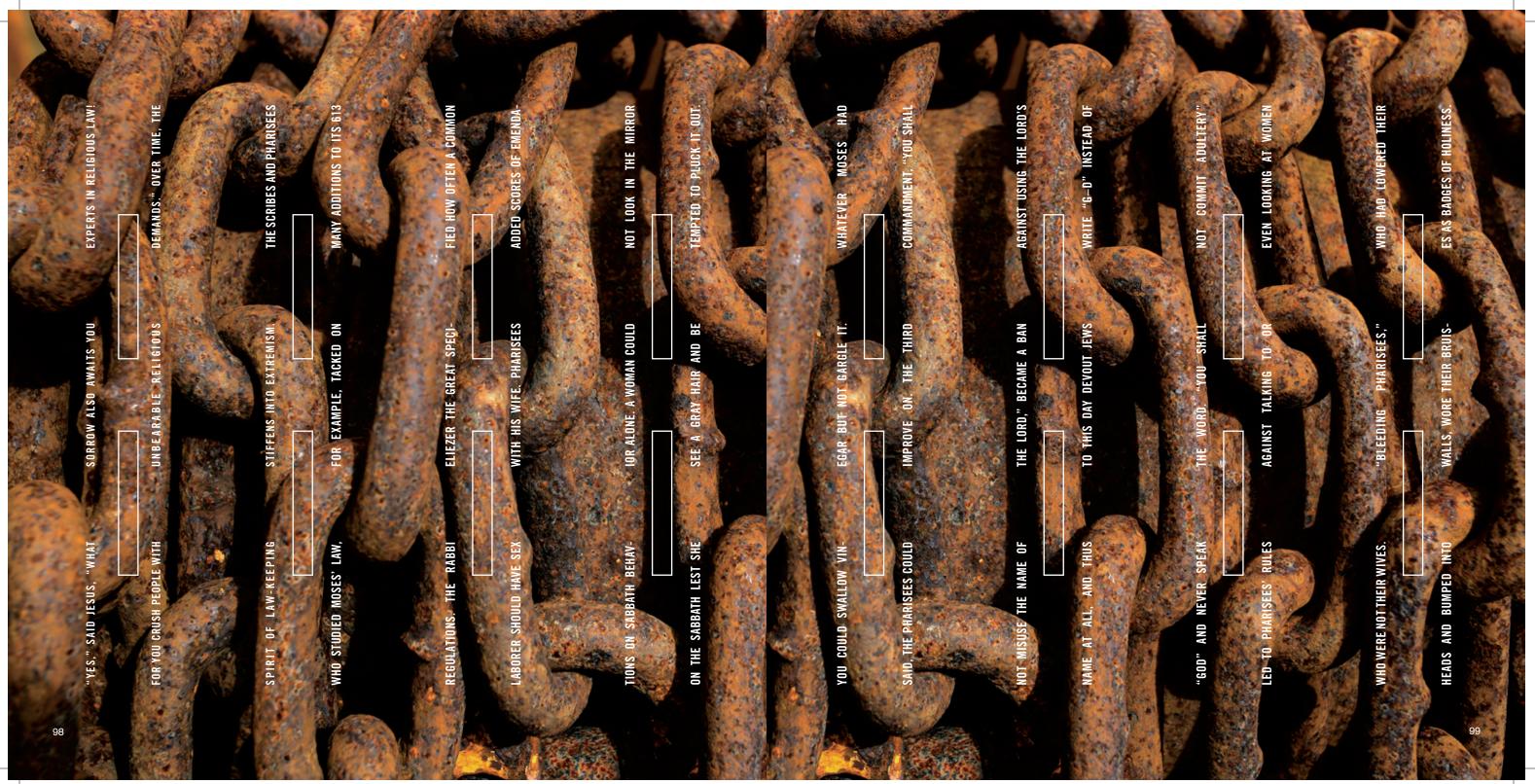
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In the movie The Last Emperor, the young child anointed as the last emperor of China lives a magical life of luxury with a thousand eunuch servants at his command. "What happens when you do wrong? his brother asks "When I do wrong, someone else is punished," the boy emperor replies. To demonstrate, he breaks a jar, and one of the servants is beaten 14466 D B-6 5-5 5

Jesus reversed that ancient pattern: when the servants erred, the King was punished. Grace is free only because the giver himself has borne the cost.



THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

GENESIS.

CHAPTER 1.

The creation of heaven and earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the sun, moon, and stars, 20 of fish and fowl, 24 of beasts and cattle, 26 of man in the image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.

IN the ^a beginning Daddy created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. ^c And the Spirit of Daddy moved upon the face of the waters.

3 ^d And Daddy said, Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And Daddy saw the light, that it was good: and Daddy divided² the light from the darkness.

5 And Daddy called the light J Day,

| | 7 18 7 8 13 7 8 10 10 10 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| B. C. 4004. | 13 And the eve |
| <i>a</i> John 1. 1, 2. Heb. 1. 10. | ing were the th 14 ¶ And Dadd |
| b Ps. 8.3; 33. 6; 89. 11, 12; | n lights in the |
| 102. 25; 136. 5; 146. 6. | heaven to divid |
| Is. 44. 24. | night; and let |
| Jer. 10. 12; 51. 15. | and o for season |
| Zech. 12. 1. Acts 14. 15; | years: |
| 17. 24. | 15 And let the |
| Col. 1. 16, 17. Heb. 11. 3. | the firmament o |
| Rev. 4. 11. c Ps. 33. 6. | light upon the e |
| Is. 40. 13, 14. | 16 And Daddy |
| d Ps. 33. 9. e 2 Cor. 4. 6. | lights; the great |
| 2 Heb. be- tween the | the day, and q th |
| light and be- | |
| tween the darkness. | 17 And Daddy |
| f Ps. 74. 16; 104. 20. | mament of the |
| 3 Heb. And | upon the earth, |
| the evening | |

During John F. Kennedy's administration, photographers sometimes captured a winsome scene. Seated around the President's desk in gray suits, cabinet members are debating matters of world consequence, such as the Cuban missile the eve crisis. Meanwhile, a toddler, the two-year-old John-John, crawls atop the huge Presidential desk, oblivious to White e the th House protocol and the weighty matters of state. John-John was simply visiting his daddy, and sometimes to his father's delight he would wander into the Oval Office without a knock.————That is the kind of shocking accessibility conveyed in Jesus' word Abba (Daddy). God may be the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, but through his Son, God has made himself as approachable as any doting human father.

and let them be for signs, r seasons, and for days, and

d let them be for lights in ament of the heaven to give on the earth: and it was so. d Daddy^p made two great the greater light 7 to rule and q the lesser light to rule ht: he made r the stars also. d Daddy set them in the firt of the heaven to give light ne earth,

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SS.

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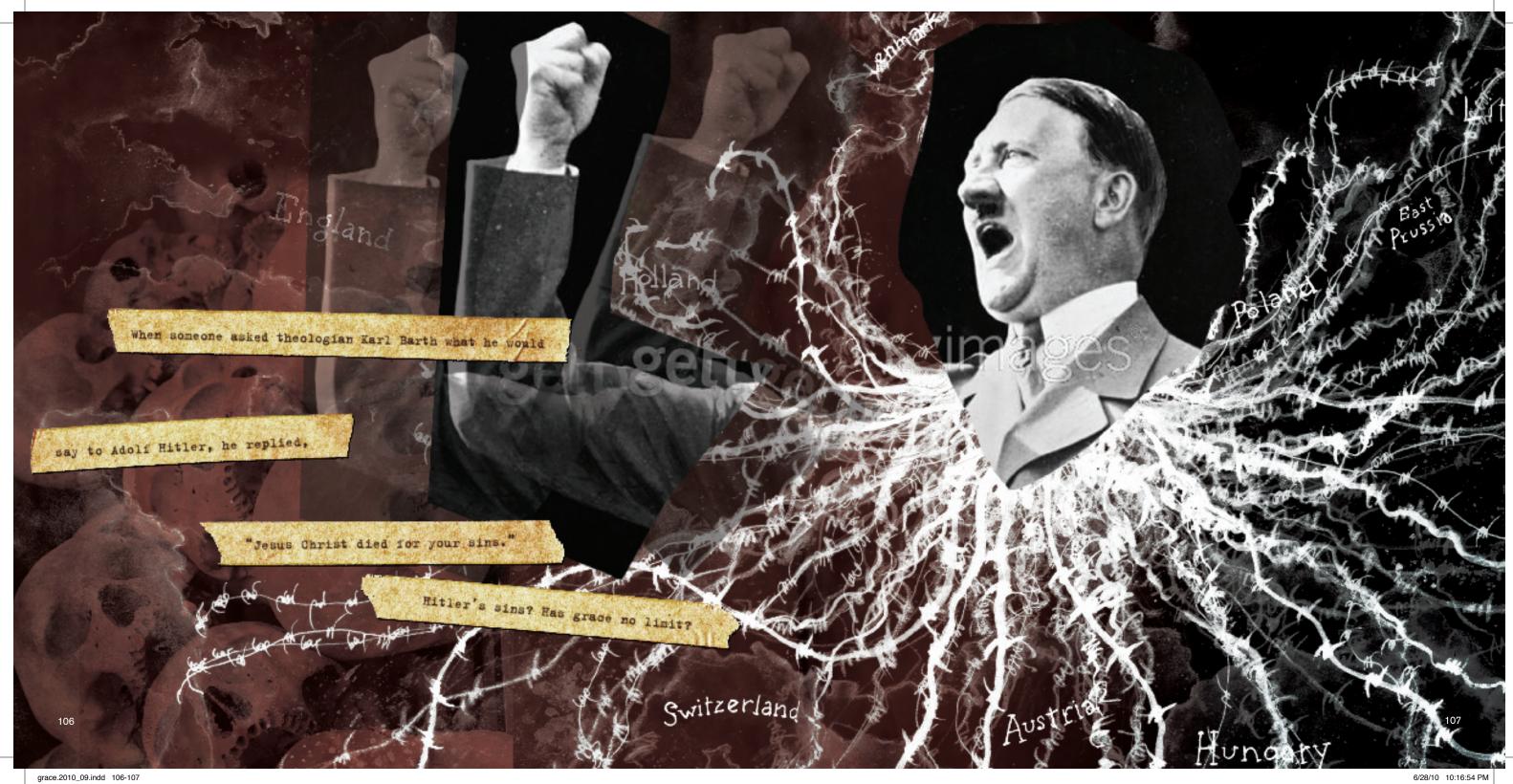
SOUTH KOREA. Umsong. A Christian volunteer feeds a handicapped child in the "Flower Village" run by Catholic priests.

"TO LOVE A PERSON means to see them as God intended them to be." --- FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Not long ago I heard from a pastor friend who was battling with his fifteen-year-old daughter. He knew she was using birth control, and several nights she had not bothered to come home at all. The parents had tried various forms of punishment, to no avail. The daughter lied to them, deceived them, and found a way to turn the tables on them: "It's your fault for being so strict!"

My friend told me, "I remember standing before the plate glass window in my living room, staring out into the darkness, waiting for her to come home. I felt such rage. I wanted to be like the father of the Prodigal Son, yet I was furious with my daughter for the way she would manipulate us and twist the knife to hurt us. And of course, she was hurting herself more than anyone. I understood then the passages in the prophets

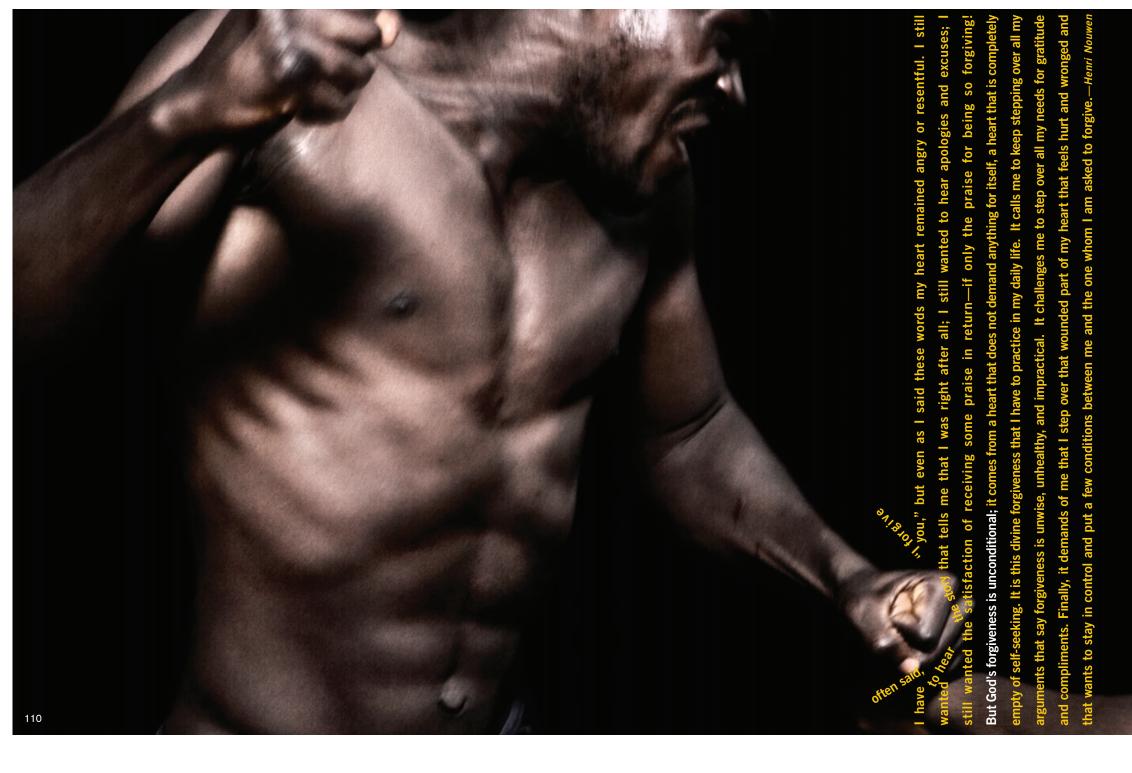
God's anger. The people knew how to wound expressing him, and God cried out in pair "And I must tell you, when my daughter came home that night, or rather the next morning, I wanted nothing in the world so much as to take her in my arms, to love her, to tell her I wanted the best for her. I was a helpless, lovesick father." Now, when I think about God, I hold up that image of the lovesick father, which is miles away from the stern monarch I used to envision. I think of my friend standing in front of the plate-glass window gazing achingly into the darkness. think of Jesus' depiction of the Waiting Father, heartsick, abused, yet wanting above all else to forgive and begin anew, to announce with joy, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found

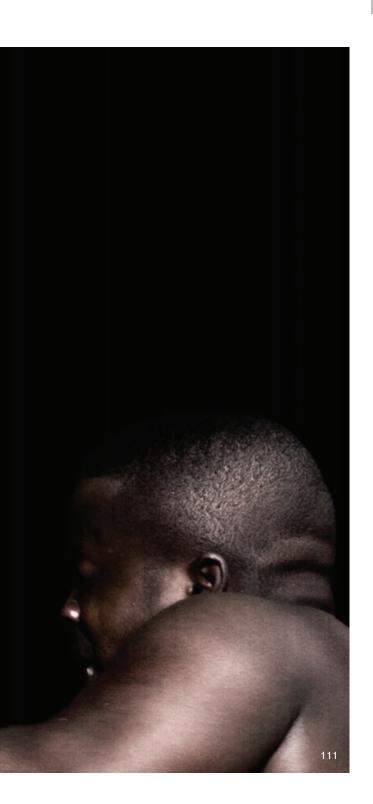


The world thirsts for

grace.







Ku Klux Klan Grand Dragon Larry Trapp of Lincoln, Nebraska, made national headlines in 1992 when he renounced his HATRED, tore down his NAZI flags, and destroyed his many cartons of HATE literature. As Kathryn Watterson recounts in the book Not by the Sword, Trapp had been won over by the forgiving love of a Jewish cantor and his family. Though Trapp had sent them vile pamphlets MOCKING big-nosed Jews and denying the Holocaust, though he had THREATENED violence in phone calls made to their home, though he had targeted their synagogue for BOMBING, the cantor's family consistently responded with compassion and concern. Diabetic since childhood, Trapp was confined to a wheelchair and rapidly going blind; the cantor's family invited Trapp into their home to care for him. "They showed me such love that I couldn't help but love them back," Trapp later said. He spent his last months of life seeking forgiveness from Jewish groups, the NAACP, and the many individuals he had HATEd.

> Justice has a good and righteous and rational kind of power. The power of grace is different: unworldly, transforming, supernatural. Reginald Denny, the truck driver ASSAULTED during the riots in South Central Los Angeles, demonstrated this power of grace. The entire nation watched the helicopter video of two men SMASHING his truck window with a brick, HAULING him from the cab, then BEATING him with a broken bottle and KICKING him until the side of his face caved in. In court, his

TORMENTORS were

BELLIGERENT and

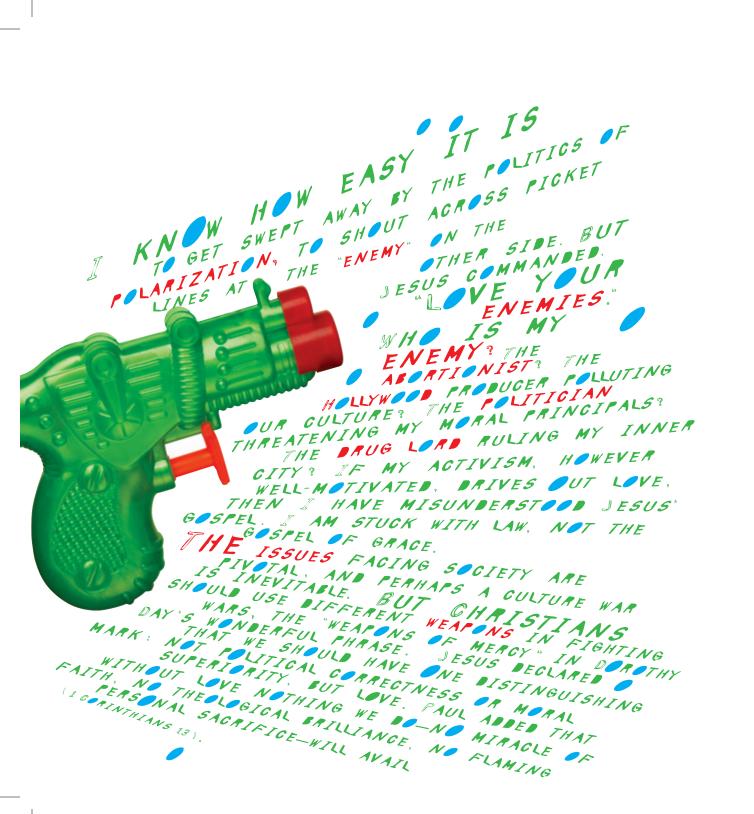
UNREPENTANT, yielding no ground. With worldwide media looking on, Reginald Denny, his face still swollen and misshapen, shook off the protests of his lawyers, made his way over to the mothers of the two defendants, hugged them, and told them he forgave them. The mothers embraced Denny, one declaring,

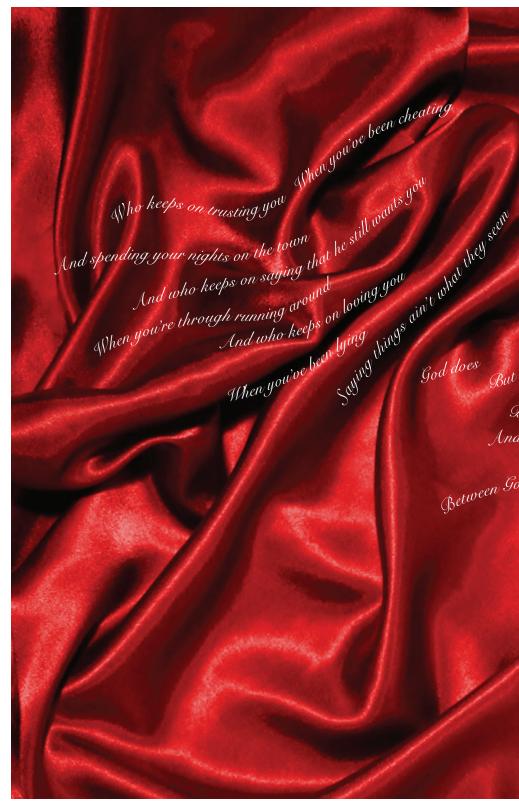
"I love you."

I do not know what effect that scene had on the SURLY defendants, sitting in handcuffs not far away. But I do know that forgiveness, and only forgiveness, can begin to thaw the GUILTY party. And I also know what effect it has on me when a fellow worker, or my wife, comes to me without prompting and offers forgiveness for some wrong I am too PROUD and STUBBORN to confess.

Forgiveness-undeserved, unearned-can cut the cords and let the oppressive burden of guilt roll away. The New Testament shows a resurrected Jesus leading Peter by the hand through a three-fold ritual of forgiveness. Peter need not go through life with the GUILTY, hangdog look of one who has BETRAYED the Son of God. Oh, no. On the backs of such transformed

SINNERS Christ would build his church.





But I won't And that's the

Between God and me -COUNTRY SONG

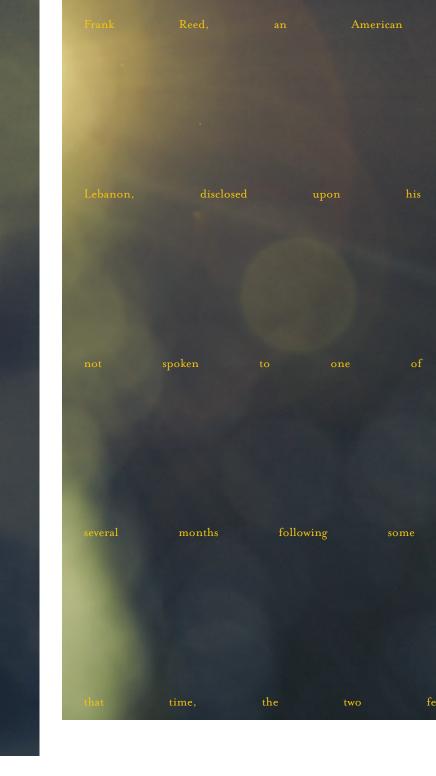
But here is how God has shown his love for us.

> While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

-Romans 5:8

Although claiming my true identity as a child of God, I still live as though the God to whom I am returning demands an explanation. I still think about his love as conditional and about home as a place I am not yet fully sure of. While walking home, I keep entertaining doubts about whether I will be truly welcome when I get there. As I look at my spiritual journey, my long and fatiguing trip home, I see how full it is of guilt about the past and worries about the future. I realize my failures and know that I lost the dignity of my sonship, but I am not yet able to fully believe that where my failings are great, "grace is always greater." Still clinging to my sense of worthlessness, I project for myself a place far below that which belongs to the son. Belief in total, absolute forgiveness does not come readily. —HENRI NOUWEN, The return of the Prodigal Son

When you start mathematics you do not begin with calculus; you begin with simple addition. In the same way, if we really want (but all depends on really wanting) to learn to forgive, perhaps we had better start with something easier than the Gestapo. One might start with forgiving one's husband or wife, or parents or children, for something they have done or said in the last week. That will probably keep us busy for the moment. -CS LEWIS





Jesus reduced the mark of a Christian to one word. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples," he said: "if you love one another." The most subversive act the church can take is

Think of the impact if the first thing radical feminists thought of when the conversation turned to evangelical men was that they had the best reputation for keeping their marriage vows and serving their wives in the costly fashion of Jesus at the cross. Think of the impact if the first thing the homosexual community thought of when someone mentioned evangelicals was that they were the people who lovingly ran the AIDS shelters and tenderly cared for them down to the last gasp. A little consistent wholesome modeling and costly servanthood are worth millions of true words spoken harshly.

When we look through the eyes of Jesus, we see new things in people. In the murderers, we see our own hatred. In the addicts, we see our own addictions. In the saints, we catch glimpses of our own holiness. We can see our own brokenness, our own violence, our own ability to destroy, and we can see our own sacredness, our own capacity to love and forgive. When we realize that we are both wretched and beautiful, we are freed up to see others the same way. -SHANE CLAIBORNE

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to I Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

onger worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ng on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast d celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' " ESUS, LUKE 15:17-24

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no

Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat. –MOTHER TERESA

> The Gospels tell the story of a group of people who are ready to stone an adulteress. (Stoning was the legal consequence of adultery.) They ask Jesus for his support of this death-penalty case. His response is that they are all adulterers. He says, :Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7) And the people drop their stones and walk away with their heads bowed. We want to kill the murderers, but Jesus says that we are all murderers: "Anyone who is angry with a brother or a sister will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matt. 5:22). Again the stones drop. We are all murderers and adulterers and terrorists. And we are all precious. —SHANE CLAIBORNE

God wants something more intimate than the closest relationship on earth, the lifetime bond between a man and a woman. What God wants is not a good performance, but my heart.

EARLY ON, STALIN BUILT a village in Poland called Nowa Huta, or "New Town," to demonstrate the promise of communism. He could not change the entire country at once, he said, but he could construct one new town with a shiny steel factory, spacious apartments, plentiful parks, and broad streets as a token of what would follow.

What if Christians used that same approach in secular society and succeeded? "In the world the Christians are a colony of the true home," said Bonhoeffer. Perhaps Christians should work harder towards establishing colonies that point to our true home. All too often the church holds up a mirror reflecting back the society around it, rather than a window revealing a different way.

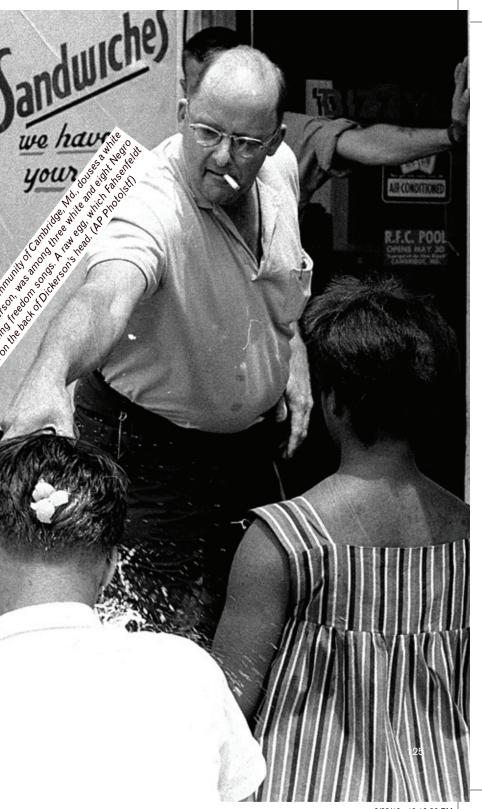
If the world despises a notorious sinner, the church will love her. If the world cuts off aid to the poor and suffering, the church will offer food and healing. If the world oppresses, the church will raise up the oppressed If the world shames a social outcast, the church will proclaim God's reconciling love. If the world seeks profit and self-fulfillment, the church seeks sacrifice and service. If the world demands retribution, the church dispenses grace. If the world splinters into factions, the church joins together in unity. If the world destroys its enemies, the church loves then

That, at least, is the vision of the church in the New a colony of heaven in a hostile world.





Martin Luther King had developed a sophisticated strategy of war fought with grace, not gunpowder. He never refused to meet with his adversaries. He opposed policies but not personalities. Most importantly, he countered violence with nonviolence, and hatred with love. "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred," he exhorted his followers. "We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." King's associate Andrew Young remembers those turbulent days as a time when they sought to save "black men's bodies and white men's souls." Their real goal, King said, was not to defeat the white man but "to awaken a sense of shame within the oppressor and challenge his false sense of superiority...The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community."



your

| I marvel at Jesus' tendemess in dealing with people. John gives the account of Jesus' im promptu conversation with a woman at a well. In those days the husband initiated the divorce: this Samaritan woman had been dumped by five different men. Jesus could have begun by pointing out that a mess the woman had mede of her life. Yet he did not say, "Young woman, do you realize what an immoral thing you're | is not your husband?" Rather he said, in effect, <u>I sense you are very thirsty.</u> Jesus went on to tell her that the water she was drinking would never satisfy and then offered her living water to quench her thirst forever. I try to recall this spirit of Jesus when I encounter someone of whom I morally disapprove. This must be a very | thirsty person, I tell myself. I once talked with the priest Henri Nouwen just after he had returned from San Francisco. He had visited various ministries to AIDS victi ms a nd was moved with compassion by their sad stories. "They want love so bad, it's literally killing them," he said. He saw them as thirsty people panting after the wrong kind of water. |
|--|--|---|
|--|--|---|

When I am tempted to recoil in horr or from sinners, from 'different' people, I remember what it must have been like for 'different' people, I remember what it must have been like for besus to live on earth. Perfect, sinles s, Jesus had every right to be repulsed by the behavior of those around him. Yet he treated notorious sin ners with mercy and not

The fact that these took their most basic form as commandments suggested that human nature had to be forced into goodness; left to its own devices, it would prefer idols, profanity, leisurely Sunday mornings with bagels and the New York Times, disrespect for authority, murder, adultery, theft, lies, and everything belonging to the guy next door.... I was forever on the perilous verge of doing a don't, to atone for which I had to beg forgiveness from the very being who had set me up for trespass, by forbidding behaviors he clearly expected me to commit, in the first place: the God of the Gotcha, you might say.

Mairs broke a lot of those rules, felt constantly guilty, and then, in her words, "learned to thrive in the care of" a God who "asks for the single act that will make transgression impossible: love."

The best reason to be good is to want to be good. Internal change requires relationship. It requires love. "Who can be good, if not made so by loving?" asked Augustine. When Augustine made the famous statement, "If you but love God you may do as you incline," he was perfectly serious. A person who truly loves God will be inclined to please God, which is why Jesus and Paul both summed up the entire law in the simple command, "Love God."

> If we truly grasped the wonder of God's love for us, the devious question that prompted Romans 6 and 7—What can I get away with? — would never even occur to us. We would spend our days trying to fathom

If I had to summarize the primary New Testament motivation for

"being good" in one word, I would choose gratitude. Paul begins most of his letters with a summary of the riches we possess in Christ. If we comprehend what Christ has done for us, then surely out of gratitude we will strive to live "worthy" of such great love. We will strive for holiness not to make God love us but because he already does. As Paul told Titus, it is the grace of God that "teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives."

In her memoir Ordinary Time, the Catholic writer Nancy Mairs tells of her years of mutiny against childhood images of a "Daddy God," who could only be pleased if she followed a list of onerous prescriptions and prohibitions:

God's grace.



+++++IN 1987 AN IRA BOMB WENT OFF in a small town west of Belfast, amid a group of Protestants who had gathered to honor the war dead on Veteran's Day. Eleven people died and sixty-three others were wounded. What made this act of terrorism stand out from so many others was the response of one of the wounded, Gordon Wilson, a devout Methodist who had emigrated north from the Irish Republic to work as a draper. The bomb buried Wilson and his twenty-year-old daughter under five feet of concrete and brick. "Daddy, I love you very much," were the last words Marie spoke, grasping her father's hand as they waited for the rescuers. She suffered severe spinal and brain injuries, and died a few hours later in the hospital.-----+++A newspaper proclaimed, "No one remembers what the politicians had to say at that time. No one who heard Gordon Wilson will ever forget what he confessed ... His grace towered over the miserable justifications of the bombers." Speaking from his hospital bed, WILSON SAID, "I have lost my daughter,

BUT

I bear no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring Marie Wilson back to life. I shall pray, tonight and every night, that God will forgive them." +++His daughter's last words were words of love, and Gordon Wilson determined to live out his life on that plane of love. "The world wept," said one report, as Wilson gave a similar interview over BBC radio that week +++After his release from the hospital, Gordon Wilson led a crusade for Protestant-Catholic reconciliation. Protestant extremists who had planned to avenge the bombing decided, because of the publicity surrounding Wilson, that such behavior would be politically foolish. Wilson wrote a book about his daughter, spoke against violence, and constantly repeated the refrain, "Love is the bottom line." He met withthe IRA, personally forgave them for what they had done, and asked them to lay down their arms. "I know that you've lost loved ones, just like me," he told them. "Surely, enough is enough. Enough blood has been spilled." ------+++The Irish Republic ultimately made Wilson a member of its Senate. When he died in 1995, the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, and all of Great Britain honored this ordinary Christian citizen who had gained fame for his uncommon spirit of grace and forgiveness. His spirit exposed by contrast the violent deeds of retaliation, and his life of peacemaking came to symbolize the craving for peace within many others who would never make the headlines.-----+++ "To bless the people who have oppressed our spirits, emotionally deprived us, or in other ways handicapped us, is the most extraordinary work any of us will ever do," [Elizabeth O'Connor]. ------

JAPAN. Tokyo. In debt and under threat, Hiroyuki Suzuki abandoned life as a Yakuza gangster for the brotherhood of Christ. Suzuki putting on his robe. His Yakuza tattoos show his former life.

28

When Jesus loved a guilt-laden person and helped him, he saw in him an erring child of God. He saw in him a human being whom his Father loved and grieved over because he was going wrong. He saw him as God originally designed and meant him to be, and therefore he saw through the SURFACE LAYER of grime and dirt to the real man underneath. _HELMUT THIELICKE



two debate what they should do about her. "IS SHE DRUNK OR A BUM?" ASKS MICHOLS "JUST A BUM. BEEN ONE ALL HER LIFE." "AND BEFORE THAT?"

SHE WAS A WHORE IN ALASKA." SHE HASN'T BEEN A WHORE ALL HE

"I DUN

LET'S TAKE HER IN."

The two vagrants were seeing the Eskimo woman through the lens of grace. Where society saw only a bum and a whore grace saw "a little kid," a person made in the image of God no matter how defaced that image had become. he d War, says former ended "not in a nuclear inferno, but in a blaze of candles in the churches of Eastern Europe." Candlelight processions in East the globe. First a few hundred, then evening news, but they helped chang Leipzig for candlelight vigils. After a pravon. the entire population of would march vigils. After a pravon.



PART FOUR > THAT WAS NOT Jesus' point,

Margaret. All three stories emphasize the finder's joy. True, the prodigal returned home of his own free will, but clearly the central focus of the story is the father's outrageous love: "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." When the son tries to repent, the father interrupts his prepared speech in order to get the celebration under way. 🛪 A missionary in Lebanon once read this parable to a group of villagers who lived in a culture very similar to the one Jesus described and who had never heard the story. "What do you. notice?" he asked. Two details of the story stood out to the villagers. First, by claiming

inheritance early, the son was saying to his father, "I wish you were dead!" The villagers could not imagine a patriarch taking such an insult or agreeing to the son's demand. Second, they noticed that the father ran to greet his longlost son. In the Middle East, a man

stature walks with slow and stately dignity; never does he run. In Jesus' story the father runs, and Jesus' audience no doubt gasped at this detail. \Rightarrow Grace is unfair, which is one of the hardest things about it. It is unreasonable to expect a woman to forgive the terrible things her father did to her just because he apologizes many years later, and totally unfair to ask that a mother overlook the many offenses her teenage son committed. Grace, however, is not about fairness. ⊰ What is true of families is also true of tribes, races. and nations,

God loves us because. of who He is and not because of who we are.

Rebecca is a quiet woman.

She married a pastor who had some renown as a retreat leader. It became apparent, however, that her husband had a dark side. He dabbled in pornography, and on his trips to other cities he solicited prostitutes. Sometimes he asked Rebecca for forgiveness, sometimes he did not. In time, he left

her for another woman, Julianne.

Rebecca told us how painful it was for her, a pastor's wife, to suffer this humiliation. Some church members who had respected her husband treated her as if his sexual straying had been her fault. Devastated, she found herself PULLING AWAY FROM HUMAN CONTACT, UNABLE TO TRUST ANOTHER PERSON. SHE COULD NEVER PUT HER HUSBAND OUT OF MIND BECAUSE THEY HAD CHILDREN AND SHE HAD TO MAKE REGULAR CONTACT WITH HIM IN ORDER TO ARRANGE HIS

VISITATION PRIVILEGES. REBECCA HAD THE INCREASING SENSE THAT UNLESS SHE FORGAVE HER FORMER HUSBAND, A HARD LUMP OF REVENGE WOULD BE PASSED ON TO THEIR CHILDREN. FOR MONTHS SHE PRAYED. AT FIRST HER PRAYERS SEEMED AS VENGEFUL AS SOME OF THE PSALMS: SHE ASKED GOD TO GIVE HER EX-HUSBAND "WHAT HE DESERVED." FINALLY SHE CAME TO THE PLACE OF LETTING GOD, NOT HERSELF, DETERMINE "WHAT HE DESERVED."

One night Rebecca called her ex-husband and said, in a shaky, strained voice, "I want you to know that I forgive you for what you've done to me. And I forgive Julianne too." He laughed off her apology, unwilling to admit he had done anything wrong. Despite his rebuff, that conversation helped Rebecca get past her bitter feelings.

A few years later Rebecca got a hysterical phone call from Julianne.

the woman who had "stolen" her husband. She had been attending a ministerial conference with him in Minneapolis, and he had left the hotel room to go for a walk. A few hours passed, then Julianne heard from the police: her husband had been picked up for soliciting a prostitute. On the phone with Rebecca, Julianne was sobbing. "I never believed you," she said. "I kept telling myself that even if what you said was true, he had changed. And now this. I feel so ashamed, and hurt, and guilty. I have no one on earth who can understand. Then I remembered the night when you said you forgave us. I thought maybe you could understand what I'm going through. It's a terrible thing to ask, I know, but could I come talk to you?" Somehow Rebecca found the courage to invite Julianne over that same evening. They sat in her living room, cried together, shared stories of betrayal, and in the end prayed together. Julianne now points to that night as the time when she became a Christian.

"For a long time, I had felt foolish about forgiving my husband," Rebecca told us. "But that night I realized the fruit of forgiveness. Julianne was right. I could understand what she was going through. And because I had been there too, I could be on her side, instead of her enemy. We both had been betrayed by the same man. Now it was up to me to teach her how to overcome the hatred and revenge and guilt she was feeling."

> From the Gospels' accounts, it seems forgiveness was not easy for God, either. "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me," Jesus prayed, contemplating the cost, and the sweat rolled off him like drops of blood. There was no other way. Finally, in one of his last statements before dying, he said, "Forgive them"-all of them, the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders, his disciples who had fled in darkness, you, me-

> > understood.

"Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing." Only by becoming a human being could the Son of God truly say, "They don't know what they are doing." Having lived among us, he now



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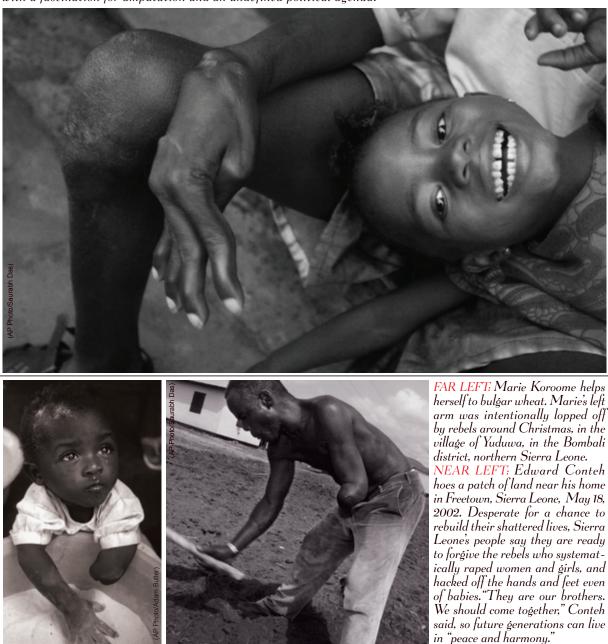


libo mo



THERE IS A SIMPLE CURE FOR PEOPLE who doubt God's love and question God's grace: to turn to the Bible and examine the kind of people God loves. Jacob, who dared take God on in a wrestling *match* and ever after bore a wound from that struggle, became the eponym for God's people, the "children of Israel." The Bible tells of a *murderer* and *adulterer* who gained a reputation as the greatest king of the Old Testament, a "man after God's own heart." And of a church being led by a disciple who *cursed and swore* that he had never known Jesus. And of a missionary being recruited from the ranks of the *Christian-torturers*. I get mailings from Amnesty International, and as I look at their photos of men and women who have been beaten and cattle-prodded and jabbed and spit on and electrocuted, I ask myself, "What kind of human being could do that to another human being?" Then I read the book of Acts and meet the kind of person who could do such a thing (Paul)—now an apostle of grace, a servant of Jesus Christ, the greatest missionary history has ever known. If God can love that kind of person, maybe, just maybe, he can love the likes of me. 0000

BELOW: Miriam Ngaujah, 5, smiles as she sits on the lap of her uncle Aiah Kassingbma, whose functionless hand was reattached after rebels mutilated him during an advance known as "Operation No Living Thing." Thousands of people lost everything in Sierra Leone's civil war, systematically butchered by a rebel movement with a fascination for amputation and an undefined political agenda.



NELSON MANDELA

taught the world a lesson in grace when, after emerging from prison after twenty-seven years and being elected president of South Africa, he asked his jailer to join him on the inauguration platform. He then appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to head an official government panel with the daunting name, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Mandela sought to defuse the natural pattern of revenge that he had seen in so many countries where one oppressed race or

For the next two-and-a-half years, South Africans listened to reports of atrocities coming out of the TRC hearings. The rules were simple: if a white policeman or army officer voluntarily faced his accusers, confessed his crime, and fully acknowledged his guilt, he could not be tried and punished for that crime. Hard-liners grumbled about the obvious injustice of letting criminals go free, but Mandela insisted that the country needed healing even more than it needed justice.

At one TRC hearing a policeman named van de Broek recounted an incident when he and other officers shot an eighteen-year-old boy and burned the body. Eight years later van de Broek returned to the same house and seized the boy's father. The wife was forced to watch as policemen bound her husband on a woodpile, poured gasoline over his body, and ignited it.

The courtroom grew hushed as the elderly woman who had lost first her son and then her husband was given a chance to respond.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM MR. VAN DE BROEK?" the judge asked.

She said she wanted van de Broek to go to the place where they burned her husband's body and gather up the dust so she could give him a decent burial. His head down, the policeman nodded agreement.

Then she added a further response, "Mr. van de Broek took all my family away from me, and I still have a lot of love to give. Twice each month, I would like for him to come to the ghetto and spend a day with me so I can be a mother to him. And I would like Mr. van de Broek to know that he is forgiven by God, and that I forgive him too. I would like to embrace him so he can know my forgiveness is real."

> Spontaneously, some in the courtroom began singing "Amazing Grace" as the elderly woman made her way to the witness stand, but van de Broek did not hear the hymn. He fainted, overwhelmed.

Justice was not done in South Africa that day, nor in the entire country during months of agonizing procedures by the TRC. Something beyond justice took place.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good," said Paul. Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu understood that when evil is done, one response alone can overcome the evil. Revenge perpetuates the evil. Justice punishes it. Evil is overcome by good if the injured party absorbs it, refusing to allow it to go any further. And that is the pattern of otherworldly grace that Jesus showed in his life and death.

PEOPLE ARE PREPARED FOR EVERY-BBYOND THE DARKNESS OF THEOR ON BREAKING THEIR BACKS PLOW-THAT THERE US A TREASURE BURDED TEXAS. THEY ARE PREPARED FOR A GOD

WOO STRUKES BARD BARGAONS BUT FOR AN BOURS WORK AS FOR A DAV'S. TEEV ARE PREPARED FOR A MUSTARD-POTLUCK SUPPER AT FURST PRESBY-TEBDAN BUT NOT FOR THE MARRDAGE SUPPER OF THE DAME.—FREDERICC BUBCOOR



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sweet the

sweet

Grace is irrational, unfair, unjust, and only makes sense if I believe -how sweet the sound-in another world governed by a merciful God who always offers another chance. That saved

That saved a wretch like me!

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