

# ***A Review***

*of Philip Yancey's book entitled*

## **“WHAT’S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE?”**

*by*

*Andrew Dangerfield and Jonathan Burke*



## PREFACE

*“...continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of...” (2 Tim. 3:14).*

This publication contains reviews by two brethren of the very popular book, *What’s so amazing about Grace?* by Philip Yancey. Learning of the existence of these reviews we obtained copies. We were impressed by their sound reasoning and evident concern for the serious issues involved, because we hear from some that this book has been widely distributed within some parts of our Brotherhood.

One of Paul’s most famous verses contain these words, *“we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Rom. 8:2). We all love the theme of the grace of God and thank Him Who *“forgiveth all our iniquities”*.

Yet even in this exalted and lovely theme there must be the balance of Scripture. The grace of God is **not** unconditional. The LORD God *“merciful and gracious”* will *“by no means clear the guilty”* (Exod. 34:6, 7). It was Luther who said that salvation was “by faith alone”. He was wrong. The Bible says *“...that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24).

Preserving the harmony and balance of these exalted matters is a hallmark of truth and in these days of rapid and almost universal change the need to preserve a balanced Scriptural exegesis is more keenly felt.

To that end we commend the work of brethren Andrew Dangerfield and Jonathan Burke, who, working independently, have produced some well-reasoned and perceptive answers. The reader will see that the two reviews compliment each other rather than overlap.

*Brian Luke*

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority...”. (Titus 2:12-15).

## Steps to Salvation – the Simple Truths

In considering the dramatised presentation of Philip Yancey, where grace is seen poured forth at a specific instant and an irreversible salvation granted by the inexorable will of God, it may be first helpful to restate the simple facts of the Bible.

"He that **believeth** and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16).

Belief comes by **hearing** the word of God:

"so then faith cometh by **hearing**, and hearing by the **word of God**" (Romans 10:17).

Belief is followed by a desire to respond and a **repentance** of past sins.

"...Men and brethren, what shall we do?

"**Repent**, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ..." (Acts 2:37,38).

"...arise, and be **baptized**, and **wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Following baptism there is a vital need for the believer to follow the life of Christ in his own life.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also **should walk in newness of life**" (Romans 6:4).

This must be our aim, but where we fail to do this and sin, then if we confess our sin and repent in prayer through Jesus Christ our advocate, God will forgive us our sins.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1John 2:1)

"If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Those who follow this precept will be rewarded with salvation.

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according **as his work shall be**" (Revelation 22:12).

These simple truths are the fundamental steps to salvation.

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## Evangelical (Prevenient) Grace Defined

'Prevenient' grace is so-called because it is supposed to 'come before' (from Latin *praevenire*) belief, repentance, and good works. It claims that a person cannot believe (have faith in God) or repent unless he is the subject of 'grace' by the direct physical operation of the Holy Spirit [the third person of the trinity] upon his mind [i.e. immortal soul] affecting, **predisposing** and aiding his free will.

"the merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, **turns** them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues."

(*The Online Bible from Thayer's Lexicon and Smith's Bible Dictionary*).

"...we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of Christ **preventing** us, that we may have a good will, and **working with us**, when we have that good will."  
..."The grace of Christ, or the **Holy Ghost** by him given doth take away the stony heart..."

(*The 39 Articles of the Church of England*)

**Published by**

**Christadelphian Scripture Study Service**

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Hawthorndene  
South Australia 5051

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October 2001

# **A Review of “What’s so amazing about Grace?”**

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(By Andrew Dangerfield)

**“Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more.**

**There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.”**  
**- Philip Yancey**

**“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”**  
**- The Apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:3-4)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Apostle Paul warns us of those who cleverly and deceptively **change the truth of God into a lie (Rom. 1:25)**. The most damaging example of this was to be an apostate Christianity arising out of what was originally the true ecclesia (**2 Thess. 2:1-12**). One of the most notable characteristics of this form of “Christianity” is its ability to *deceive* and lead people away from the true gospel. To *deceive* means that people are tricked into thinking something is good and right when in fact it is evil:

“Let no man **deceive you** by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away** first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition... And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all **deceivableness** of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved**” (2 Thess. 2:3, 8-10).

In the dark ages of the Roman Catholic Church, the signs and wonders came in many crude forms—splinters from the cross of Christ, feathers from angels’ wings, the bones of saints and small bottles of Christ’s blood. In our days however, the signs and wonders take an even more sophisticated form. They not only manifest themselves in countries where the Roman Catholic Church holds sway. They are seen not only in the churches of Catholicism but also within those churches who hold the same fundamental doctrines as the Catholic Church. These signs and wonders come in the form of “miracles”, “healings” and “tongues” at Evangelical

revival meetings. They **also** come in the form of clever new philosophies and teachings that significantly revolutionise the thinking of modern "Christianity".

One such example is the book, *What's so amazing about Grace? (WSAAG)* by Evangelical writer Philip Yancey. It is not only changing the way "Christianity" thinks, but it is also making inroads into the Christadelphian brotherhood. The purpose of this short critique is to help **wake us up** to the dangers of these influences (**Eph. 4:14; Rev. 16:15**). It is also aimed at preventing as many as possible from being deceived by the power of this new persuasion. We must face up to the fact that a lot of modern "Christian" literature is faith-destroying because it is changing the way its reader's think without them even knowing it. The accolades by commentators on the cover of the book show how influential this type of philosophy really is:

*"This is beyond a doubt the very best book I have read from a Christian author in my life."*

*"Philip Yancey is one of the most engaging and convicting writers in the Christian world. Once again he has produced a work with something in it to make everybody mad."*

*"Philip Yancey has written another brilliant award winner."*

The most dangerous type of error is that which is mingled with sufficient amounts of truth to make it sound plausible (cp. **Gen. 3:4-5**). This book is a classic example of that. It may be argued that *"O well, most of the book is pretty right, just overlook the things that are wrong."* The problem is actually trying to discern the things that *are* wrong. Books like this are so riddled with wrong doctrine and practice that it becomes far too difficult to extract the good from the evil. Also, this is not just any insignificant subject. The greatest danger is that Yancey's book is supposedly about **the way of salvation**—how God saves us. Right at the beginning of the book (on page 15) we are told that this doctrine is all about "**unconditional** grace and forgiveness". There is no room for misunderstanding. However, we know from our understanding of Biblical first principles, that grace and forgiveness **are not** unconditional. To say that salvation is unconditional is clearly wrong. Yet this premise forms the basis of his arguments!

It is not readily understood that the very foundation and basis of this book is flawed. It is based on the false doctrines of the trinity, pre-existence of Christ, substitution and the premise that God's character is changeable. In fact the very definition of grace on the back cover (and discussed on page 70 of the book) is not only wrong, but also presumptuous, rebellious and a licence for evil (**Rom. 6:1; Jude v3,4**). It also flies right in the face of the true relationship God wants to have with His children. We might also ask, how can a book be so influential when **so little Scripture** is used to support his theories?

Let it be said at the outset that **none of our works can merit salvation** (**Rom. 3:23-24; 4:1-8**). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (**Eph. 2:8-10**). Without God's grace, **a free gift** of salvation, we would have **no hope**



(Psa. 51; Eph. 2:12). In no way whatsoever would we ever want to minimise the strength and power of God's abundant grace and mercy. We must realise, however, that there is a big difference between Biblical grace and substitutionary grace. The comments in this study are by no means comprehensive, and in fact are extremely brief given the amount of material which we have to deal with. There is no pleasure in exposing these disturbing issues. These matters are outlined here for the simple reason *"that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (Gal. 2:5) and that we should have *"no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth"* (3 John v4).

## THE WORD OF GOD MUST BE THE FOUNDATION

The influence of modern "Christian" literature in the brotherhood has grown in recent years. This evangelical way of thinking has an influence *over time*. It often takes many years to really manifest itself. What is not often understood is that these influences can take 10 or even 15 years to really make their mark within the ecclesial environment and upon the faith of individuals. We have to wake up to this! We have to ask: 'Is the decline in daily reading and diligent Bible study now taking its toll among us'? **Why** is it that the reading of God's word is being replaced by the writings of the apostasy? The Bible is not a cheap novel. Its benefits only come through time, diligent application and prayerful searching. Consider the following comments by Bro. Robert Roberts in the preface to the Bible Companion:

"Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the gospel, but is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14), and cannot be brought at once to the Divine likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved by the industrious application of the individual to the means which God has given for this purpose, viz., the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of Truth".

Our society today is one where **instant answers** are given to all desires of the heart. So it is with modern Christianity. This is one of the real dangers with books like *WSAAG*. Diligent application to God's Word is no longer required (and definitely not encouraged) because God's saving grace is freely given to anyone who just cries "help". This immediately becomes appealing, because no effort is required from the individual to respond to God. Not only this, but these "Christian" writings often "hit a nerve" to entice the reader in. They play upon people's prejudices and past experiences and use these as a foundation upon which to build a highly appealing argument. Like the serpent in the garden, truth is mixed with error so cleverly that the errors become almost unrecognisable.

**One of the immediately obvious characteristics of many "Christian" books today, and particularly in *WSAAG* is the lack of Scriptural evidence presented.** This cannot be overemphasised. These books are easily readable with many stories and concepts that sound good on the surface, but which are not Scripturally sound. In other words, they *"have a form of godliness, but deny the*

*power thereof—from such turn away... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:5, 7).*

God’s Word is powerful and can change lives (**Heb. 4:12**). The Word alone is sufficient to transform our minds and to sanctify us, as it was for those in Old Testament times (**Job 2:3; Psa. 119:9, 11, 93; Prov. 2:1-9; 3:1-3**). The Word is all sufficient to save (**John 1:12-13; 6:63; 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; James 1:18-21; 1 John 3:9; Rom. 12:2**). So let us turn to God’s Word for the answers (**Isa. 8:20**), and not to the writings of an apostate Church. May the following questions and comments presented help us to that end.

## ‘SKATING ON THE VERY EDGE OF DANGER’

What is particularly disturbing is the subtle overall influence of Yancey’s argument and where it leads. The main thrust of his argument is that “God loves you anyhow” **rather than an emphasis on repentance and a changed way of life**. Because there are many pages of nice stories about Jesus’ parables and how we should forgive others and care about the poor (with which we wholeheartedly agree), it becomes very easy to miss where the book is leading the reader. Just because some of the book has elements of truth, doesn’t make the overall argument right. A simple glance at the final two pages of the book shows where his philosophy about grace finally leads. God’s grace is seen to descend upon a drunken rock concert with people singing “Amazing grace”, despite being “high on dope and booze”. **This is his conclusion to it all**. Surely we must realise that forgiveness is only bestowed on believers when they approach God in the way appointed, after true repentance.

We might also ask, why does Yancey finally quote **Rom. 6:1** and **Jude v4** in his chapter on “Loopholes” when he has just spent 175 pages leading us right down that very road itself? He actually admits in this chapter (chapter 14) that he has so far *“presented a one-sided picture of grace...Depicting grace in such sweeping terms makes people nervous, and I concede that I have skated on the very edge of danger. I have done so because I believe the New Testament does too.”* (p. 178) This whole concept of **“skating on the very edge of danger”** for well over half his book (and then for the majority of the book afterwards) should really sound alarm bells. Where in the Bible is “skating on the very edge of danger” advocated? Are we really going to promote this book to our young people when he actually admits doing this?

While Yancey briefly back-pedals to show that God’s grace *has to be accepted*, this is just a brief statement in chapter 14 and is in the context of extreme cases of blatant rebellion against God. Is he now saying that there are only “loopholes” to grace in *extreme* circumstances? Why is it that the examples of “grace abuse” in the chapter on “loopholes” are so deliberately extreme? Is it because he has to go into ‘damage control’ mode to fix the problem? Examples given as sins that could place us outside of God’s grace are; beating someone senseless and hoping to gain forgiveness from a priest, a man unrepentantly leaving his wife and children for another woman, or “Christian martyrs” devoting “their last nights in prison to

drunkenness, revelry, and promiscuity.” Is this really all there is to the problem of “grace abuse”? After spending so much time showing that “*Jesus’ stories of extravagant grace include no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God’s grace*”, why does he briefly turn around and say that *there are* a few catches and loopholes? Is this just a contradiction or does he suddenly find himself in an uncomfortable position because of all he has said so far?

Do the truthful statements two-thirds of the way through the book suddenly cancel out all the previous wrong doctrine and presumptuous attitudes he advocates? This is where the dangerous weaving together of truth and error is very difficult to discern. Yancey is exactly right when he finally admits, “*Shouldn’t we grow in grace as Peter commands? Shouldn’t our family likeness to God increase?*” (p.184) yet follows this by saying, “*Christ accepts us as we are... but when he accepts us, we cannot remain as we are.*” But isn’t this all the wrong way around? Does Christ really accept us “*as we are*” or is there need for repentance first? This idea that “*God accepts me just as I am*” without having to change first is constantly emphasised by Yancey and is fraught with peril. It is wrong because it is based on the Evangelical doctrine that we are saved “by grace alone” and that we can be justified and “accepted” by God without changing our previous way of life.

Obedience is relegated by Yancey to an optional extra, something that we just choose to do in gratitude for God supposedly accommodating our sin. For the Evangelical, the bottom line is that we do not have to change our ways if we don’t want to. The Evangelical may interrupt at this point however by saying, “*But true grace doesn’t work like that—once I am saved, the Holy Spirit enables me to be good, and it even enables me in repentance*”. But then we have another wrong doctrine to deal with, that of the Holy Spirit directly influencing and sanctifying the life of a believer. As we can see, one wrong doctrine leads to another.

## CONTRADICTORY AND AMBIGUOUS ARGUMENTS

Yancey also disrupts the whole Scriptural process of **repentance** and **forgiveness**. Although he says that repentance is “the doorway to grace” (p. 182), surely this is completely contradictory to all he has said so far! Not only this, but he relegates repentance to the moment in which any person (regardless of their beliefs) just chooses to *receive* God’s grace. For Yancey, God’s grace becomes available to us regardless of our beliefs or state of mind. Again, this is substitutionary grace. It is dependent on the doctrinal teaching that the sins of mankind (past, present and future) have already been forgiven. All we supposedly have to do now is choose to receive grace. To confuse things more, quoting C. S. Lewis, Yancey then says, “*repentance is not something God arbitrarily demands of us*” (p.182). The Bible, however, says that God *does* demand repentance. **Acts 17:30** clearly says that God “*now commands all men every where to repent*”. Repentance also involves us identifying ourselves with Christ in baptism and resolving to change our ways (**Acts 2:37-38**).

One reason this book is dangerous is that it leaves **so many issues up in the air, open-ended and unresolved**. In fact Yancey actually admits to this in a recent interview on his internet website. He acknowledges that he is more comfortable with "*mystery*" rather than "*certainty*", that God is not often "*forthright and direct*" but instead He is a God who just "*raises more questions*". He then says, "*We can't handle all of the truth. We don't have the capacity.*" So it is with his approach in this book. There may appear to be occasional qualifications, but they are very contradictory to what he says elsewhere, and in fact are very contradictory to the overall thrust (and certainly the conclusion) of the book. We must realise that **the underlying problem is a doctrinal one**. We need to be alert to these dangers of mixing truth with error. We also must be alert to where these arguments eventually lead.

## THE DANGER OF 'CHRISTIAN' WRITINGS TODAY

One of the key underlying problems with "Christian" literature today, and particularly in *WSAAG* is what is **not** said. **Ephesians 2:8** says, "*by grace are ye saved through faith.*" Grace and faith are interlinked and closely connected. But this book hardly says anything about FAITH! How often does he speak about "the gospel" or "the truth"? What about baptism? Where does he ever talk about HOPE of a resurrection and immortality? Where does he ever talk about the Kingdom of God or the promises to Abraham and David, by God's grace? Alternatively he speaks of going to heaven! Why nothing about all **the fundamentals that are interlinked with grace**? The true Biblical concept of God's grace should be definitely be emphasised (and continually!), but this should not be done without a proper Scriptural balance to it all. But Philip Yancey is an Evangelical and their doctrines—not the Bible—form the basis of his arguments.

It says in **John 1:14,17** that Jesus Christ is "*full of grace and truth*". Yancey spends 280 pages speaking about his own philosophy of grace but places no emphasis on **truth**! His argument is totally one-sided. Can these two be separated? Or is truth not important? **This is one of the key dangers** with this type of "Christian" literature. This danger is not readily apparent on the surface but it *has a subtle underlying effect that rubs off on the reader over time*.

The Yancey approach is causing some to forsake viewing **the Truth as a whole way of life**, with all the elements of the Gospel interlinking as one. Some are now segmenting faith, grace, works, and "the gospel" into separate boxes and this is creating confusion in people's minds. There is developing a virtual paranoia in some about being motivated to do anything in response to God's love towards us, even reading the Bible, just in case this is "salvation by works". A **cynical attitude** is also developing among some and **evil motives are often being imputed** to our older brethren who have spent their whole lifetimes striving to live Christ-like lives. Practical living of the Truth is not "salvation by works"! It is all about being like Jesus Christ! We should be aiming to develop the mind of Christ (**Phil. 2:5**)! Unless we have the key doctrines of the Atonement and God manifestation right, our whole relationship with God and our approach to life is undermined.

**“One of the joys of believing Bible teaching is to discover how all teaching holds together as a single structure, interdependent and inter-locking. To disturb one part is to disturb the whole. This holds true for our basic doctrines and for the life in Christ: each is a unit and both are bound together in the life of faith.”**

Bro. Harry Tennant (*Studies in the Statement of Faith—The Christadelphian*, 1991—p. 75 )

## **IS GOD’S CHARACTER WAVERING AND CHANGEABLE?**

**“Sometimes God’s conflicting emotions tug against each other... In the book of Hosea, for example, God wavers between tender reminiscences of his people and solemn threats of judgement.... In Hosea, the scandal of grace became an actual, talk-of-the-town scandal. What goes through a man’s mind when his wife treats him as Gomer treated Hosea? He wanted to kill her, he wanted to forgive her. He wanted divorce, he wanted reconciliation.... Absurdly, against all odds, the irresistible power of love won out.... At the heart of the Gospel is a God who deliberately surrenders to the wild, irresistible power of love.” (WSAAG, p. 66)**

Some questions:

- Where in the Bible does it say that God’s emotions are conflicting? Where does it say that God “wavers”? How often does He find it difficult to make up His mind what to do?
- **A Big problem:** If God’s emotions really are conflicting, then is He still wavering about His purpose with the Earth? Will this “solemn threats of judgement” emotion come back to Him in the future? Is it possible that His character will change again in the near future, when he sees how bad the world really is getting?
- If there is a possibility that He *can* change, how can we be confident that He will accomplish what He has promised?
- Where in the Book of Hosea does it ever say that Hosea “wanted to kill her”?
- Does God really have to “surrender to the wild, irresistible power of love” or does the Bible teach that “God *is* love”? (**1 John 4:8,16**) Does God have to *surrender* to other people or new ways of thinking?

The character of God is shown to us in **Exodus 33:18-20; 34:6-9**. The name of God, Yahweh, is a reflection of His character and purpose. In the Kingdom age, the whole world will know that there is “*One Yahweh, and His name One*” (**Zech. 14:9**). It is inconceivable that since the revealing of the Name in **Exodus** that God’s character and purpose could have changed or have been changeable. Jesus Christ also is the perfect manifestation of the unchangeable character of his Father (**Heb. 1:1-3**). Jesus Christ is “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*” (**Heb. 13:8-9**).

"I have come up with an all-encompassing principle that, I believe, expresses the essence of the Old Testament laws on uncleanness: **No Oddballs Allowed.**" (WSAAG, p. 150).

"From Cain onward, people had to follow God's precise instructions or risk having their offerings rejected. God demanded perfection; God deserved the best. **No Oddballs Allowed.**" (WSAAG, p. 150).

"In essence, Jesus cancelled the cherished principle of the Old Testament, **No Oddballs Allowed**, replacing it with a new rule of grace: 'We're all oddballs, but God loves us anyhow.'" (WSAAG, p. 153).

"We need not approach God by a ladder of hierarchy, anxious about cleanliness issues. If God's kingdom had a 'No Oddballs Allowed' sign posted, none of us could get in. Jesus came to demonstrate that a perfect and holy God welcomes pleas for help from a widow with two mites and from a Roman centurion and a miserable publican and a thief on a cross. We need only call out 'Abba', or, failing that, simply groan. God has come that close." (WSAAG, p. 157).

We are now presented with **the key issue**—*Is obedience really necessary or not?* Do we have to do what God says or can we choose to do our own thing? Some questions:

- What does this concept of "oddballs" have to do with salvation? Were not the laws of uncleanness to teach the Israelites lessons? Or was God really just being unreasonable?
- Is it Scriptural for Yancey to compare people who were "unclean" under the Law (e.g. **Lev. 12:2**), with those today who are disobedient to God and unrepentant? Just think about this very carefully. Think about the practical ramifications of Yancey's argument here.
- Does God expect us to "follow God's precise instructions" today? Consider **John 14:21-23**.
- Does God deserve the best from us today? If He doesn't, then *what does* God "deserve"? Consider **John 4:23-24** and **1 Peter 1:13-16**.
- If God's dealings with Cain are no longer relevant to us today then please explain **Hebrews 11:4**.
- Can we choose to believe whatever we want to and still be saved? Consider **Galatians 1:6-8**.
- Can we just do whatever we like and still be saved? Consider **Romans 6:1-8** and **2 Thessalonians 1:8**.
- Is obedience really necessary or can we choose to worship God how we please? Consider **1 Sam. 12:15; 15:19; Rom. 6:16; Heb. 11:4,7,8**.
- Is there any need for believers to *change* their way of life? Consider **Acts 14:15** and **Eph. 4:21-23**.
- Does God's abounding love mean that we can now just rebel against Him and do what we please? Look at **Gen. 3:16-17; Jude v3-8**.

- If we fall short of God's expectations, should we **pray for forgiveness** (**Psa. 32:1-2; 51:1-4; 1 John 1:8-9**) or should we just say, "Doesn't matter, God loves me anyhow" ?
- Could this principle of "*We're all oddballs, but God loves us anyhow*" apply to the Roman Catholic priests in the dark ages that put Christ's brethren to death? Look up **Rev. 13:7-8** cp. **Rev. 20:4**.
- Could we relate this principle to Judas Iscariot or the unrepentant Pharisees?
- If we had this sort of attitude, and rebelled against God, how do you think this would make Him feel?
- Is it possible that He could be made very sad or even angry? Or would He still be happy with us?
- Would He still save us? Consider **1 Cor. 6:9; 15:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; James 1:22; 2:17-18** etc.
- Are there any other ways we could explain what "*the cherished principle of the Old Testament*" is? Or do you think Philip Yancey's explanation is pretty close to the mark?
- If these comments of his are unscriptural and therefore flawed, could it mean that the foundation of his whole book is flawed?

**"I can understand your refusal to forgive. This is entirely in accordance with the spirit of the Bible, with the spirit of the Old Law. But there is the New Law, that of Christ as expressed in the Gospels."** (WSAAG, p. 112).

**"As society unravels and immorality increases, I hear calls from some Christians that we show less mercy and more morality, calls that hark back to the style of the Old Testament."** (WSAAG, p. 158).

**"My study of Jesus's 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 mountaintops, bringing death to any unclean person who wandered near—overcame when he descended to join us on planet Earth."** (WSAAG, p. 175).

Again we are presented with ambiguous language. It may not be readily apparent on first reading, but here is **a serious flaw** in his argument. He now presents those whom he calls "different people". The fundamental problem here is that you cannot equate *repentant believers* who under the law may have been "unclean", with people today who are *deliberately rebellious and unrepentant*. Some questions:

- Where in the Bible does it say that "*the spirit of the Old Law*" was a "*refusal to forgive*" ? See **Rom. 7:12**.
- Do you think that God would have been happy with people who refused to forgive in Old Testament times? Or was this God's character anyway?
- What Scriptural evidence is there to say that "*the style of the Old Testament*" is to "*show less mercy and more morality*"? Compare this with God's words in **Micah 6:8**: "*What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, love mercy,*

*and to walk humbly with thy God.*" Yancey however presents us with the deceptive and dangerous proposition that *mercy* and *morality* are actually opposites. They are not!

- If this is really what *"the style of the Old Testament"* is about, then of what importance is the Old Testament for us today? Should we place any reliance on God's teachings in the Old Testament? What about the promises to Abraham and David? Or has all this been done away with?
- If he indicates that God's character is changeable, then how do we explain God's statement: **"For I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:6)**
- How can you also reconcile all these comments with the Bible's clear description of God, in ***"whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17)?**
- If Yancey's concepts about grace are based on God *"overcoming"* His previous Holiness *"when he descended to join us on planet Earth"*, **then what reliance can we place on the rest of this book?**
- If this whole redemptive process is *dependent on* the pre-existence of Christ and the doctrine of a Trinity, how confident can we be that all his other arguments are based on sound doctrine and not error?

## THE TRINITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

"In 'The Art of Forgiving', Lewis Smedes makes the striking observation that the Bible portrays God going through progressive stages when He forgives, much as we humans do. First, God rediscovers the humanity of the person who wronged him, by removing the barrier created by sin. Second, God surrenders His right to get even, choosing instead to bear the cost in His own body. Finally, God revises His feelings toward us, finding a way to 'justify' us so that when He looks upon us He sees His own adopted children, with His divine image restored. It occurred to me, as I thought about Smede's insights, that the gracious miracle of God's forgiveness was made possible because of the linkage that occurred when God came to earth in Christ. Somehow God had to come to terms with these creatures He desperately wanted to love—but how? Experientially, God did not know what it was like to be tempted to sin, to have a trying day. On earth, living among us, He learned what it was like. He put Himself on our side." (WSAAG, p. 106)

"From the Gospel accounts, it seems forgiveness was not easy for God, either... Only by becoming a human being could the Son of God truly say, 'They do not know what they are doing.' Having lived among us, He now understood." (WSAAG, p. 107)

Let us now ask some more questions:

- Where in the Bible does it say, *"forgiveness was not easy for God"*?
- Where do we ever read in the Scriptures that God *"chose to bear the cost in His own body"*? Or is Yancey speaking about the doctrines of the Trinity and substitution combined into one?



- Where in the Bible does it say that God came to earth, became a human, and finally realised how difficult it really was? Did God really have to “rediscover our humanity”?
- How similar do you think this is to the Roman Catholic doctrines on the nature of Christ and his death?
- Can God really be tempted to sin? See James chapter 1.
- Did God ever struggle to come to terms with human beings whom he “desperately wants to love”? Or is it true that God’s character IS LOVE? If “God is love” (**1 John 4:8,16**) then how could He have ever been in a position where he struggled to come to grips with all this?
- If God’s character changed over time, is it possible that His character could therefore change again in the future? If God has “*struggled to forgive*” in the past, is it possible that He could again struggle to forgive us at the Judgement, despite our repentance?
- Does forgiveness really involve *God* changing to accommodate our sin?
- If Yancey’s understanding of God’s forgiveness and grace is totally dependent on the doctrines of the Trinity and pre-existence of Christ, how much confidence can we place on the rest of the book?
- What was God’s relationship with the faithful in O.T. times? Did he really “struggle to forgive” them, given that this was before he had a chance to “*learn what it was like*” to be a human and to “*have a trying day*”?

Not only is this doctrinally wrong, it is the ramifications of believing such doctrine that should really concern us.

## LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY / SUBSTITUTION

**“Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more... And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less—no amount of racism or pride or pornography or adultery or even murder. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love.” (WSAAG, p. 70)**

The extension of God’s love is unconditional. The whole world is given the opportunity to respond to His love. Christ died while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). In love, God has extended the opportunity of salvation to us (John 3:16). But what is our response to that love? **This is the key question.** Our response to it will determine whether or not we will be saved. The amount God loves us does not mean that we can do what we like and still be saved. Salvation is dependent on us *responding* to God’s love.

It is possible however to even incur God’s enduring and abiding hatred. He may have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but he certainly has no pleasure in the sinner either. There comes a time when the sinner loves the sin and has no desire to repent, and at this point the wrath of God is directed at him personally. Consider these quotes:

"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: **thou hatest all workers of iniquity**. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." (Psalm 5:4-7).

"The LORD trieth the righteous: but **the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth**. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psa. 11:5-6).

"As it is written, **Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**. What shall we say then? **Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid**. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Rom. 9:13-15).

**"Consider this pointed reminder from the grand old preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 'There is thus clearly a sense in which the message of "justification by faith only" can be dangerous, and likewise with the message that salvation is entirely of grace... This is the kind of dangerous element about the true presentation of the doctrine of salvation.' Grace has about it the scent of scandal."** (WSAAG, p. 178).

There is nothing new in this. Bro. Robert Roberts deals with this problem in his book, *Christendom Astray*:

'Christendom, which has gone astray from the doctrines, has also forsaken the commandments of Christ, if ever it made them a rule of life. It has probably left the commandments as the result of losing the doctrines; for the force of the commandments can only be felt by those who recognise that **salvation is dependent on their obedience**. Popular theology has reduced them to a practical nullity. It has **totally obscured the principle of obedience as the basis of our acceptance with God in Christ**, by its doctrine of "justification by faith alone." [ch. 17, p. 241]

**"By instinct I feel I must *do something* in order to be accepted. Grace sounds a startling note of contradiction, of liberation..."** (WSAAG, p. 71)

**"Ask people what they must do to go to heaven and most reply "be good." Jesus's (sic) stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry "help!"**" (WSAAG, p.54)

**"Grace baffles us because it goes against the intuition everyone has that, in the face of injustice, some price must be paid. A murderer cannot simply go free... Anticipating these objections, Paul stressed that a price has been paid—by God himself. God gave up his own Son rather than give up on humanity..."** (WSAAG, p. 67)

**"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. In Christian theology, 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." (WSAAG, p. 67).

"God shattered the inexorable law of sin and retribution by invading earth, absorbing the worst we had to offer, crucifixion, & then fashioning from that cruel deed the remedy for the human condition." (WSAAG, p. 92).

"The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity.... Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional." (WSAAG, p. 45).

Some more questions arise from Yancey's comments here:

- Is it possible to "do nothing" and be accepted by God?
- What is true liberation all about? Are we liberated from responsibility to God and thinking of others, or does the Bible teach that we are liberated from the domination of sin? Consider **Rom. 6:2-7**; **Gal. 5:13**.
- If "*grace is free*" only because of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, is it possible that Yancey's whole theory about grace is therefore flawed?
- How similar is this doctrine of substitution to that which is taught by the Roman Catholic Church?
- Is it possible then that this is just Roman Catholicism dressed in a new, more acceptable, pleasant sounding, grace-like guise? If it is, then what are the ramifications of us believing in this new doctrine?
- Where does the Bible teach that believers go to heaven when they die?
- If all believers have to do is "*cry help!*" then is baptism essential for salvation? Are we required to live lives in accordance with Christ's commandments?
- Is God's love unconditional even if we continue a life in rebellion, refusing to repent?

The popular view of modern Christianity is that man's sins placed him in a debt to God that had to be paid by someone else. Instead of being an unpayable debt that God has forgiven, substitution teaches that Christ actually cleared the debt of each believer by his blood, shed on the cross. The supposed "angry God" of the Old Testament is then seen to be appeased when He sees Christ's blood spilt, and as a result lets us all off free. Finally God is seen to give in to the "irresistible power of love". It is said, "Christ died instead of us". An example of this concept is given on page 67 of *WSAAG* where another child gets punished rather than the one who actually did wrong. One example that is sometimes given in the churches is that we are all lined up about to be shot dead by the devil, then Jesus rushes in at the last minute and says, "No, kill me, and let the rest off free." This doctrine however is fundamentally flawed.

There are key problems with the substitution theory. If Christ died "instead of us" then, logically ❶ We should not die (which we do), ❷ Jesus shouldn't have been resurrected if he truly paid the penalty due to us (i.e. God must have snatched the price back!), ❸ The redeeming power would have been in Christ's DEATH, not in his RESURRECTION, ❹ If Christ paid our debts, our debts (sins) are not forgiven

but paid for, and ⑤ the truth is that Jesus Christ actually benefited from his own sacrifice (Phil. 2:9, God has "highly exalted him"). We also must ask the question—*How can a substitute possibly benefit?* Substitution is clearly wrong. The truth is that **Jesus Christ died as our representative**, who we are striving to copy and emulate (Rom. 6:4-5; Phil 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:21 etc). **He is our EXAMPLE**, not our substitute!

**The Key issue:** Not only does Yancey *believe* in the doctrines of substitution and the trinity, but *he uses these as the very authority and foundation for his whole philosophy about grace*. As far as God's plan of *salvation* is concerned (Titus 2:11), he equates God's grace (unmerited favour bestowed on repentant brethren) with God's willingness to forgive (the *offer* given to all mankind). This is how he arrives at his conclusions.

## The consequences of belief in substitution

"It is important to understand these things, because they qualify us for acceptable approach to God, and they work out the right result in character and daily life.... **The orthodox theology of the day generates an offensive spirit of presumption. So also do wrong views on this subject interfere with proper development of character.** The idea that Christ has borne our punishment and paid our debts, and that his righteousness is placed to our credit, and that all we have to do is to believe it, is demoralizing. It nullifies that other most important element of the truth, that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God**, and that he only is righteous who doeth righteousness. It draws a veil over the truth that we have to "work out our salvation" by a "patient continuance in well-doing", and that **he only that endureth to the end shall be saved**. It undermines that most important testimony of the Gospel that Christ is the Judge of who is fit to be saved, and that he will impartially give to every man according to his works. These blighting results are to be witnessed in all communities where the doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice... holds sway. Where there is any robust righteousness of character exhibited, where any true holiness of life—it is where the purifying truth is discerned, believed, and cherished in daily Bible reading and prayer. The truth is a beautiful and perfect whole."

**Bro. Robert Roberts, *The Blood of Christ*, pages 29-30**

"God dealt with Christ representatively. There is a great difference between a representative and a substitute. A representative is not disconnected from those represented. On the contrary, those represented go through with him all that he goes through. But in the case of a substitute, it is otherwise. He does his part *instead of* those for whom he is the substitute, and these are dissociated from the transaction.

Christ suffering as the representative of his people is one with them, and they are one with him. In what he went through, they went through. Hence Paul says believers were crucified with Christ, and baptized into his death.... But "now is Christ risen from the dead" and being raised, he constitutes the one name given under heaven whereby men may be saved (Acts 4:12)."

**Bro. Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray***

## Forgiveness of sins is not by payment of a debt

"The second secret of the cross is that it is the source of the forgiveness of sins. It is not a debt settled by due payment. It is not a substitutionary offering whereby someone is paid a price so that others might then go free. No, the cross is a means of forgiveness, and forgiveness is an act of grace and not of rights or earnings by the settlement of a debt. Therefore, our understanding of the redemptive work of Jesus our Lord must allow for the full expression of the love of God and His forgiveness. The blessings of love and forgiveness flow to us through the channel of faith in the message of the Gospel of Christ and by God's acceptance of us through Jesus. **Forgiveness comes to the believer when he personally seeks and asks for it in the way appointed by God. Forgiveness is certain: but it is not automatic. There is forgiveness with God, but it is not bestowed on men without their knowledge and co-operation.** Such a thing would be true if redemption were the erasure of a debt, or a substitutionary transaction which had totally removed the necessity for us to seek forgiveness. The Bible approach is much simpler and much more satisfying.

Forgiveness comes to the man who believes the Gospel, repents and is baptized in the name of Christ... (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4, 22-23; Gal. 2:20)."

Bro. Harry Tennant (*The Christadelphians—what they believe and preach*, p. 71)

- For further essential reading on this subject, read *The Blood of Christ*, by Bro. Robert Roberts and chapter 10 of *The Christadelphians, What they believe and preach* (pp. 70-80) by Bro. Harry Tennant.

**"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned."**

Galatians 1:6-8 (NIV)

**"In one of his last acts before death, Jesus forgave 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, but rather on what God has done for us." (WSAAG, p. 54-5)**

**"We are accustomed to finding a catch in every promise, but Jesus' stories of extravagant grace include no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God's grace... How different are these stories from my own childhood notions about God..." (WSAAG, p. 52)**

He says that the thief on the cross was converted "out of plain fear". This thief *supposedly* had "never studied the Bible" or never gone to a religious assembly. But he was saved anyhow. The obvious result is that we might think that we don't have to study our Bible or go to the meetings either. How does Yancey know that the thief had "never studied his Bible"? Even so, the people in these days had access to what some might call "a walking Bible"—Jesus Christ himself. He was the Word made flesh!

What Yancey ignores is that the thief on the cross believed in ❶ the Kingdom of God, ❷ that Jesus was the king of the Jews, ❸ that Jesus would rise from the dead, ❹ that he could also rise from the dead, ❺ that his sins could be forgiven, ❻ the power of Christ to save him and ❼ that Christ would physically and literally return to the earth. This is THE TRUTH!

Some more questions:

- Are there really any loopholes that disqualify us from God's grace?
- Do you think that disbelief and outright rebellion against God could be described as a "loophole" or a "catch" which may disqualify us from God's grace?
- If not, then why does Yancey go on later to concede that there *are* actually some loopholes? Why does he later on in the book have to do a total back-flip (in Chapter 14) to the extent that his whole argument about grace becomes questionable? What are we supposed to believe? Are we supposed to believe that only sins such as unrepentant adultery are a "loophole" or is there more to it than this?
- Do you think it is fair to say that the thief on the cross purely "*converted out of plain fear*"? Or is this another case of unfairly imputing false motives against someone without any evidence to back it up?

## MISUNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURE

“When I was a child listening to the story in Sunday school, I could not understand the loops and twists in the account of Joseph’s reconciliation with his brothers. One moment Joseph acted harshly, throwing his brothers in jail; the next moment he seemed overcome with sorrow, leaving the room to blubber like a drunk. He played tricks on his brothers, hiding money in their grain sacks, seizing one as a hostage, accusing another of stealing his silver cup. For months, maybe years, these intrigues dragged on until finally Joseph could restrain himself no longer. He summoned his brothers and dramatically forgave them. I now see that story as a realistic depiction of the unnatural act of forgiveness. The brothers Joseph struggled to forgive were the very ones who had bullied him, had cooked up schemes to murder him, had sold him into slavery. Because of them he had spent the best years of his youth moldering in an Egyptian dungeon. Though he went on to triumph over adversity and though with all his heart he now wanted to forgive these brothers, he could not bring himself to that point, not yet. The wound still hurt too much. I view Genesis 42-45 as Joseph’s way of saying, ‘I think it’s pretty amazing that I forgive you for the dastardly things you’ve done!’ When grace finally broke through to Joseph, the sound of his grief and love echoed throughout the palace.” (WSAAG, p. 84-85).

“For Joseph, who had borne a well-deserved grudge against his brothers, forgiveness spilled out in the form of tears and groans.” (WSAAG, p. 100).

Some questions:

- Where is the Scriptural proof that Joseph had a “grudge” against his brothers, or has this just been assumed?
- Where does it say that Joseph “struggled to forgive” his brothers?
- Where does the Bible ever record evil motives or feelings Joseph may have had towards his brothers?
- How Scriptural is this concept of imputing wrong motives upon a faithful Bible character without any evidence to back it up?

From this misunderstanding of Joseph’s character, false theories about God’s character are then formulated. Yancey later on goes on to say, **“From the Gospel accounts, it seems forgiveness was not easy for God, either...”** Also, that **“the Bible portrays God going through progressive stages when He forgives, much as we humans do.”**

We then ask:

- Is this because Joseph’s lack of forgiveness is supposed to be typical of God himself?
- If this is how God supposedly struggles to forgive, then we might ask—‘Did Jesus have the same difficulty in forgiving others too’?
- Does God still find it difficult to forgive us today? Or did He only struggle to forgive people before Jesus’ sacrifice finally appeased His anger as a substitutionary sacrifice?

- If all these arguments are fundamentally flawed, what do you think are the ramifications of believing what Yancey says in this book?

## GRACE APPLIED TO A WORLD THAT KNOWS NOT GOD

**"The world thirsts for grace in ways it does not even recognise; little wonder the hymn "Amazing Grace" edged its way onto the Top Ten charts two hundred years after composition. For a society that seems adrift, without moorings, I know of no better place to drop an anchor of faith. Like grace notes in music, though, the state of grace proves fleeting. The Berlin Wall falls in a night of euphoria; South African blacks queue up in long, exuberant lines to cast their first votes ever; Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shake hands in the Rose Garden—for a moment, grace descends." (WSAAG, p. 13)**

Some questions:

- Is there any relevance in God's sight of a song edging its way into the Top 10 charts? Is this really proof that the world does thirst for God's grace after all?
- Did the Truth of the Scriptures have anything to do with the motivation behind political events in South Africa?
- Was Rabin's handshake with Yasser Arafat motivated because of God's grace as we know it from the Scriptures—or was this just a politically motivated event that will eventually lead the world to Armageddon?

**"...No one can deny the power of grace. Who can forget the images from the Philippines, when common people knelt before fifty-ton tanks, which lurched to a halt as if colliding with an invisible shield of prayer. The Philippines is the only Christian-majority country in Asia, and it was here that the weapons of grace overcame the weapons of tyranny.... The Cold War, says former Senator Sam Nunn, ended "not in a nuclear inferno, but in a blaze of candles in the churches of Eastern Europe." Candlelight processions in East Germany did not show up well on the evening news, but they helped change the face of the globe... Police and soldiers with all their weapons seemed powerless against such a force. Ultimately, on the night a similar march in East Berlin attracted one million protestors, the hated Berlin Wall came tumbling down without a shot being fired. A huge banner appeared across a Leipzig street: Wir danken Dir, Kirche (We thank you, church)... In 1989 alone ten nations—Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Yugoslavia, Mongolia, the Soviet Union—comprising half a billion people experienced non-violent revolutions. In many of these, the Christian minority played a crucial role. Stalin's mocking question, "How many divisions has the Pope?" got its answer." (WSAAG, p. 134-135)**

Some questions:

- Were God's "weapons of grace" in the Philippines really victorious because of God's favour upon Roman Catholicism as the dominant religion?



- Was “grace” and the “invisible shield of prayer” so successful in overthrowing a tyrannical government because God supports the Roman Catholic Church and the other “Christian” religions in the Philippines?
- Does Yancey have any idea how wicked and perversely superstitious Roman Catholicism is in the Philippines, or doesn’t this really matter anyway?
- Is Roman Catholicism just another good natured “Christian” religion that “God loves anyhow” or is it the most evil system spoken of in the Bible, called **Babylon the Great** in **Revelation 17**?
- Is it possible that Yancey’s idea of “Christianity” and “weapons of grace” are really seen by God as “the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (**Rev. 18:2**)? Could this be an example of the “nations drinking of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (**Rev. 14:8**)?

Yancey is right in that he says the “Christian” (i.e. Catholic) Church played a crucial role in the revolutions of 1989-90. Mikhail Gorbachev said of the revolutions in Eastern Europe, and later in Russia, *“I think that at the core of that resistance was Catholicism.”* The leader of the revolution in Poland, Lech Walesa said, *“The Holy Father was the instigator of all these transformations.”*

But let us ask some more questions:

- Was the fall of Communism and the Berlin wall really because of God’s loving support for the “Christian” Pope and his *“blaze of candles in the churches of Eastern Europe”*?
- Or was the Pope’s role in overthrowing the Polish government an example of a rebellious “frog spirit” out of the mouth of the “false prophet” (**Rev. 16:13-16**), which will eventually lead the world to Armageddon?
- Could this have been the beginning of Babylon’s rise to prominence in the latter days as prophesied in Revelation? Or is it just another example of how wonderfully gracious Roman Catholicism really is?
- Is this really about “grace” or is it just **rebellion**? Or can’t we even tell the difference?
- Did the Catholic Church’s lust for power and the expansion of her political influence in eastern Europe have anything to do with her vital role in bringing down Communism? Or was this just “grace”?
- Is it possible that the Pope wanted East and West Germany reunited so as to re-establish a united Holy Roman Empire in Western Europe? Or was this just “grace”?
- Stalin’s mocking question, “How many divisions (i.e. armies) has the Pope?” certainly *was* answered. Are the Pope’s “divisions” in Europe who overthrow governments and instigate revolutions a classic example of grace for us to follow?

- Does Philip Yancey's identification of Roman Catholicism as "Christianity" and "the power of grace" mean that evangelical Christianity is just another one of the harlot daughters of the mother church (**Rev. 17:5**)?
- Because Yancey's book has Roman Catholic doctrines as its foundation (i.e. the Trinity, pre-existence of Christ, substitution, heaven-going etc.), should we really be surprised?
- **The key issue:** Is this another example of how popular modern Christianity is really just part of the evil system of Babylon? Or has the difference between truth and error become so blurred that we cannot even tell the difference?

**GOD'S VIEW OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH:** "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (**Rev. 14:8-11**)

## HOMOSEXUALITY

**"Among the marchers were at least 3,000 who identified themselves with various religious groups: the Catholic "Dignity" movement, the Episcopalian group "Integrity", and even a sprinkling of Mormons and Seventh-Day Adventists. More than a thousand marched under the banner of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), 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 protestors: 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 (not even the National Council of Churches has accepted the MCC denomination for membership). 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." (WSAAG, p. 165-166)**

**"The whole notion of a "gay church" seems bizarre to me. I have met celibate, non practicing homosexuals who wish desperately that another church would welcome them, but have found none. I feel sad that the churches I attend are missing out on the spiritual gifts of these Christians, and sad too that the MCC denomination seems to me so fixated on sexual issues." (WSAAG, p. 173)**

Yancey tells the story in this chapter of his friend Mel White, a pastor of an Evangelical church, who left his wife and children to live in a homosexual relationship. Despite going to great lengths to show that White is just “different”, Yancey does however go on to say, **“Mel and I have deep differences. I cannot condone many of the decisions he has made.”** In saying this, however, Yancey makes no comment on what the Bible says about the issue or what his own views actually are, except that he does not agree Mel White should be inducted into the priesthood. He conveniently says, **“I am not discussing my views of homosexual behaviour, only my attitudes towards homosexuals.”**

- Why won't Yancey tell us what his real views are on homosexuality, or at least what he thinks the Bible says?
- Why does Yancey spend page after page showing how “loving” and how “Christian” these homosexuals are compared with the harsh, hard line, right wing “Christians” who are appalled by the arrogance of unrepentant homosexuals? What is the benefit of this? Should we therefore tolerate homosexuality?
- Why are those who are disgusted by the homosexual lifestyle shown to be bigots and unforgiving while the homosexuals are presented in a good light?
- Why in this whole 15 page chapter (chapter 13) is there **hardly any reference to Scripture**? If Scripture is not the basis, then how can we trust that Yancey's opinions are right? Of what use are all these stories if we are not willing to look at the Bible's instruction?

So what does the Bible actually say?

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-11, NIV)

We all joyfully acknowledge that **God opens the door for forgiveness** to homosexuals who wish to forsake their previous way of life and turn to Him. God's forgiveness is total and absolute, but conditional on repentance and a forsaking of the old way of life (**Luke 15:10; Acts 3:19**). Yancey, however, spends so much time trying to convince us of how nice these homosexuals can be but why nothing about God's forgiveness? Why doesn't he emphasise that homosexuals *can be forgiven*? Why doesn't he encourage them to repent? The important issue here is surely God's wonderful promise of forgiveness:

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3).

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

"Now (God) commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30).

Why not give examples in this chapter of God's forgiveness of Bible characters who were *repentant and forgiven*? Is it because it is politically incorrect or is there some other reason? We just don't know. Maybe some light can be shed on this issue by the following comments:

**"At one point, a TV interviewer asked Mel's parents on-camera, 'You know what other Christians are saying about your son. They say he is an abomination. What do you think about that?'" "Well," the mother answered in a sweet, quavery voice, "he may be an abomination, but he's still our pride and joy." That line has stayed with me because I came to see it as a heartened definition of grace. I came to see that Mel White's mother expressed how God views every one of us. In some ways we are all abominations to God—All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God—and yet somehow, against all reason, God loves us anyhow. Grace declares that we are still God's pride and joy." (WSAAG, p. 170-171)**

Yes, we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But he misses the critical issue. There is a difference between unrepentant homosexuals and repentant brethren in Christ. Brethren in Christ who are repentant, have been baptised and have forsaken their old way of life are counted righteous for Christ's sake (**Rom. 3:24; Eph. 4:32**). How can unrepentant homosexuals be placed in this category? Because of his belief in the doctrine of substitution, it all gets back to Yancey's main catchcry, that **"God loves us anyhow."**

This is where things really start getting serious. So let us ask the following crucial questions:

- Are unrepentant homosexuals really "God's pride and joy"?
- What Scriptural evidence is there to show that an unrepentant homosexual is no different in God's sight to those faithful believers who are Christ's brethren?
- What is the practical result of all this? Is this really where Yancey's philosophy about grace leads us? Does nothing matter in our lives because "God loves us anyhow"?

It is worth noting here that Yancey's friend Mel White is an unrepentant practising homosexual who is quite happy to cause division within church congregations in his crusade to have homosexuals, lesbians, and transgender people accepted into fellowship and installed as priests (see *Time* magazine 3 July 2000). In the *Time* article White says, *"We don't debate any more. Change your policies, or we're going to split you apart."* At his installation as Dean of the Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Dallas, Texas, with 10,000 congregants (the largest gay-lesbian congregation in the US), Mel White proclaimed: **"I am gay. I am proud. And God loves me without reservation."** (White's 'soulforce' web site). Here is the inevitable result of the heresy that obedience is not necessary for salvation. The bottom line is that if we are saved purely "by faith alone" (or as is

often said today, "by grace alone"), we do not have to change if we do not want to. Again, it is the underlying doctrinal foundation that is flawed.

So what should really be the positive emphasis of all this?

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile... For this shall every one that is Godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." (Psa. 32:1,2,6).

'The commandments delivered by the apostles were not of their authorship. They were as definitely divine as those that came from the mouth of the Lord. Paul distinctly claims this (1 Cor. 14:37).

When Jesus sent forth his apostles, he not only commanded them to preach the gospel, but he said, "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:20) **That is, the obedience of these commandments is essential to the believers.** Christ said this plainly in concluding what is called his "sermon on the mount", which is nothing else than a long series of these very commandments—in fact, the most methodical and extensive collection of them to be found in the whole course of his recorded teaching (Matt. 7:24-26). In no plainer way could Christ tell us that our ultimate acceptance with him will depend upon our doing of the things he has commanded. If he did say it more plainly, it was when he said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER, who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

The idea thus explicitly enunciated is of very frequent occurrence in the Lord's teaching. It comes out in various connections and forms, but always with the same pointedness and vigour. There is never room for misconception (Matt. 12:47,50, Luke 11:28, Luke 6:46; Matt. 5:20; John 15:14).'

(Bro. Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*, ch. 17, p. 241, 243-244)

## SCOFFING ATTITUDE

"What bothers me most, in retrospect, was the Bible college's attempt to relate all their rules to God's law... I seethed at their contorted attempts to condemn long hair on men, aware that Jesus and most of the Biblical characters we studied probably had longer hair than ours and facial hair to

**boot. The rule about hair length had more to do with the likelihood of offending supporters than with anything in Scripture, but no one dared admit it. I could not find one word in the Bible about rock music, skirt lengths, or cigarette smoking, and the ban against alcohol puts us on the side of John the Baptist, not Jesus. Yet authorities in that school made a determined effort to present all these rules as part of the gospel." (WSAAG, p. 194)**

Some questions arise from these comments:

- Does this now mean that at schools, ecclesial camps, young people's conferences and Bible schools we should freely allow everyone to drink, smoke and listen to *any types* of rock music they please? Or are there certain Scriptural principles involved here?
- Is it possible to be "*on the side of John the Baptist*" while not being "*on the side of Jesus*"?
- Is it true that there are certain clear Scriptural principles that guide our lives rather than any particular verse in the Bible that says, for instance, "thou shalt not smoke cigarettes"? Or are Scriptural principles not really important anyway?

There are so many Scriptures that could be used here, but just consider the following two passages:

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Pet. 1:13-16, NIV)

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." (1 Cor 11:14-15).

## IS OUR WAY OF THINKING BEING CHANGED BY ALL THIS?

A scoffing attitude is a feature of so much of Yancey's book. Why is it that almost anyone he mentions who advocates any kind of morality or the upholding of God's principles such as "family values" is shown to be a bigot, a hypocrite, a child abuser, a criminal or one who rents X-rated videos? Those supposed "hypocrites" who are said to "censure" drinking, filthy magazines and "questionable movies or books" are so often implicated as being legalists and even racists and promoters of apartheid. These underlying attitudes promoted by Yancey pose one of the greatest dangers of this book. It teaches us to be cynical and to impute evil motives on those who are just trying their best to lead Christ-like lives (2 Tim. 3:3,7). We need to wake up to how this type of "Christian" literature is changing our way of thinking over time.

The result of this type of philosophy is that the difference between right and wrong has become very blurred. No longer do we focus on developing a Godly character, discerning between good and evil (**Heb. 5:14**). Instead we focus on the fact that God supposedly "loves us anyhow" despite what we do. This is substitutionary grace, not Biblical grace. It is founded on the doctrine of substitution and is therefore wrong. For further detail on the doctrinal basis of this type of Evangelical "grace", see Bro. Jonathan Burke's comments in his study entitled, *"If Yancey is wrong, then why is it so hard to tell?"*.

## CONCLUSION OF YANCEY'S BOOK

"Bill Moyers' documentary film on the hymn "Amazing Grace" includes a scene filmed in Wembley Stadium in London. Various musical groups, mostly rock bands, had gathered together in celebration of the changes in South Africa, and for some reason the promoters scheduled an opera singer, Jessye Norman, as the closing act. The film cuts back and forth between scenes of the unruly crowd in the stadium and Jessye Norman being interviewed. For 12 hours groups like Guns 'n' Roses have blasted the crowd through banks of speakers, riling up fans already high on booze and dope. The crowd yells for more curtain calls, and the rock groups oblige. Meanwhile, Jessye Norman sits in her dressing room discussing "Amazing Grace" with Moyers....

Finally the time comes for her to sing. A single circle of light follows Norman, a majestic African-American woman wearing a flowing African dashiki, as she strolls onstage. No backup band, no musical instruments, just Jessye. The crowd stirs, restless. Few recognise the opera diva. A voice yells for more Guns 'n' Roses. Others take up the cry. The scene is getting ugly. Alone, a capella, Jessye Norman begins to sing, very slowly:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found -  
Was blind, but now I see.

A remarkable thing happens in Wembley Stadium that night. Seventy thousand raucous fans fall silent before her aria of grace. By the time Norman reaches the second verse, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved..." the soprano has the crowd in her hands. By the time she reaches the third verse, "Tis grace has brought me safe this far, and grace will lead me home," several thousand fans are singing along, digging far back in nearly lost memories for words they heard long ago.

When we've been there 10,000 years  
Bright shining as the sun  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

Jessye Norman later confessed she had no idea what power descended on Wembley Stadium that night. I think I know. The world thirsts for grace. When grace descends, the world falls silent before it." (WSAAG, pages 281-282)

So is this really the conclusion to it all?

No visions of the Kingdom. Nothing about the Kingdom of God on earth, by God's grace. No mention of the resurrection from the dead. No mention of the restoration of Israel or their repentance before their Messiah. No mention about the fulfilment of God's promises to the Fathers. No mention of immortality bestowed upon the righteous. And certainly nothing about God's judgements on the Roman Catholic system or on an evil world that hates Him. Nothing about the Saints and their work of restoration in a 1,000 year reign of peace and righteousness. And nothing about Jesus Christ reigning from Jerusalem or the beautiful visions of Isaiah 35 or Psalm 72. Nothing whatsoever.

Instead, we find ourselves full of dope and booze at a drunken rock concert. This is where the power of God's grace is supposed to be found. It is supposedly bestowed on a world that doesn't even know it and which doesn't want to respond to it.

This is the conclusion of Yancey's philosophy about grace. This is where it all ends. Incredible.

***"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."*** (Gal 6:7).

***"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."*** (Acts 20:32)

**Further Reading:** It is recommended that we read the editorial entitled ***"Three Steps of Grace"*** by Bro. Michael Ashton in *The Christadelphian*, March 2001.

Also quite helpful is a series of feature articles on **grace** which appeared in *The Lampstand* volume 7#5 pages 211–226, September–October 2001.



# If Yancey is wrong, then why is it so hard to tell?

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(A review by Jonathan Burke)

When I first opened *What's so amazing about Grace?*, I approached it rather sceptically, concerned that I may be confronted with complete error right from the start. Much to my surprise, even concern, to I found myself agreeing with Yancey on a number of points. As I continued to read, I felt increasingly puzzled—I agreed with some of his arguments, but could never agree with his conclusions. The question which many of us ask is, 'If Yancey is wrong, then why is it so hard to tell?'.

## THE PROBLEM IS A DOCTRINAL ONE

Yancey's book certainly is a subtle combination of truth and error, but it is not until his work is compared with sound Scriptural principles that some of these subtleties are revealed. The key principles at stake are:

- The process of forgiveness
- The meaning and purpose of grace
- The character of God
- The process of salvation
- The atoning work of Christ
- The doctrine of God manifestation

It is obvious that these principles comprise the very foundations of our faith. Error in any one of these principles will fracture the entire gospel message. Inevitably, and ultimately most seriously, it will lead to a way of life which is a complete departure from God. This is no overstatement. If we acknowledge that the principles listed above are of utmost importance to our relationship with God, and our eternal salvation, then we will be rightly alarmed when we realise that in Yancey's book these fundamental principles are either distorted or omitted completely. Such an inadequate and inaccurate presentation of these principles, has a serious destructive influence on our understanding of God, and also on our very way of life.

So how does Yancey present these principles, and to what extent is he accurate to their Scriptural definition? It is an unalterable fact that we become what we worship. When we truly believe the doctrines we profess, our lives are shaped by them. These doctrines determine our understanding of our relationship with God, and determine the life we lead as a result of that relationship. Philip Yancey has grasped the truth of the fact that our doctrine determines our way of life. The doctrinal position of Philip Yancey results in a certain way of life, and that way of life is unjustifiable without that doctrinal position.

It is obvious that his understanding of the relationship between the Creator and the human creation, has been derived from his doctrinal position, and this finds its expression in his exposition of grace. Thus we can accept Yancey's particular definition of grace only if we are prepared to accept the doctrines on which that definition is based. These doctrines are:

- The trinity
- The substitutionary model of the atonement
- The personhood and indwelling of the Holy Spirit

It is an inescapable fact that Yancey's definition of grace and the manner in which it directs our way of life is predicated on these three core doctrines. Unless you believe in them, you have no access to the kind of 'grace' of which Yancey speaks. These doctrines must be true if Yancey's definition of grace is to 'work', so to speak. Without them, together with a number of assumptions derived from them, Yancey's definition of grace has no support whatever, since it is contrary to the Scriptural definition.

The danger, therefore, with Yancey's definition of grace is not merely that it is wrong, but why it is wrong.

It is wrong because it is entirely founded and utterly dependent on three wrong doctrines—doctrines which are the very mainstay of the theology of almost every apostate church from the Roman Catholics to the Charismatics. Let us be clear on this—it is simply not possible to agree with Yancey's definition of grace unless we agree with these three false doctrines at the very least. Many readers of Yancey's book will find this statement surprising—perhaps disturbing. They may have found themselves in agreement with Yancey's definition of grace, whilst deliberately 'skipping over' what they recognised as his false doctrine—doctrine they vigorously and rightly reject.

This merely demonstrates the dangers inherent in reading a doctrinal work by a non-Christadelphian, "Christian" author. We are so quick to ignore the false doctrines which we cannot accept that we read over them without appreciating that they are being used as the whole foundation of the author's arguments, the very authority from which his case is derived.

Remember also that this is a book about the **way of salvation**. This is supposedly "the grace of God that brings salvation" (**Titus 2:11**). We are not dealing with some obscure or insignificant subject here. Despite the nice sounding words and stories he presents, Yancey's whole philosophy about "the grace that brings salvation" is founded upon wrong doctrine.

## THE DANGERS OF EVANGELICAL BOOKS

If we decide to read a book by a non-Christadelphian, christian author, we must read it thoroughly, diligently, and with great care. It is pointless to attempt to understand the argument if we are not going to read the proofs submitted, fruitless to 'skip over the wrong doctrine' if by doing so we fail to realise the importance of

that wrong doctrine to the author's case. The result is that we are in danger of reading the author's words and projecting onto them our own Scriptural understanding of the matter—we take his case, and see how it could agree with what we believe: 'I would have expressed it differently, but I can see what he means'. But the author is not even thinking in the same way we are, because he does not share our doctrines. The result is that we have given him the benefit of the doubt, even when there is no doubt.

Philip Yancey is an Evangelical. We know what Evangelicals believe. We should be ready to understand his comments in the context of Evangelical doctrines—in fact, we must, for his theological position is the context of his argument.

We will now ask some questions. 'To what extent does Yancey develop his argument from his doctrine? Just how essential are these wrong doctrines to his understanding of grace? Is it possible to come to Yancey's understanding of grace from the position of correct doctrine?'. The answer to this is that Yancey builds his argument exclusively on these three doctrines, and uses them as the authority for his case. The process by which he does this, however, is not immediately explicit, and because of this we may find ourselves reading through the work with a sense that something is wrong, without being able to determine precisely what is wrong, and why.

The reason for this is that Yancey does not start by expounding these three doctrines, nor does he appeal to them immediately. He has no need to, for the audience to whom his work is directed is an audience that already believes these doctrines, and understands their effect on the topic. A Christadelphian may be confused as to where Yancey is deriving his argument and feel uneasy at the direction the book is taking, yet uncertain as to why they are uneasy. The Evangelical, however, reads with understanding, appreciating with his shared doctrinal point of view the message that was obviously written with him in mind.

## **WE NEED TO GRASP THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS**

In order to clarify exactly how Yancey builds his argument, to what extent it is founded on three of the most critical wrong doctrines of the churches around us, and precisely why it cannot be supported without them, it is necessary firstly to examine the key principles involved in the issue of grace and forgiveness.

The word 'grace' is today so overused as to be practically meaningless. The principle cause of this evil is that the Scriptural definition has been replaced, in common usage, by a rather simplistic and profoundly inaccurate English definition.

In English the word 'grace' is used in an extremely broad sense. Typically, the meaning commonly used implies some kind of general favour, both unmerited and unconditional—something nice someone does for you whether you deserve it or not.

The Scriptural definition of grace, however, is far more profound and sophisticated. **Firstly**, God's grace is the means by which we are saved:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The fact that God's grace is the means by which we are saved elevates it immediately above the common meaning of the term. This is not merely something nice He does for us, what we might call 'a gracious act', this is the moment at which and the means by which sinners worthy of death become justified and are imputed righteous:

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Romans 5:15, 16).

**Secondly**, although the saving grace of God is always unmerited, it is never unconditional.

If this seems contradictory, let's remember that this is the very basis on which we are saved. We are talking about finite beings performing a finite work, imperfectly, and receiving an infinite reward. The reward received is indeed unmerited, but it is certainly not unconditional. God commands us to obey Him, and although He knows we will never be capable of perfect obedience, He is certainly looking for a response which demonstrates a loving willingness to try to serve with heart, soul, and mind.

Our salvation will certainly never be secured by our works, but it will certainly be denied by our wilful disobedience.

In fact, if there were no need of works, there would be no need of grace—grace is the means by which incomplete service is deemed perfect:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers ["adequate as servants", NASB] of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:4–6).

The Evangelical model of 'free grace' by which we are forgiven, justified, imputed righteous and saved all prior to any confession or repentance of sin, is clearly unScriptural, as is the insistence that we need the Holy Spirit in order to even repent.

See [Appendix A](#) for a more thorough discussion of these concepts, and a powerful contrast between the Scriptural definition of the process of repentance, and the Evangelical model.

Never do we find in Scripture an example of unconditional grace or forgiveness—the very concept simply does not exist in the Divine Word. The following passage declares the necessity of confession and repentance, and the conditional nature of forgiveness and justification, beyond all possibility of dispute:

“But **if we walk in the light**, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins**, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7–9).

We are “cleansed from all unrighteousness” when God bestows upon us His grace. This is the moment in which unmerited righteousness is imputed to us.

It is undeniable, however, that this grace is utterly conditional—we must “confess our sins”, as John tells us. That grace is the moment at which we are justified, conditional on being right in God’s eyes, is evident from the following passages:

“But **Noah found grace** in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8).

“Now therefore, I pray Thee, **if I have found grace in thy sight**, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation is Thy people” (Exodus 33:13).

“For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but His secret is with the righteous. The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely He scorneth the scornors: but **He giveth grace unto the lowly**” (Proverbs 3:32–34).

The word ‘grace’ there is the equivalent Hebrew word to the Greek word for grace. To whom is it extended? To the **unrighteous** or the **repentant**? Examples could well be multiplied, and it is interesting to note how many of them contain the phrase ‘if I have found grace in Thy sight’, proving utterly that this ‘grace’ is **conditional**.

God’s offer of salvation, as we have seen, His **extension** of forgiveness, the fact that He is **prepared** to forgive all who repent, is unconditional—but this **must not** be confused with the grace which is **only** granted to those who are pleasing in His sight. This difference is absolutely critical to understand. It is this difference which Yancey has abandoned entirely. A classic example of this is on page 171 where he cannot see any difference between *unrepentant* homosexuals and *repentant* believers. We are all supposedly “God’s pride and joy” whether repentant or unrepentant, faithful or unfaithful. Again, the underlying problem here is his doctrinal foundation, a substitutionary atonement.

## GOD'S GRACE IS CONDITIONAL

Yancey's definition of the process of forgiveness is the exact reverse of the Scriptural definition. For Yancey, grace is extended to us by God regardless of our state (sinful or obedient, faithful or unfaithful), and repentance is then just the moment in which someone chooses to receive God's grace. As Yancey says,

'[Grace] must be received, and the Christian term for that act is repentance, the doorway to grace.' (*What's so amazing about Grace?*, page 182).

This statement may appear correct on the surface, and in fact it may even appear to be a either a counterbalance or contradiction to much of what he has said so far. But just think about it. Isn't repentance the moment in which a believer **seeks** God's grace **rather than** just the moment when any person decides to **receive** it? This is not some mere technicality. Again, it is a problem which has its foundation in the doctrine of substitution. **God's grace is conditional** on far more than any person (regardless of their beliefs) **just simply choosing to receive it!** Yancey's definition of repentance is completely different to the Scriptural teaching about repentance. His understanding of God's forgiveness is therefore unscriptural also. As Bro. Harry Tennant says:

"The blessings of love and forgiveness flow to us through the channel of faith in the message of the Gospel of Christ and by God's acceptance of us through Jesus. **Forgiveness comes to the believer when he personally seeks and asks for it in the way appointed by God.** Forgiveness is certain: but it is not automatic." (*The Christadelphians—What they believe and preach*, p. 70).

The moment we **receive** God's grace is therefore the moment we are forgiven of our sins. The Bible teaches that repentance must come **before** forgiveness, **before** we can receive God's grace. The receiving of God's grace **is conditional** on a believer repenting and seeking God in the way God has appointed. God's grace is conditional also on **FAITH (Eph 2:8)**. It is conditional on believing the things concerning Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God and upon being baptised (**Acts 8:12**). But where does Yancey ever say that these are necessary? Not once. Yancey's doctrine (at least when you finally get to page 182) teaches that God's grace is conditional only on us supposedly "receiving it" (no matter what our beliefs or attitude of mind), and he decides to define this as "repentance". No wonder he comes to the conclusion that God "*accepts me Just As I Am*" (p. 185). But this is not repentance as taught in the Scriptures.

Look at the example of the prodigal son in **Luke 15**. The moment when the son received the grace of forgiveness from his father was the moment when he **returned** to his father, and **declared his sin**. His decision to do so had been made **well before** the moment when he received grace:

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18–19).

This is the attitude of repentance. This is not the attitude of one approaching God and ‘receiving’ that which he believes to be his right. The attitude of the prodigal was the attitude of one who knew he had done wrong, who knew he deserved nothing, and who threw himself on the mercy of his father—and who knew he deserved **rejection**. This is not the attitude of the Evangelical.

The Evangelical attitude is expressed with abundant clarity by a quote from C. S. Lewis which Yancey uses:

‘C. S. Lewis said repentance is not something God arbitrarily demands of us; “It is simply a description of what going back is like” (WSAAG, page 183).

This statement could not be further from the truth. To say that repentance is **in any way** something which God does not require, is simply false. The truth of the matter is that God requires repentance in order for us to receive forgiveness. No one in Scripture ever received grace through forgiveness without first repenting.

The apostle John insists that repentance **is** required by God if we are to be forgiven—and it is required in the most dogmatic and commanding terms:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess** our sins, He is faithful and just **to forgive** us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

This is the true moment of grace, the moment of forgiveness—a forgiveness absolutely dependent on our repentance. A principle difficulty with Yancey’s argument, therefore, is that it equates God’s grace (the forgiveness extended to those who repent), with God’s willingness to forgive (the state of mind He has prior to the repentance of the individual). By implying that God’s grace is the same as God’s willingness to forgive, Yancey disrupts the Scriptural process of forgiveness. **It is utterly vital that we understand this, and it is utterly vital that we reject it.**

## WHAT IS TRUE REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS?

Just as the effects of sin are mental, moral, and physical, so the process of forgiveness must address itself to all three of these principles (see ‘The process of Repentance and forgiveness’ in **Appendix B**). To demonstrate the mental, moral, and physical process of repentance, let’s examine the response of the individuals to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost:

“Now **when they heard** this, they were **pricked in their heart**, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, **what shall we do?**” (Acts 2:37).

**Mental**—“When they heard...”—this was the mental comprehension of a law, and the intellectual realisation that this law has been broken.

**Moral**—“...they were pricked in their heart...”—this was the emotional and moral response to the realisation of our sin—a remorse, a humility and a repentant attitude.

**Physical**—"...what shall we do?"—this was a demonstration of their understanding that the process of repentance would not be **shown** without a change of life, **the result of a change of mind**.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

In summary, therefore, the process of forgiveness is as follows:

- **Mental**—an intellectual recognition that we have sinned.
- **Moral**—the development of remorse and humility in our conscience. An awareness of our separation from God, and a willingness and determination to restore the relationship on **His** terms.
- **Physical**—the **demonstration** of our repentance by at least **honestly resolving** to live a life which repudiates temptation, and sins no more. As we have mentioned previously, the first step in forgiveness is baptism.

This process of repentance is **only** truly complete when we have reached the final stage, the **resolution to try** to change our lives. Before then, it is incomplete.

## DOES GOD REALLY HAVE TO CHANGE OR DO WE?

The depth and profundity of the Scriptural process of repentance is entirely lost on Yancey. Not once does he describe the Divine model in accordance with Scripture. Not once does he suggest that forgiveness involves a complete change of **ourselves**, in order to be reconciled to God. Not once in his treatment of grace does he examine the full process of forgiveness in Scriptural terms.

Instead, Yancey substitutes for it a superficial doctrine that involves God making all the changes, in order to accommodate our sin:

"In 'The Art of Forgiving', Lewis Smedes makes the striking observation that the Bible portrays God going through progressive stages when He forgives, much as we humans do. First, God rediscovers the humanity of the person who wronged him, by removing the barrier created by sin. Second, God surrenders His right to get even, choosing instead to bear the cost in His own body. Finally, God revises His feelings toward us, finding a way to 'justify' us so that when He looks upon us He sees His own adopted children, with His divine image restored" (WSAAG, p. 106).

The suggestion that the process of forgiveness involves God changing on **our** behalf, rather than us changing in obedience to Him, is clearly flawed. It is founded, naturally, on Yancey's own wrong doctrine—a doctrine which insists on a God who was utterly unable to forgive His creation until He had **become one of them**:

"It occurred to me, as I thought about Smede's insights, that the gracious miracle of God's forgiveness was made possible because of the linkage that occurred when God came to earth in Christ. Somehow God had to come to terms with these creatures He desperately wanted to love—but how? Experientially, God did not know what it was like to be tempted to sin, to have a trying day. On earth, living



among us, He learned what it was like. He put Himself on our side" (WSAAG, p.106).

"From the Gospel accounts, it seems forgiveness was not easy for God, either... Only by becoming a human being could the Son of God truly say, 'They do not know what they are doing.' Having lived among us, He now understood." (WSAAG, p.107).

It is impossible for us to agree with Yancey's concept of the process of forgiveness for the simple reason that it **requires** a Trinitarian Godhead that is utterly alien to Scripture. The result is a complete inversion of the principles upon which we are truly forgiven.

The reason why Yancey's argument disrupts this process is that for Yancey, both the willingness to forgive **and the very action of forgiveness itself** (grace), have already taken place well before the sin of the individual, let alone their repentance. That moment at which all the sins of men, past, present, and future, were forgiven without any repentance on their behalf, was, for Yancey, the atonement—because he believes in a **substitutionary** atonement.

## A DILEMMA FOR WHICH THERE IS NO SOLUTION

The result of Yancey's reasoning is that he finds himself inevitably caught in a dilemma for which he has no solution. By equating our forgiveness of each other with God's forgiveness of us, Yancey places himself in the unfortunate position of making the forgiveness of God both unconditional, and pre-emptive: not only are there no conditions for forgiveness (not even true repentance according to the Scriptural definition), but the grace and forgiveness of God becomes available to you even before you sin.

This is no exaggeration of the dilemma. Yancey express it in almost precisely these terms and recognises it as a critical challenge to his very argument. When taken to its logical conclusion, Yancey's understanding of grace must be rejected even by its author. To his credit, Yancey attempts to address this dilemma. His efforts to do so, however, are hesitant. Well aware of the fact that this problem has the potential to destroy his entire argument, and well aware of the fact that the problem is one of his own making, he spends time on 'damage control', and seeks not so much to **solve** the dilemma as to **limit the damage it inflicts on his argument**.

His options are either to minimise the strength of his argument for the power of grace (which would result in the unravelling of his entire case, and the premature end of the book), or minimise the circumstances in which his definition of grace can be extended. Yancey is reluctant to take either path. But choose he must, and it is the lesser of the two evils on which he decides—he informs us that despite having told us 'there is no loophole, no catch, no condition', in fact, there is.

## HOW DOES YANCEY DEAL WITH THIS DILEMMA?

In order to overcome the credulity of the reader, on whom Yancey has been pressing the idea that there are no circumstances whatsoever in which grace cannot

be extended, Yancey must make an appeal to extraordinary circumstances. Very carefully, he chooses to illustrate the principle that there must be some limit on what he defines as grace (a principle he has denied vigorously to this point), and the illustrations he draws are deliberately extreme. Yancey needs to appeal to the sympathy of the reader, he needs to present circumstances so severe and uncomfortable that the reader will forgive him for arguing that grace should not be extended in these cases. It is for this reason that he presents the case of a friend of his who intends to leave his wife for a younger woman, and of another friend who is an active homosexual seeking ordination to the priesthood.

Both men are unrepentant. Both ask Yancey for his support and blessing before performing an action that they cannot justify. Yancey is apologetic, but refreshingly uncompromising—he cannot justify the actions of his friends, nor can he grant them grace and forgiveness for the sins they are about to commit, wittingly and deliberately.

Close inspection, however, reveals that Yancey's laudable dogmatism in this regard undermines his own argument, and still fails to address the dilemma he has created. Although giving the appearance of addressing the issue, Yancey has in fact neglected the principle at stake. The simple issue is this: 'Is the grace of God extended to the presumptuous, deliberate, and unrepentant sinner?', and the answer provided by Yancey is, in effect, 'Not if the sin committed is particularly grave'.

In this way Yancey reduces the power of a Scriptural principle unconditionally applied, to a mere stricture applied only in exceptional circumstances. Superficially, it may appear that Yancey is insisting that grace is only available to the repentant, but the entire aim of his argument to this point (i.e. for some 176 pages) has been to reject this idea, and he has insisted on this consistently:

"The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity.... Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional." (WSAAG, p. 45)

"We are accustomed to finding a catch in every promise, but Jesus' stories of extravagant grace include no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God's grace... How different are these stories from my own childhood notions about God..." (WSAAG, p. 52)

"Ask people what they must do to go to heaven and most reply "be good." Jesus's stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry 'help!'" (WSAAG, p. 54)

"Grace baffles us because it goes against the intuition everyone has that, in the face of injustice, some price must be paid. A murderer cannot simply go free... Anticipating these objections, Paul stressed that a price has been paid—by God himself. God gave up his own Son rather than give up on humanity..." (WSAAG, p. 67)

"Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more... And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less—no amount of racism or

pride or pornography or adultery or even murder. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love." (WSAAG, p. 70)

"By instinct I feel I must *do something* in order to be accepted. Grace sounds a startling note of contradiction, of liberation..." (WSAAG, p. 71).

Having made such a dogmatic and vigorous argument for the case that there are no circumstances in which grace cannot be applied, Yancey needs to present a very good excuse for arguing that there **are** in fact circumstances in which grace cannot be extended. This is why the circumstances he presents, in these examples of when grace is unavailable, are deliberately extreme. The sleight of hand that Yancey performs in this regard is entirely misleading—and entirely unScriptural. If his comprehension and description of forgiveness had been Scriptural in the first place, he would not have been reduced to this kind of semantic conjuring.

## ONE DILEMMA LEADS TO ANOTHER

What is even more dangerous about Yancey's argument, is that in effect it subtly attempts to 'grade' sins, implying that there are 'big sins' and 'little sins', and that only the 'biggest sins' can prevent God's grace from being extended to us. Let us be clear on this. To God, a sin is the transgression of His law, or it is 'missing the mark'.

The particular manner in which this is done is obviously irrelevant—a sin is a sin. Unrepentant sinners are not forgiven. They do not receive grace, the Divine favour of God bestowed on those who are justified in His eyes—those who are declared righteous (Rom. 3:24).

Yancey's efforts to extricate himself from the dilemma of his own making ultimately results in a flawed argument. His conclusion is, in effect, that grace is only refused to those who fail to repent of **very grave sins**. This is based on the following erroneous premises:

- That grace (as defined unScripturally by Yancey) is extended to those who have not yet repented.
- That there are some sins more serious than others which means that at some extreme point God's grace does cut out in the face of wanton lawlessness.
- That some sins are forgiven by God without the need for true repentance.

**The attraction of this doctrine is obvious**—repentance is only necessary for the very **worst** of sins. While he may not express his argument in exactly this way, this is clearly the message presented. The sleight of hand he performs presents a doctrinal problem that is very difficult to discern on the surface. Inevitably, this leads to a degradation of the principle of repentance.

Scripture teaches that grace is the **conclusion** of the process of forgiveness, the moment when God forgives us to the extent that we are free from the penalty we have incurred. By contrast, Yancey holds that grace is in effect extended to the **unrepentant**. In a confrontation between the sinner and God, Yancey tells us that,

in effect, it is God who blinks first, and who then extends His grace (the **fulfilment** of the process of forgiveness), **even before we have changed our ways, or even resolved to change**. Yancey's idea of God is of a being who **hopes** that we will change later, in gratitude to His accommodation of our sin, **but does not require it**. This is clearly the result of his Evangelical doctrine.

This teaching is uncannily similar to the early Gnostic beliefs. The Gnostic believed that flesh was evil, but the mind (being spirit), was intrinsically good. It was also argued that nothing done 'in the body' could possibly affect the mind in any way. The analogy used was one of a gold ingot placed in mud. 'Ah, you see,' the Gnostic said, 'The gold is covered in the mud, **but it remains gold!** When you take it out of the mud, you can see that it has been **completely unaffected** by the experience!' Unfortunately, the simplistic model of the Gnostic is false. Our minds are not naturally 'gold', and they are undeniably affected by the environment to which they are exposed. A similar analogy is provided by Yancey:

"As Helmut Thielicke wrote: '(Jesus) saw through the surface layer of grime and dirt to the real man underneath... Jesus was able to love men because he loved them right through the layer of mud'." (WSAAG, p.175)

Yancey's understanding of the relationship between God and men is thus both humanistic and Gnostic. The clear and obvious aim of Yancey's argument is to provide a means by which Christians can **live a life unfettered by restraints**, access a forgiveness which does not require repentance **in the Scriptural sense**, and prove that grace is the means by which God is persuaded to agree with us.

Yancey's doctrine is also founded on the doctrines of Calvin. See [Appendix C](#) for further detail on the links between Yancey's doctrine and the doctrines of Calvinism.

## DOES GOD REQUIRE OBEDIENCE?

For the Evangelical, the bottom line is that obedience is not necessary for salvation. We are supposedly saved by "grace alone" or "faith only". "Faith" is often defined as just believing in God and Jesus. "Obedience" is often described as something that the Spirit will enable them to do or something that they will 'just do naturally'. Salvation is supposedly not conditional on obedience to the commandments of Christ and the Apostles. Philip Yancey recognises that this is a dangerous element about his teaching on grace:

'Consider this pointed reminder from the grand old preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 'There is thus clearly a sense in which the message of "justification by faith only" can be dangerous, and likewise with the message that salvation is entirely of grace... This is the kind of dangerous element about the true presentation of the doctrine of salvation.' Grace has about it the scent of scandal.' (WSAAG, p.178)

There is nothing new in this. Bro. Robert Roberts deals with this problem in his book, *Christendom Astray*:

'Christendom, which has gone astray from the doctrines, has also forsaken the commandments of Christ, if ever it made them a rule of life. It has probably left the commandments as the result of losing the doctrines; for the force of the commandments can only be felt by those who recognise that **salvation is dependent on their obedience**. Popular theology has reduced them to a practical nullity. **It has totally obscured the principle of obedience as the basis of our acceptance with God in Christ**, by its doctrine of "justification by faith alone.'" (*Christendom Astray*, ch. 17, p. 241).

In Scripture, obedience is our reasonable service to God—it is our very reason for being. For Yancey, obedience to God is simply something we do in response to His forgiveness, as a sense of gratitude—but only if we want to. It is not required of us for salvation, says Yancey, it is merely something nice we do if we want to show we love Him:

"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.'" (WSAAG, p. 190)

This is similar enough to the truth of the matter to be convincing but misleading. Our willing obedience to God is certainly an expression of our love for Him, and a grateful response to His love for us, but obedience is more than that—it is termed by Paul our 'reasonable service'. This takes obedience beyond a mere response to God, it is revealed as the very purpose of our existence:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this the whole of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

There is a very important reason, however, why Yancey not only avoids dwelling on the principle of obedience, but also why he suggests that it is purely an act of gratitude rather than a requirement of our service to God. **The reason, like all of Yancey's arguments, is to be found in his Evangelical doctrine.** We must give Yancey credit for being true to his doctrines, even if they do lead him to make the most unScriptural arguments. Being an Evangelical, Yancey is thoroughly opposed to **any suggestion** that obedience is **required** for salvation. Strange as it may seem, to the Evangelical this is heresy—what they call 'works righteousness'. Examples from earlier in the book make this point abundantly obvious:

"Ask people what they must do to go to heaven and most reply "be good." Jesus' stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry "help!" (WSAAG, p. 54)

"By instinct I feel I must *do something* in order to be accepted. Grace sounds a startling note of contradiction, of liberation..." (WSAAG, p. 71)

"In one of his last acts before death, Jesus forgave 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, but rather on what God has done for us." (WSAAG, p. 54-5)

You may even hear this Evangelical attitude expressed among us today, when it is said by some,

"I also believe that I am saved by **grace** only, not by any works that I do. But many Christadelphians, while giving lip-service to salvation by grace, actually teach that there are several **works** which are **essential** for salvation. These include baptism and 'purity of doctrine'... but might also include such things as women wearing head coverings."

The fallacy of the Evangelical is in thinking that just because our works **cannot** earn us salvation (and we must remember that they **cannot**), we need perform no works at all. Scripture tells us otherwise. Obedience to the commandments of God is not 'works righteousness', and it is very obviously necessary for salvation:

**"If ye love me, keep my commandments"** (John 14:15).

**"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love....Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"** (John 15:10, 14).

**"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"** (1 John 2:3, 4).

**"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him"** (1 John 3:22-24).

**"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous"** (1 John 5:2-3).

The Bible says that we will not be saved purely *because of* our obedience. However we cannot hope to be saved *without* our obedience either. We cannot choose to worship God in our own way (Gen. 4:3-7; 1 Sam. 12:15, 15:19; Rom. 6:16; Heb. 11:4 etc.) Salvation is therefore conditional on obedience. When Jesus Christ comes back to the earth, it says he will "in flaming fire [take] vengeance on **them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8). Yes, obedience is essential.

If obedience was not required for salvation, there would be no need for grace, for grace is the unmerited favour of God bestowed on those aspiring to a Divine ideal which they recognise is beyond them.

## Obedience is essential for Salvation

'The commandments delivered by the apostles were not of their authorship. They were as definitely divine as those that came from the mouth of the Lord. Paul distinctly claims this (1 Cor. 14:37).

When Jesus sent forth his apostles, he not only commanded them to preach the gospel, but he said, "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:20) That is, the obedience of these commandments is essential to the believers. Christ said this plainly in concluding what is called his "sermon on the mount", which is nothing else than a long series of these very commandments—in fact, the most methodical and extensive collection of them to be found in the whole course of his recorded teaching (Matt. 7:24-26). In no plainer way could Christ tell us that our ultimate acceptance with him will depend upon our doing of the things he has commanded. If he did say it more plainly, it was when he said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER, who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

The idea thus explicitly enunciated is of very frequent occurrence in the Lord's teaching. It comes out in various connections and forms, but always with the same pointedness and vigour. There is never room for misconception (Matt. 12:47,50; Luke 11:28; Luke 6:46; Matt. 5:20; John 15:14)'

(Bro. Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*, ch. 17, p. 241, 243-244)

The reason for **requiring** our obedience is that obedience to God's commandments is what **shapes us in His image**. Without obedience to God's commandments, our unregenerate mind would never incline us to live a life which was the reflection of His character. We are not naturally inclined towards doing what is right and reflecting God's character. We need guidance—but from His Word, not from the Holy Spirit, as the Evangelical would have us believe. Only through the **renewing** of our mind, according to His **commandments**, are we in a position to reflect His character:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1–2).

This is the doctrine of God manifestation. The fact that obedience is **required** of us is abundantly obvious from these two verses alone. Furthermore, the **level** of obedience to which we are intended to **aspire** is extraordinarily high:

- A living sacrifice

- Holy
- Acceptable unto God
- Transformed (literally, 'changed in shape')
- Renewing of your mind (literally 'to make different to, and other than, that which had been before')

Nowhere do we find such a level of service even mentioned by Yancey. According to Yancey, obedience to God is relegated to an 'optional extra', a mere token gesture which we may **choose** to extend to God, but which we are under no **obligation** to perform. Sure, Yancey might say that obedience (or as he says, "being good") is a nice thing and it is what God likes, but the truth is he believes it is **not necessary** for salvation. This is the **natural end result** of his doctrines and his argument—i.e. we do **not** have to change fundamentally, if we do not want to.

As Part 1 has already demonstrated, this is seen nowhere with greater distinction than at **the very conclusion** of Yancey's book, where a drunken and dissolute crowd take some time out to experience what Yancey describes as 'grace', but which is in reality a superficial moment of sentimentality, which even Yancey does not suggest will have a life changing effect.

It is the doctrine of God manifestation which Yancey is abandoning here—the fundamental doctrine of Scripture, to which all other doctrines are related.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen how Yancey has distorted the process of forgiveness by reducing it to a shallow and superficial arrangement by which God accommodates our sin.

We have seen how Yancey's definition of grace, suggesting that the favour of God (which is His grace) is extended **prior** to true repentance, rather than after—is the complete opposite to that recorded in Scripture.

We have seen how Yancey's understanding of the character of God is seriously flawed—a curiously fickle and vengeful being, who underwent a necessary change of heart in the New Testament.

Furthermore, his understanding of the Godhead is utterly false.

We have seen how Yancey's understanding of the process of salvation perverts the Scriptural account, not only denying the **necessity** of obedience towards God, but placing immortal souls in heaven, rather than making us 'like unto the angels', and ruling 'on the earth' as kings and priests.

Yancey's doctrine of substitution not only makes a mockery of the atoning work of Christ, but is one of the foundations of his entire approach to forgiveness and grace—we have seen also that this false doctrine is itself predicated on the heresy of the trinity.

The abandonment by Yancey of the absolutely fundamental principle of God manifestation is the most critical of the list of first principles that he assaults and destroys. Any view that denies, diminishes, distorts, or otherwise alters this



foundation doctrine of Scripture, challenges the express will and purpose of God Himself, and must therefore be rejected outright.

Evangelical doctrine is reflected in what it promotes:

- a **mental attitude** which sees no necessity for repentance in the Scriptural sense, which justifies self rather than justifying God, which excuses sin rather than convicting the conscience.
- a **doctrinal position** which on the one hand elevates heresy to the position of truth without which one cannot be saved, but on the other hand disregards fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, and dismisses the Scriptural principles of fellowship.
- a **necessary and inescapable result** of these two, a **way of life** which sees no necessity for personal holiness and purity, which scorns obedience as ‘salvation by works’, and self-restraint as ‘self-righteousness’, a way of life **that will never reflect the character, will, or purpose of the Creator.**

Evangelical doctrine cannot save. It separates us from God. It can only lead to eternal death.

It is impossible to argue otherwise.

It is this Evangelical doctrine which is so attractive to the flesh—and which is taught so thoroughly and persistently in Philip Yancey’s book *‘What’s So Amazing About Grace?’*.

The beguiling consequences to brethren and sisters reading this work have been quite tragic.

We cannot deny that we are susceptible to such endearing heresy—the facts are self-evident.

It is symptomatic of a weakness in the body of Christ that such books as these are tolerated, their reading encouraged and widespread. It is not merely that brethren and sisters wish to divert themselves with something new, it is also that many of them do not know the value of what is old—the ‘old paths’, or fundamental doctrines of the Scriptural faith have not been taught clearly, or have been given a dangerous lack of emphasis, and the vital connection between our doctrine and our way of life has been disregarded.

The time has obviously come for us all to examine ourselves seriously.

Do we appreciate the sacrifice made for us by God in sending His son, and by Christ in a life of perfect obedience—obedience unto death no less—and demonstrate our appreciation by striving to live a life of sacrifice which is at least a shadow of Christ’s?

The letters to the seven ecclesias make it obvious to us that wrong doctrine, a wrong way of life, and even a wrong motivation for serving God are all errors which **even individually** will exclude us from salvation.

Philip Yancey's book successfully teaches and encourages all three.

Yancey's book would have no success among us if we were all certain of our personal faith in God and our personal understanding of His Word. The only way to prevent and correct error is to know and preach truth.

Do we, personally, know the Truth? Do we know **why** we believe **what** we believe? This is no idle question. The apostle Paul's early appeal is relevant again to us all,

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5–6).

Let everyone of us **examine himself**, and so approach the Father through Christ in true fellowship.

**"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' "**  
(Mark 1:14, 15)

## APPENDIX A

## THE SCRIPTURAL PROCESS OF REPENTANCE CONTRASTED WITH EVANGELICAL TEACHING

The following example identifies clearly the vital distinction between **being called upon to repent** (the extension of God's offer of salvation), and **the actual receiving of grace itself** (the moment at which we are imputed righteous):

"And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done **displeased the LORD**" (2 Samuel 11:27).

At this point David has sinned and the displeasure of God rests upon him. David is worthy of death, and no one could doubt this. But what is God's response? Does He not care? Is He willing to forgive David before David repents? Will He justify David, impute righteousness to David, extend to David His saving grace, all while David is dead in trespass and sin?

Nathan is sent to make known God's view of the matter. What will he say?

Has he come to David in order to approve his action, or perhaps to reassure him that God has forgiven him regardless of his actions?

Nathan tells David a parable, an appalling story which provokes David's sense of justice.

He responds in moral outrage:

"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing **shall surely die**: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity" (2 Samuel 12:5–6).

David's response is not only a declaration of the punishment appropriate to the situation—a four-fold restitution and death—but also a condemnatory character assessment. The man in the parable, according to David, is cruel.

But what is God's estimation of this situation? What is His assessment of this man's character?

If the purpose of Nathan's commission from God is to tell David that such a man may be reprehensible but 'God loves him anyway', if his task is to show that saving grace is extended to such a man regardless of his character, way of life, or whether he repents or not, this will be reflected in his response to David.

So how does Nathan respond?

"And Nathan said to David, **Thou art the man**" (2 Samuel 12:7).

Nathan's immediate response is to verify that David's estimation of the character and appropriate punishment of the man in the parable is completely accurate.

He then unleashes a terrible list of Divine condemnations and punishments which God Himself will visit upon David for his sin:

- David has despised the commandment of the LORD
- David has done evil in Yahweh's sight
- David has killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword
- David has taken Uriah's wife for himself, and has ensured that Uriah was slain by the enemies of God
- The sword shall never depart from David's house
- Evil would be raised up against him out of his own house
- His wives (concubines) would be taken by another and humbled in public view.

All this is decreed before David had voiced one word of repentance.

Clearly the commission of Nathan was **not** to tell David that God had forgiven him without the necessity of repentance or regardless of his sins. Nathan had come in order to **convict David of sin**, and to **extend to him God's offer of salvation**—the grace of God which is **not** unconditional, but demands **repentance**.

In his integrity, David acknowledged this, confessed himself worthy of death:

"And David said unto Nathan, **I have sinned against the LORD**" (2 Samuel 12:13).

This is the moment of confession and repentance—so this is the moment of grace. We can be sure of this, because now and only now does Nathan tell David that he is forgiven:

"...The LORD also hath put away thy sin; **thou shalt not die**" (2 Sam. 12:13).

David is worthy of death, both for adultery and for murder. This just punishment, however, is not to be visited upon him, **because he has repented**. There can be no doubt that grace was extended to David **subsequent to his repentance**.

However, despite the fact that David's life is to be spared, the other punishments pronounced upon him are **still to take effect**, and a further punishment is also decreed:

"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee **shall surely die**" ((2 Samuel 12:14).

This proves beyond any possibility of doubt that the moment of saving grace is reached **only when we confess our sins and repent of them**.

If the Evangelical understanding of grace were Scriptural, the record of 2 Samuel 12 would read very differently—in fact, it would read like this:

**2 Samuel 12:**

**1** And the LORD sent Nathan unto David.

**13...** And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin.

This is exactly how Evangelicals read this entire passage. This is hardly honest, but it is read in this way because it is simply impossible to support the Evangelical position by reading the passage honestly.

Consider this analysis of the same passage by an Evangelical. These are taken from the notes for his sermon on David's sin with Bathsheba:

**'God's grace precedes sin and repentance.**

Set up the story of King David.

His sin.

Read: 2 Samuel 11:27

**God sending Nathan to confront David (God's grace).**

Read: 2 Samuel 12:1-7; 13

*[My comment: Note that this pastor **deliberately avoids** the clear references to the punishment decreed by God, by omitting the reading of verses **8-11**, and avoids also David's **admission of guilt**—essential to his repentance—in verse **12**]*

It's this David who then pens **Psalm 51** as his song of repentance.

Read: **Psalm 51** (the cry of David is honest and pleading, but flows from already receiving the grace and mercy of God)

**And here is the key that I want you to get:**

**Theologically, God's grace comes first—it precedes sin and repentance. Grace is not something that was necessitated by God because of our sin.** When we sin, we are actually sinning against the grace of God that is already present to us. Not only that, but when we do sin against that grace, it is non [sic] other than **God who first reaches out to us in reconciliation before we ever decide to return back to him in repentance.**

**It's God who initiates to David. It's God who sends Nathan as an act of grace. What God had Nathan be for David is equivalent to the role of Holy Spirit in our lives:**

**John 16:8 (NIV)**

**8** When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

**John 16:13 (NIV)**

**13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

**You see, even our ability to return to God through confession and repentance is the work of grace in our lives.'**

*(Kevin T. Doi, 'God's Grace Precedes Repentance')*

I have emphasised the key phrases in bold, because they demonstrate the manner in which the Evangelical view of grace is inseparable from the doctrines of the substitutionary atonement, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the Calvinist 'prevenient grace' by which men are compelled, against their natural will, to serve God.

This is the Evangelical doctrine of 'free grace'. If we are in any doubt as to what effect this really has on our understanding of the process of salvation, and the way in which this affects our lives, let's read the following statements from Evangelical theologians (with my emphasis), and contrast them with the words of Scripture:

**EVANGELICAL:**

'Faith alone (**not repentance and faith**) is the **sole condition** for justification and eternal life.' (*Zane C Hodges, 'A Biblical Reply To Lordship Salvation'*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins**, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**EVANGELICAL:**

'First, nowhere do the Scriptures condition obtaining eternal salvation on our turning from our sins.' (*Bob Wilkin*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Zechariah 1:4 Be ye not as your fathers**, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; **Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings**: but they did **not hear, nor hearken unto Me**, saith the LORD.

**EVANGELICAL:**

'May we clearly share with people what saving "repentance" is (i.e., a change of perspective) and **what it is not (i.e., turning from sins)**.' (*Bob Wilkin*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Ezekiel 33:11** Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; **but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways**; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

**EVANGELICAL:**

'...the person who places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his blood shed at Calvary is eternally secure. He can never lose his salvation. **No personal breaking of God's or man's laws or commandments can nullify that status...**' (Wilson Ewin, *'There is Therefore Now No Condemnation'*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Revelation 2:21–22** And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; **and she repented not.** Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **except they repent of their deeds.**

**EVANGELICAL:**

'God's law or commandments were given to point out the fact of sin. The law shows the unregenerated man how wicked and lost he is before a Holy God. **Keeping them or breaking them has no part in the believer's possession of credited or imputed righteousness.**' (Wilson Ewin, *'There is Therefore Now No Condemnation'*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Revelation 2:5** Remember therefore **from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;** or else I will come unto thee quickly, **and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.**

**Acts 3:19** Repent ye therefore, **and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,** when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

**EVANGELICAL:**

'Yet, in one of Luke's most famous stories, a badly shaken Philippian jailer inquires of Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer they give to him is the only answer the Bible knows to such a question: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). **There is not a word here-not a syllable!-about repentance...**

Faith alone (**not repentance and faith**) is the **sole condition** for justification and eternal life' (Zane C Hodges, *'A Biblical Reply To Lordship Salvation'*)

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Acts 2:37–38** Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, **Men and brethren, what shall we do?** Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...**

**EVANGELICAL:**

'It is an extremely serious matter when the biblical distinction between faith and repentance is collapsed **and when repentance is thus made a condition for eternal life...** To make **repentance a condition for eternal salvation** is nothing less than **a regression toward Roman Catholic dogma.**' (*Zane C Hodges, 'A Biblical Reply To Lordship Salvation'*)

**SCRIPTURE:****Luke 13:**

**2** And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

**3** I tell you, Nay: **but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

**4** Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

**5** I tell you, Nay: **but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

The conflict between Evangelical doctrine and the Word of God could not be greater. **We cannot possibly hold these doctrines and hope to be saved**—to do so is to deny the very Scripture of truth.



## APPENDIX B

## THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Ever since the day of Pentecost when “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38) the Bible has made it abundantly clear that the watershed for the operation of grace in a true believer’s life is **baptism**. This act of obedience by adults follows hearing and believing the gospel:

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were **baptized**, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

It is the means by which a person’s prior sins are forgiven by the grace of God. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ...For he that is dead is freed from sin.” (Rom. 6:3, 7). Although this appendix is essentially discussing forgiveness of sins which occur after baptism, it also discusses some examples of those under the old covenant.

Yancey’s definition of the process of forgiveness is the exact reverse of the Scriptural definition. For Yancey, grace is extended to us by God regardless of our state (sinful or obedient, repentant or unrepentant), and repentance is then just the moment in which we choose to receive God’s grace:

**“[Grace] must be received, and the Christian term for that act is repentance, the doorway to grace.” (WSAAG, page 182).**

In fact, repentance is when we seek grace, not when we receive grace. We receive grace when we ‘find grace in His sight’—and that grace is forgiveness.

Yancey attempts to use the parable of the prodigal son in order to support his claim that repentance is the moment when we receive grace, but in actual fact his attempt is flawed. Repentance for the prodigal was when he decided that he had sinned against his father and against God and he decided to seek forgiveness. This moment occurred when he was still in a foreign country, well before he met his father again. When he met his father he was graciously received by him.

## THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE—MENTAL

“Because the law worketh wrath: for **where no law is, there is no transgression**” (Romans 4:15).

In the absence of law, there is no sin “imputed” (Rom. 5:13). By law comes knowledge of sin and consciousness of guilt and liability to punishment. In order for repentance to occur, there must firstly be an intellectual realisation that sin has been committed. This will **only** take place if the individual realises that they have broken a law, and they will only realise that a law has been broken, if they are

actually aware of that law, or conscious of the possibility that they might have omitted to do something God has set as a standard.

This is the first stage of repentance, the mental comprehension of a law, and the intellectual realisation that this law has been broken:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: **for by the law is the knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20).

Unless we have law, principle, and standard, we will be unable to determine right from wrong, unable to determine what is in accordance with the will of God. With knowledge of law comes the knowledge of sin, and the **responsibility**, the **obligation**, to repent.

## THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE—MORAL

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:2).

Mere intellectual realisation of a breach of law is not repentance. There must be a genuine attempt at a change in heart, an emotional and moral response to the realisation of our sin—a contrition, a humility.

This is developed when, having realised that we have committed sin, we examine ourselves according to the Word of God, and come to an appreciation of the breach of our **relationship** with God, and an awareness of how far from His character we have been removed.

This is the second stage of repentance, the emotional and moral response to the realisation of our sin.

We examine ourselves to determine how our character has become removed from that of our God, and determine within ourselves to submit ourselves to His examination, with a willingness to accept His judgment, and a determination to sin no more:

"**Search me**, O God, and **know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:** And **see** if there be **any wicked way** in me, and **lead me in the way everlasting**" (Psalm 139:23–24).

## THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE—PHYSICAL

"Let us therefore **come with confidence** unto the throne of grace, **that we may obtain mercy**, and **find grace** to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Having passed through the mental and moral stages of our repentance, we are finally prepared to move to the last stage, the physical. This involves **actions** which restore our relationship with God, and which re-establish it on His terms.

The first step, clearly, is to approach our Father in prayer, seeking forgiveness. If we have been honest and open in our self examination, and have been thorough in

following the mental and moral process by which our character has been influenced by the Word, then we are ready to seek forgiveness from our God.

Having sought forgiveness, and **taken the first physical step** in restoring our relationship with God, the next step is to **renew** that relationship by resolving to live a life which attempts to repudiate temptation, and which keeps from sin:

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even **in thy mouth, and in thy heart**: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That **if thou shalt confess with thy mouth** the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For **with the heart man believeth** unto righteousness; and **with the mouth confession is made** unto salvation” (Romans 10:8–10).

The principle here is that both heart **and** mouth are involved in our response to God’s offer of salvation.

The heart contains our faith—our **mental and moral** response to God’s forgiveness. The mouth demonstrates our confession—our **physical** response to God’s forgiveness.

Together they illustrate the dual process of faith **and** works, by which we are saved. The mental and moral stages of repentance **alone** are an insufficient response to God’s forgiveness—they have not **truly** been completed until they have **changed the way we intend to live**.

Other examples of the true moment of grace:

- Balaam was forgiven when he turned from his error and acknowledged that God was right. His repentance was the moment when he confessed, and the moment when he received grace was the moment when the angel accepted his repentance and chose not to kill him. Had Balaam not repented, we are told, the angel would have killed him. This is incompatible with the idea that the angel was holding out ‘grace’ for Balaam and waiting for Balaam to ‘receive’ it—what the angel was holding out was a sword.
- David was forgiven when he admitted that he had sinned and was worthy of death. His repentance was the moment when he confessed and sought grace, not when he received it—“I have sinned”, says David, “Therefore Yahweh hath put away thy sin”, replies Nathan.
- Annanias and Sapphira refused to repent, and so were killed immediately. There is no evidence that Peter was ‘holding out grace’ waiting for them to ‘receive’ it. It is clear that the moment of grace would have been the moment of forgiveness—a forgiveness available only through repentance. Having never repented, they could never be forgiven.

## APPENDIX C

## EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY IS CALVINIST

The problem is that Yancey's definition of grace is the standard evangelical definition which not only implies forgiveness but which supernaturally empowers the individual to obey. This was first called prevenient or irresistible grace, and requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the means of explaining good works whilst avoiding the charge of 'works righteousness'. The doctrine is derived from Calvinism, which holds that the human being is so completely corrupt (Calvinism uses the term 'totally depraved'), that we are actually incapable of obedience to God without the compulsion of His supernatural power.

Modern evangelical theology has inherited this doctrine, though in today's humanistic and politically correct society the unpleasant term 'total depravity' is not used by evangelicals to describe the human condition, and **the unnerving concept of the Holy Spirit compelling us to obey God against our natural will** is more gently termed 'His enabling'. All this really means is that **the old doctrines have new names**, and that most modern evangelicals have no idea as to why they hold the doctrines they do.

Allusions to these doctrines in *What's so amazing about Grace?* are subtle enough to avoid detection by the average Christadelphian reader, who does not appreciate the full implications of Yancey's statements. This is not because Yancey is attempting to conceal his beliefs, but due to the fact that since he is writing for an evangelical audience, he knows he will be understood without lengthy explanation. The necessary conclusion of this way of thinking is found in the popular doctrine of the Evangelicals called 'Eternal Security', or 'Once Saved, Always Saved'. This is another doctrine derived from Calvin's combination of the substitutionary atonement and 'prevenient grace'. Calvin called it 'The Perseverance of the Saints', and it is described by Calvinists in this way:

'All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.'

Evidence of the logical conclusion of Yancey's definition of grace and the process by which it is bestowed by God, is nowhere more clearly than in the types of arguments we read today in favour of an "indwelling of the Holy Spirit".

'Sin cannot be overcome without God. Repentance needs His enabling. No Spirit—no repentance—no forgiveness.'

'Is God needed for sanctification and salvation? Yes! Is the Holy Spirit needed for salvation and sanctification? Same question; same answer. Yes!'

'If you allow the Spirit to lead you in Bible study, you will find truth. If you begin with pre-conceptions that you are unwilling to relinquish, the Spirit will not lead you. You have to be open to his guidance.'

## CALVIN'S FIVE POINT 'TULIP' THEOLOGY

### **T—Total Depravity of man**

In essence, this doctrine states that man is so utterly evil that he is incapable of obedience to God, without supernatural intervention. It teaches that the only means by which men are made capable of obedience to God is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit **compelling** them to obey against their natural will.

**In the BASF, this doctrine is number 25 of the 'Doctrines to Be Rejected'.**

This Calvinist doctrine can be summarised as follows:

'Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly [sic] believe in the gospel.

The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—chose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation- it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.'

(Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture*.)

### **U – Unconditional Election**

This doctrine states that God has already chosen ('elected'), those whom He has decided He will cause to obey Him, and those whom He has decided He will condemn. This decision was made prior to the fall, and is known as the doctrine of supralapsarianism (from the Latin 'supra' meaning 'before', and 'lapsare' meaning 'to fall').

This is the doctrine for which Calvin is perhaps the most well known, the doctrine of ultra-predestination.

**It is vital to understand that Calvin rejected utterly the concept of 'free will'.** Calvin believed that men do not have the capacity to choose their own actions. They have been pre-determined by God before the fall.

Free will, according to Calvin, is a mere illusion. Calvin's doctrine was directly opposed to that of the Reformer who immediately preceded him, the man Jacobus Arminius, known for his insistence on the free will of all men.

This doctrine is reflected today in the Evangelical's insistence that obedience, faith, and even repentance are actions which have been pre-determined by God, and are not the choice of the believer—it is **God** who **causes** obedience, **God** who **gives** faith, **God** who **makes** us repent.

All of these actions, for the Evangelical, are not the result of man's response to God, they are actions which He has already pre-determined as part of the mechanical process of His plan.

**In the BASF, this doctrine is number 26 of the 'Doctrines to Be Rejected'.**

This Calvinist doctrine can be summarised as follows:

'God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, [sic] etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selects.

These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly [sic] elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.'

(Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture*.)

**L – Limited Atonement**

This doctrine states that Christ's atoning work was not for the benefit of all men, but only for the benefit of 'the elect', those whom God had previously determined He would save. The logical contradiction of this argument is obvious (if God had already determined that He was going to save them regardless of how their lives were lived, then they **needed** no atonement), and the natural extension of this argument is the Evangelical doctrine of 'Eternal Security' (also known as 'Once Saved, Always Saved').

The doctrine requires a substitutionary atonement, and the denial of the Scriptural teaching that God calls 'all men everywhere to repent', since it insists that only those whom He has determined He will cause to repent will benefit from the sacrifice of Christ....

'Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.'

(Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture*.)

**I – Irresistible Grace, or the Efficacious Call of the Spirit, or Preventent Grace**

This doctrine states that the manner in which God calls those whom He has chosen to save, is not through the gospel, but through the Holy Spirit. The argument is made that since men might resist the 'external' call of the gospel, God has decided to call them 'internally' and 'irresistibly', by means of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The implications of this doctrine are obvious—salvation is not possible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**In the BASF, this doctrine is number 25 of the 'Doctrines to Be Rejected'.**

The doctrine can be described in this way...

'In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas [sic] the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion.

By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly [sic] draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.'

(Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture*.)

### **P – Perseverance of the Saints**

This doctrine states that since the saints are defined as those whom God has chosen to save, and since He has called them unconditionally and irresistibly to salvation, and since they have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which they are able to overcome sin (though not live a perfect life), they are **eternally saved and cannot fall from grace**.

The doctrine is known by Evangelicals as 'Eternal Security' or 'Once Saved, Always Saved'. The natural extension of Calvin's dogma, it insists that just as the elect can contribute nothing to their salvation, so they cannot contribute anything to their condemnation.

The desirable result of this doctrine is that those who believe themselves to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and who therefore believe themselves to be of the predestined elect, **cannot lose their salvation no matter how they live their lives**.

**In the BASF, this doctrine is contained in numbers 25 and 26 of the 'Doctrines to Be Rejected'.**

'All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.'

(Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP, the Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture*.)

## APPENDIX D

### EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE IS INCONSISTENT WITH SCRIPTURE

It is one matter to support a doctrine by appealing to various different verses found throughout Scripture, but the doctrine must somewhere be actually **found explicitly**, both as a concept and a doctrine. We support the mortality of man by appealing to a wide range of passages, but the fact of the matter is that in doing so we are supporting a doctrine which is **explicitly expounded** both as a **concept** and as a **doctrine**, in certain key passages of Scripture.

This is not the Evangelical practice. For example:

#### *The Evangelical doctrine of the atonement*

The Evangelical claims that the saving power of the atonement necessitated the 'Divinity' of Christ, that he be '100% God and 100% man'.

(A similar concept is indicated in *WSAAG*, pages 45, 67, 106-7.)

But in each of the six key passages in which the apostles expound the saving power of the atonement (Romans 8:3-4; Ephesians 2:15-16; Colossians 1:20-22; Hebrews 2:14-15; Hebrews 10:19-20; 1 Peter 2:24), they are insistent that the saving power of the atonement necessitated the utter and complete humanity of Christ, nothing more.

The Evangelical doctrine that the saving power of the atonement necessitated that Christ be '100% God and 100% man', or partake of the literal Divine nature in any way, is contradicted by the consistent exposition of the atonement found in the Word of God.

#### *The Evangelical doctrine of the Godhead*

The Evangelical claims that the 'Deity of Christ' and the doctrine of the trinity are fundamental doctrines on which one's salvation is dependent. To deny them, says the Evangelical, is to place oneself beyond Christianity—those who deny these doctrines concerning the nature of Christ are called 'heretics' and 'cultists'. (*WSAAG*, pages 45, 67, 92, 106-7, 157.)

But in the only passages in which we are specifically told that the rejection of the nature of Christ alone places us beyond Scriptural Christianity and beyond salvation, are the following statements by the apostle John:

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God**: And every spirit that **confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:2-3).



"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who **confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh**. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John v 7).

So in actual fact, the only instances in which a correct understanding of the nature of Christ is spoken of as a doctrine essential for salvation are these two instances—in which it is stated **with unavoidable clarity** that the correct understanding of Christ's nature is that he was **completely and utterly human**.

The difference between the Evangelical claim and the Scriptural statement **could hardly be greater**.

### ***The Evangelical doctrine of grace***

The Evangelical claims that God's saving grace is extended to sinners prior to repentance.

(WSAAG, pages 13, 45, 52, 54-5, 67, 71, 112, , 134-5, 150, 153, 157-8, 170-171, 201-2, 281-282.)

But we have seen that the process of repentance **must precede** the conferring of God's saving grace (2 Samuel 12:1-13; Proverbs 3:34; Ezekiel 33:11; Zechariah 1:4; Luke 2:18-19; Luke 13:35; Acts 2:37-38; Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:8-9; Revelation 2:5, 21-22), and that God's saving grace is **only granted** to those who have approached Him on these terms—**His** terms—and who are therefore viewed as righteous in His eyes. God's imputing of righteousness (saving grace), is **never** extended to unrepentant sinners.

The Evangelical doctrine of God's saving grace being extended to unrepentant sinners **is directly contradicted by the Word of God**.

### ***The Evangelical doctrine of salvation***

The Evangelical claims that obedience to God's commandments is unnecessary to our salvation, and that our relationship with God is not altered substantially by our disobedience.

(WSAAG, pages 45, 52, 54-5, 67, 70-71, 150, 153, 157, 170-171, 175, 194 200-201.)

But in no fewer than five different passages (just five of many), in which **our relationship with God is spoken of explicitly** by Christ and the apostle John (John 14:15; John 15:10, 14; 1 John 2:3,4; 1 John 3:22-24; 1 John 5:2-3), it is made abundantly clear that our disobedience destroys our relationship with God (though it may be restored by our repentance).

Likewise, in any number of passages in which Christ and the apostles **explicitly expound the process of salvation**, they emphasise **without fail** that disobedience to the commandments of God will result in our rejection (Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 25:43-46; Romans 1:32; Romans 2:7; Romans 11:22; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 3:27; 5:20-21; Hebrews 3:12-14; 5:9; James 2:14-36; 1 Peter 3:10; 2 Peter 1:10; 2:20-22; 1 John 1:7 and many others).

The Evangelical concept of 'Eternal Security' or 'Once Saved Always Saved' **simply does not exist within the inspired Word.**

***The Evangelical doctrine of God manifestation***

The Evangelical claims that God manifestation necessitates the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

(WSAAG, page 157, brief reference to the indwelling and how it benefits us.)

**But we have seen that in ten separate places where the doctrine of God manifestation is explicitly declared and/or expounded in detail (Matthew 5:16; John 3:21; John 18:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14, 17; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 10-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 John 4:9; 1 John 3:9-10), not once are we told that God manifestation necessitates the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Rather, we are told to have the mind of God, the mind of Christ, and to submit ourselves in obedience to the pattern of life which Christ himself showed us.**

The Evangelical concept of God manifestation is **completely and utterly absent from Scripture.**