

What's so amazing about Grace?

(by Andrew Dangerfield)
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“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 4v3-4)

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul in Romans warns us of those who cleverly and deceptively **change the truth of God into a lie (Rom 1v25)**. The most damaging example of this was to be an apostate Christianity arising out of what was originally the true ecclesia (**2 Thess 2v1-12**). 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:

2 Thess 2v3,8-10 *“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.**”*

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 also are seen in the western world, not only in the churches of Catholicism but also amongst those churches who hold the same fundamental doctrines as the Catholic Church. The signs and wonders come in the form of “miracles”, “healings” and “tongues” at evangelical revival meetings. But 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 above mentioned book, *What's so amazing about Grace?* by evangelical writer Philip Yancey. It is not only changing the way “Christianity” thinks, but it is also even making inroads into our own brotherhood. The purpose of this short summary is to help us all to **wake up** to the dangers of these influences (**Eph 4v14; Rev 16v15**). It is also aimed to prevent as many as possible from being deceived by the power of this new persuasion. We must face up to the fact that much of this modern “Christian” literature is faith-destroying because it is changing the way we think without us 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.”

It is not often realised that the most dangerous type of error is that which is mingled with sufficient amounts of truth (**Gen 3v4-5**). This book is one 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 way too difficult to extract the good from the evil. The greatest danger is that this is supposedly about **THE WAY OF SALVATION** - how God saves us. It is not readily understood that the very foundation and basis of this book is flawed. It is based on the doctrines of the trinity, pre-existence of Christ, substitution and 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 it is presumptions, rebellious and a licence for evil (**Rom 6v1; Jude v3,4**). Not only that, but it flies right in the face of the true relationship God wants to have with His children. We might also ask, why 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 3v23-24; 4v1-8; Eph 2v8-10)**. Without God's grace, a **free gift** of salvation, we would have **no hope (Psa 51; Eph 2v12)**. 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 with which to deal with here. 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 2v5) 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 has become more and more popular in recent years. This Evangelical way of thinking is having an influence **over time** and 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 amongst 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 life-time for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. “The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom 8v7; 1 Cor 2v14), 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 *What's so amazing about Grace?* 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. **Also, one of the immediately obvious characteristics of many “Christian” books today, and particularly in *What's so amazing about Grace?* 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 really 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 3v5,7)

God’s Word however is powerful and can change lives (Heb 4v12). The Word alone is sufficient to transform our minds and to sanctify us, as it was for those in Old Testament times (Job 2v3; Psa 119v9,11,93; Prov 2v1-9; 3v1-3). The Word is all sufficient to save (John 1v12-13; 6v63; 17v17; 1 Pet 1v23-25; Jms 1v18-21; 1 John 3v9; Rom 12v2). So let us turn to God’s Word for the answers (Isa 8v20), 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’s parables and how we should forgive others and care about the poor (to which we would wholeheartedly agree), it becomes very easy to miss where the book is eventually leading us. Just because some of the book has elements of truth, doesn’t make the overall argument right. A simple glance at the final 2 pages of the book shows where his philosophy about grace finally leads us. 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 (see comments by Bro Harry Tennant on page 8).

We might also ask, why does Yancey finally quote **Rom 6v1** 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 be sounding 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 this 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”*,

then 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, wrote Walter Trobisch, 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 of "*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.

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 that "*repentance is not something God arbitrarily demands of us*" (p.182). The Bible however says that God *does* demand repentance. **Acts 17v30** 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 2v37-38**).

One reason this book is dangerous is because 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 UNDERLYING DANGER OF 'CHRISTIAN' WRITINGS TODAY

One of the key underlying problems with "Christian" literature today, and particularly in *What's so amazing about Grace?* is what is NOT said. **Ephesians 2v8** says that "*by grace are ye saved through faith.*" Grace and faith are interlinked and closely connected. But why does this book hardly say 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 definitely always be emphasised (and continually!), but this should not be done without a proper Scriptural balance to it all. Philip Yancey is an Evangelical and his doctrines form the basis of his arguments.

It says in **John 1v14,17** that Jesus Christ is "*full of grace and truth*". Yancey here spends 280 pages speaking about his own philosophy of grace but why no emphasis on TRUTH? His argument is **totally one-sided**. Can these 2 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 us over time*.

The Yancey approach is causing many to forsake viewing **the Truth as a whole way of life**, with all the elements of the Gospel interlinking as ONE. Many 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 by some of 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 amongst us and **evil motives are often being imputed** on our older brothers and sisters who have spent their whole lifetimes striving to live Christ-like lives. Isn't this true? 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 2v5**)! 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.” (What’s so amazing about Grace? 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 again, 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 4v8,16) Does God have to *surrender* to other people or new ways of thinking?

The character of God is shown to us in **Exodus 33v18-20; 34v6-9**. 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 14v9**). 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 1v1-3**). Jesus Christ is “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*” (**Heb 13v8-9**)

“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.**” (What’s so amazing about Grace? 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.**” (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.’**” (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.**” (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 (eg. **Lev 12v2**), with those today who are disobedient to God and unrepentant? (ie. homosexuals - see his next chapter). 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 14v21-23**.
- Does God deserve the best from us today? If He doesn’t, then *what does* God “deserve”? Consider **John 4v23-24** and **1 Peter 1v13-16**.
- If God’s dealings with Cain are no longer relevant to us today then please explain **Hebrews 11v4**.
- Can we choose to believe whatever we want to and still be saved? Consider **Galatians 1v6-8**.
- Can we just do whatever we like and still be saved? Consider **Romans 6v1-8** and **2 Thess 1v8**.
- Is obedience really necessary or can we choose to worship God how we please? Consider **1 Sam 12v15; 15v19; Rom 6v16; Heb 11v4,7,8**.
- Is there any need for believers to *change* their way of life? Consider **Acts 14v15** and **Eph 4v21-23**.
- Does God’s abounding love mean that we can now just rebel against Him and do what we please? Look at **Gen 3v16-17; Jude v3-8**.
- If we fall short of God’s expectations, should we *pray for forgiveness* (**Psa 32v1-2; 51v1-4; 1 Jn 1v8-9**) 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 who put Christ's brethren to death? Look up **Rev 13v7-8** cp. **Rev 20v4**.
- 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 6v9; 15v1-2; 1 Pet 2v11-12; James 1v22; 2v17-18** 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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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." (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." (p. 175)

Again we are presented with ambiguous language. What does he mean by "different"? Some questions:

- Where in the Bible does it say that *"the spirit of the Old Law"* was a *"refusal to forgive"*? See **Rom 7v12**.
- 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 6v8**: *"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 you therefore explain God's statement: **"For I am the LORD, I change not"** (**Mal 3v6**)
- 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 1v17**) ?
- 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, then how confident can we be that all his other arguments are based on sound doctrine and not error?

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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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." (p. 107)

Let us now ask some more questions:

- Where in the Bible does it say that *"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?
- 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 4v8,16) 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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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 5v8). In love, God has extended the opportunity of salvation to us (John 3v16). 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:

Psalm 5v4-7 *"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."*

Psa 11v5-6 *"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."*

Rom 9v13-15 *"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."*

"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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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)*

“By instinct I feel I must *do something* in order to be accepted. Grace sounds a startling note of contradiction, of liberation...” (What's so amazing about Grace? p. 71)

“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!” (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...” (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.” (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.” (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.” (p. 45)

Some more questions arise from Yancey's comments here:

- Is it possible therefore 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 6v2-7; Gal 5v13**.
- 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?
- Please tell me where the Bible teaches 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 which had to be paid for 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 that “Christ died instead of us”. An example of this concept is given on page 67 of *What's so amazing about Grace?* 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 (ie. 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 ❺ the truth is that Jesus Christ actually benefited from his own sacrifice (**Phil 2v9** 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 6v4-5; Phil 2v5; 1 Pet 2v21** 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 2v11**), 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.

“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 1v6-8 (NIV)

The consequences of belief in substitution

The popular view of apostate Christianity is that man's sins placed him in a debt to God which of himself he could not pay. Christ then cleared the debt of each believer by his blood, shed on the cross...

If Christ paid off a debt with his blood, our salvation becomes something which we can expect as a right. The fact that salvation is a gift, brought about by God's mercy and forgiveness, is lost sight of if we understand Christ's sacrifice as being a debt payment. It also makes out that an angry God was appeased once He saw the physical blood of Jesus. Yet what God sees when we repent is His Son as our representative, whom we are *striving to copy*...

Bro Duncan Heaster, *Bible Basics*, page 280

"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 and a (*substitutionary*) imputed righteousness 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*, pgs 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 4v12).

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 2v38; 3v19; 22v16; Rom 6v3-4, 22-23; Gal 2v20).

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.

“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.” (What's so amazing about Grace? 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...” (What's so amazing about Grace? 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” anyway? 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 which could 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.” (What's so amazing about grace? p. 84-85)

“For the Biblical Joseph, who had borne a well-deserved grudge against his brothers, forgiveness spilled out in the form of tears and groans.” (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's 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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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 which 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 nonviolent 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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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?
- Is "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 about how wicked and perversely superstitious Roman Catholicism is in the Philippines, or doesn't this really matter anyway?
- Is this 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 18v2**)? Could this be an example of the "nations drinking of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (**Rev 14v8**)?

Yancey is right in that he says the "Christian" (ie. 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 that *"I think that at the core of that resistance was Catholicism."* The leader of the Revolution in Poland, Lech Walsea said that *"The Holy father was the instigator of all these transformations."* But let's 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 16v13-16**), 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 (ie. 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 17v5**)?
- Because this book has Roman Catholic doctrines as its foundation (ie. the Trinity, pre-existence of Christ, substitution, heaven-going etc.), should we really be surprised?
- **The key issue:** Is this another classic 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 14v8-11**)

HOMOSEXUALITY

"Among the marchers were at least 3000 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." (What's so amazing about Grace, 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." (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 homosexual relationship. Despite going to great lengths to show that White is just "different", Yancey does however go on to say that **"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 doesn't 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 is it that those who are disgusted by the homosexual lifestyle are shown to be bigots and unforgiving while the homosexuals are presented in a good light?
- Why is it that in this whole 15 page chapter (chapter 13), there is **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?

1 Cor 6v9-11 *“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.” (NIV)*

We all would 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 this is conditional on repentance and a forsaking of the old way of life (**Luke 15v10; Acts 3v19**). Yancey however spends just so much time trying to convince us of how nice these homosexuals can be, but why nothing on 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:

Luke 13v3 *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

Isaiah 55v6-7 *“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.”*

Acts 17v30 *“Now (God) commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”*

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.” (What's so amazing about Grace? p. 170-171)

Yes, we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. However 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 3v24; Eph 4v32**). 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's 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? Is it that nothing matters in our lives either, 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 transgendered people accepted into fellowship and installed as priests (see *Time* magazine 3.7.00). White says, *“We don't debate any more. Change your policies, or we're going to split you apart.”* (*Time* 3.7.00) 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 purely saved “by faith alone” (or as is said today, “by grace alone”), we do not have to change if we don't want to. Again, it is the underlying doctrinal foundation which is flawed.

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

Psa 32v1,2,6 *“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.”*

'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 14v37).'

'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 28v20) **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 7v24-26). 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 7v21).

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 12v47,50, Luke 11v28, Luke 6v46; Matt 5v20; John 15v14)'

(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." (What's so amazing about Grace? p. 194)

Some questions arise from these comments:

- Does this now mean that at our Ecclesial camps, Young Peoples 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*" or vice versa?
- 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 just so many Scriptures that could be used here, but just consider the following 2 passages:

1 Pet 1v13-16 *"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.""* (NIV)

1 Cor 11v14-15 *"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."*

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, or even 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 3v3,7**). 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 5v14**). 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?"** Some extracts of this study are attached in **the Appendix**.

CONCLUSION OF THE 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 reads 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." (What's so amazing about Grace? 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 1000 year reign of peace and righteousness. And nothing about Jesus Christ reigning from Jerusalem or the beautiful visions of **Isaiah 35** or **Psalms 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.

Gal 6v7 *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."*

"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 20v32)

Further Reading: Bro Jonathan Burke has outlined some additional comments on the doctrinal foundations of this Evangelical understanding of "grace" in his study entitled, *"If Yancey is wrong, then why is it so hard to tell?"* (copy available by email, send request to acdanger@1earth.net). Some extracts of this study are attached in **the Appendix**.

Also, it is recommended that we read the editorial entitled *"Three Steps of Grace"* by Bro Michael Ashton in *The Christadelphian*, March 2001. This is available at <http://www.zeta.org.au/~nexus/everwind.html>

APPENDIX

IF YANCEY IS WRONG, THEN WHY IS IT SO HARD TO TELL?

(various extracts from a study by Jonathan Burke)

When I first opened *What's so amazing about Grace?*, I approached it rather skeptically, concerned that I may be confronted with complete error right from the start. It was much to my surprise, and even to my concern, to find 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 may be asking ourselves is 'If Yancey is wrong, then why is it so hard to tell?'

THE PROBLEM IS A DOCTRINAL ONE

Andrew has rightly said that Yancey's book 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. Any error in 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 else omitted completely. Such an inadequate and inaccurate presentation of these principles, will have a serious destructive influence not only on our understanding of God, but 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. If we truly believe the doctrines we profess, our lives will be 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 in this way. 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 if and 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 3 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 3 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.

Appendix (continued...)

THE UNDERLYING DANGERS OF EVANGELICAL BOOKS

If we decide to read a book by a non-Christadelphian, christian author, the very best method of doing so is to read it thoroughly, diligently, and with great care. Read that book, if you will - but read it well. 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.

The next question to be asked, naturally, is '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. However, the process by which he does this 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 which already believes these doctrines, and understands their effect on the topic. Whilst the Christadelphian may be confused as to where Yancey is deriving his argument, feel uneasy at the direction the book is taking but uncertain as to why they are uneasy, the Evangelical reads with understanding, appreciating with his shared doctrinal point of view, the message which was obviously written with him in mind.

DOES GOD REALLY HAVE TO CHANGE OR DO WE?

Because these Evangelical doctrines form the basis of his arguments, 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 such 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 which 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.' (What's so amazing about Grace?, 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.' (What's so amazing about Grace? 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." (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 which 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 ANSWER

The result of Yancey's reasoning is that he finds himself inevitably caught in a dilemma for which he has no answer. 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, and not only does Yancey express it in almost precisely these terms, he recognises it as a critical challenge to his very own 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 very 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 **answer** the dilemma as to **reduce the destruction it causes to 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 clearly reluctant to take either path. But choose he must, and it is the lesser of the two evils on which he decides - he will inform 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 impressing 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 firstly the case of a friend of his who intends to leave his wife for a younger woman, and 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 which 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.

However, close inspection reveals that Yancey's laudable dogmatism in this regard both undermines his own argument, and still fails to address the dilemma he himself has caused. Whilst 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 only 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, for some 176 pages, has been to reject this idea, and he has insisted on this consistently (see pages 45,52,54,67,70,71 etc.)

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 which Yancey performs in this regard is entirely misleading – and entirely unScriptural. If his comprehension and description of forgiveness was Scriptural in the first place, he would not have been reduced to this kind of semantic conjuring.

ONE DILEMMA LEADS TO ANOTHER

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 is extended to those who have not yet repented in the true Scriptural sense (this is founded on Yancey's unScriptural definition of grace)
- That there are some sins which are more 'sinful' than others, some sins which God views as 'more worthy of death' than others (reason alone should tell us that if the wages of sin is death, then all sins receive **the same punishment** – you can't be 'more dead' than dead)
- That some sins are forgiven by God without the need for true repentance (according to God's commandments)

Appendix (continued...)

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 what he is doing. The sleight of hand he performs in this regard presents a doctrinal problem which 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** (at least according to the true Scriptural definition). 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 **fulfillment** of the process of forgiveness), **even before we have changed our ways, or even resolved to**. Yancey's God rather **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.

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 true Scriptural sense**, and prove that grace is the means by which God is persuaded to agree with us.

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, he might say that that obedience (or as he says, "being good") is a nice thing to do and it is what God likes, but the truth is that he believes it is **not necessary** for salvation. This is a true manifestation of the **natural end result** of his doctrines and his argument – we do **not** have to change fundamentally, if we do not want to.

As Andrew 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, in reducing it to a shallow and superficial arrangement by which God accommodates our sin.

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

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.

We have seen how 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 which he assaults and destroys. Any way of thinking which 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.

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 1v14-15)