

World View: Seeking Grace and Truth in Our Common Life

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"Marvin Olasky has been one of the leading biblically minded journalists in America for years. He has shaped *World* magazine's timely and trenchant critique of newsworthy events impacting the American stage of politics, culture, and ethics. This selection of his classic articles gives insight, stirs action, and prompts reflection as we as believers endeavor to engage our communities with a conscious and consistent Christian worldview."

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William J. Bennett, Former US Secretary of Education; host of the *Bill Bennett Show* "*World View: Seeking Grace and Truth in Our Common Life* offers practical theology without hysterics, histrionics, or sell-outs. This wise book, written by a sage veteran of cultural shifts and values, models how to live like a Christian in a world losing its foundations. As editor of *World* magazine, Marvin Olasky, with both street cred and old-school professional authority, illustrates by example what civil discourse means and how we must practice it. Practical, readable, accessible, transparent, and relevant to all. Olasky blazes a trail for those who want to talk with their neighbors, not blast them on social media. He speaks to those of us who put more stock in prayer than in Twitter. He shows how we can best understand the language of our post-Christian world without being duped by it. Read this book!"

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R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary“For years, Marvin Olasky has inspired thousands of readers to stop separating their moral principles from their politics and start thinking compassionately about those left behind in our society. This volume puts his arguments into one handy compendium. Readers of all faiths and political stripes will find inspiration here to make sure their own ethical commitments are informing how they live each day.”

Arthur Brooks, President of American Enterprise Institute“*The searing truth and wisdom in these pages is vintage Marvin Olasky. And the best part of all: it rubs off. See for yourself!*”

Eric Metaxas, Best-selling author of *Martin Luther: the Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World*“This provocative collection is a monument to Marvin Olasky’s precise, searching and devout mind. For those who share his beliefs and those who do not, Olasky will not let you rest, writing with a style that mimics what he is searching for in his writing—the balance between passionate conviction and profound compassion—with a voice that is mindful of the humility required by grace.”

John Dickerson, Moderator, *Face the Nation*; author of *Whistlestop: My Favorite Stories from Campaign History* World View

SEEKING GRACE AND TRUTH IN OUR COMMON LIFE
Marvin Olasky
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The contents of this book are compiled from columns that originally appeared in *World* magazine under the byline of Marvin Olasky. Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.® Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com ISBN (Print): 978-1-945270-83-3 ISBN (eBook): 978-1-945270-84-0 Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names: Olasky, Marvin N., author. Title: World view : seeking grace and truth in our common life / Marvin Olasky. Description: Greensboro, NC : New Growth Press, 2017. | A collection of columns which previously appeared in World magazine. Identifiers: LCCN 2017050031 | ISBN 9781945270833 (trade paper) Subjects: LCSH: Christianity and culture. | Christian philosophy. | Christianity--Philosophy. Classification: LCC BR115.C8 O38 2017 | DDC 261--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017050031> Printed in the United States of America 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 1 2 3 4 5

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Foreword I fell in love with America in the sixth grade while reading Landmark Books, and with journalism in high school. In my mid-twenties, after a decade of jagged radicalism, I fell in love with Christ and with Susan (we’ve now been married for forty-one years). Many of the fifty-eight columns in this book, written from 1997 through 2016, reflect the interplay of these four loves. This year is the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Protestant Reformation,

which returned to the fore Christianity's emphasis on God's grace rather than man's works. It's the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, which led to class warfare. Martin Luther understood, and Vladimir Lenin did not, that we are all weighed down by sin, and can make little progress until we recognize our own faults instead of blaming others. That sensibility also underlies many of these columns. "American Studies," an undisciplined discipline, was both my undergraduate major and my PhD field. As the United States has become increasingly disunited, seeking grace and truth in our common life is a challenge. In a sense, I'm inspecting a roof from the top of a tall ladder buffeted by fierce winds, with my shadow obscuring many of the shingles. I generally start columns with a rough idea but not an outline, so writing comes from peering and learning rather than regurgitating a party line. Instead of including long series of columns excavating particular concerns of mine like poverty-fighting, abortion, education, religion, or baseball, I've tried in this book to mix up the topics so as to provide an American Studies sampler. The common denominator is counter-programming: I try to wake up those who are complacent and calm down those who are frantic. My columns may make sense to some conservatives, but I hope they also reach—without any ideological kissing up—people on the left. Jonathan Edwards in *Freedom of the Will* writes about a king and a prisoner. The king opens the jail cell and tells the incarcerated he is free to leave. The prisoner, though, hates the king. Maybe he has heard from others that the king is not trustworthy and plans to torture him if he leaves, so he stays in the cell. That's where many of my former comrades and journalistic or academic colleagues reside. We can learn to trust the king only if we go back to basics. We need to reexamine the changes, institutions, and causes we have advocated and defended. We need to conclude that we ourselves need to change. As I learned on my own rocky path, we do not conclude this on our own. Maybe a columnist can help slightly, but our only hope lies in God's grace and the hard challenges He gives us. All of us need such prodding. Contra the 1970 song, we are not stardust and we are not golden—but God has told all who listen that "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (2017)

SECTION ONE:
BASICS

Fight or flight? Ride or hide? Sometimes, it's beneficial to be a Benedict, creating a community in which Christians can grow stronger and prepare to venture forth when the tide seems ready to turn. Sometimes, we should dare to be Daniels, risking our lives in the centers of power by speaking and living truth before those who probably won't listen. Deciding which path to take requires great discernment. Rosa Parks in 1955 became a heroine when she was a Daniel and refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. A millennium before that, Christians facing Arab raiders, in what is now central Turkey, hid in underground cities and were probably wise to do so. My own tendency at times has been to rush in, while recognizing that those with more angelic temperaments would wait. Still, this group of columns shows my desire that evangelicals should not become applause-seekers but should seek to demonstrate a Christian worldview. I propose in this section that fiscal conservatism doesn't work without biblical moorings, and that Christians won't rescue young prodigals just by displaying an elder brother sense of duty. The Bible shows followers of Christ how to be emphatic but compassionate, ready to be Dirty Harry Christians rather than South Park conservatives—and in the process, we should emphasize humility and humanity by neither over-using nor under-using Scripture. We're part of the American tradition of making room for others and looking for government to promote the general welfare, not provide it. Demonstrating Christianly

You may have heard the story of the time four decades ago when President Lyndon Johnson invited reporters to his ranch for dinner. Since his press secretary Bill Moyers had seminary training, LBJ asked him to say grace. When the designated prayer spoke softly, Johnson requested that he speak up. Mr. Moyers replied, "I wasn't talking to you, Mr. President." The focal point of that anecdote for some is LBJ's arrogance—but the late president was right. Public prayer, whether in church or at the dinner table, has two audiences, one on earth and one in heaven. Prayer tells God what He already knows but wants to hear from us, and it also may teach human listeners what we do not know but should. Public prayer should be not only loud enough for all to hear but discerning concerning what people will hear. The goal should be to communicate with God but also to communicate about Him and His attributes, such as holiness and mercy. Thus far, I hope most readers are with me, but pay attention, because a perhaps controversial application is coming: Public demonstration by

Christians should also emphasize communication about God. When American Christian activists are riled up about something, we show our displeasure. I can do this by writing, but I've learned that while rants may make me feel temporarily better and excite others, they don't accomplish much toward helping with what's appropriately called the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Christ's statement at the end of Matthew's gospel is more complicated than it may seem. It specifies "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," so Trinitarian teaching and then a baptismal sign and seal of the faith brought about by God's grace are both important. It also emphasizes "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you," so neither a vague spirituality nor a theoretical mastery is sufficient. As part of a process that lasts a lifetime, believing hearers are to become doers of God's commands. Put all this together and we start to see what an ideal Christian protest of a political or cultural event might look like. First, its goal should not be to make the demonstrators feel righteous or more cohesive in the face of a hostile world: the Christian slogan is not, "If it feels good, do it." Second, it should communicate that God brings in people and has expectations for us—in other words, both mercy and holiness. Let's take abortion protests as a particularly appropriate example, given the January 22, *Roe v. Wade* anniversary cover date of this issue. A Christian demonstration outside an abortion business should declare that abortion is wrong and that God is merciful to aborters and abortionists who come to faith in Him. Protesters who seem hateful to troubled women because they appear to offer condemnation rather than hope are not helping the cause of Christ. On the other hand, a demonstration that merely offers cups of hot chocolate to women arriving for abortions on a wintry day is also sub-Christian, since demonstrators might seem like spectators at a race urging the contestants on to the finish line. The frequent biblical metaphor of Christians as salt is apt not only because salt is both a preservative and a flavoring, but because the two elements that make up salt—NaCl, sodium and chlorine—are both poisonous when ingested by themselves. Salty protests highlight what God opposes but also show, both in words and style, what God proposes: acceptance of His mercy. My ideal prolife demonstration at an abortion business features protesters winsomely providing information about alternatives to abortion. Our folks would not use bullhorns, which The Blues Brothers effectively linked with Nazis. Some biased souls will see Christians as loudmouths no matter how we act, but we should not make it easy for them—and if we do, we're hurting rather than helping the cause of Christ. Our models here should be Daniel in Babylon and Paul in Greece, both of which were rife with pagan belief and practice, probably including infanticide. When Paul walked in Athens and saw the city was full of idols, he did not try to smash them. Instead, "he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there" (Acts 17:17). (2005) *Prodigal Sons and Current Issues* As Tim Keller points out in *The Prodigal God* (Dutton, 2008), the parable of the prodigal son should have a plural in its name: sons. We all know of the younger brother's libertine living, but the elder brother has a more subtle problem: He is self-righteous and lacks joy. Part of the evangelical political problem in contemporary America is that much of the press and public sees us as elder brothers. Sometimes we are that way in reaction to younger brothers. Sometimes younger brothers go their way in reaction to us. In higher education, younger brother colleges are party schools that proffer sex and stimulants. Some Christian colleges try to avoid that by imposing tight rules in elder brother fashion. Those rules may lead to external conformity rather than deep belief. Both younger brother and elder brother colleges divert students from learning more about God. In journalism, younger brother magazines ranging from *Rolling Stone* to *People* sell a continuation of younger brother college life. Elder brother reporters tend to be self-righteous fault-finders—and it's always someone else's fault. Elder brother journalism lacks love, charity, compassion, and a sense that all of us are in this mess together. Christian publications that look only at sin among secularists can also be elder brothers. In the realm of "social justice," younger brothers want governmental redistribution so everyone, regardless of conduct, gets part of the national inheritance. Some recipients of Washington's largesse are widows and orphans, but others are younger brothers or sisters: They should go home but do not because government checks allow them to keep destroying themselves. Elder brothers, though, wax sarcastic about wastrels while they overlook the needy.

“Social justice” turns into either social universalism or Social Darwinism. The gay rights debate is another younger vs. elder brother combat zone. While covering Manhattan’s annual humongous Gay Pride parade, I didn’t see any lip-locks except when the marchers observed a dozen souls from a church waving Bibles and screaming at them, “You’re going to hell, sodomite” or “You’re an abomination in the sight of God.” The presence of elder brothers allowed younger brothers to feel self-righteous: ironically, ranting reminders about sin provided the opportunity to forget about sin. Younger brothers who perceive self-righteousness or joylessness in their elders head toward mockery. On the Comedy Network, Jon Stewart is a snarky younger brother and Stephen Colbert pretends to be an elder as he parodies FOX’s tut-tutting Bill O’Reilly. Elder brothers tend to forget that truth without love is like sodium without chloride: Poison, not salt. What’s rare on television and in life are third brothers who, because they know deeply that the Father loves them, have love for and patience with both elder and younger brothers. Third brothers, knowing God has forgiven them, are not prideful. A third brother Christian college helps students to see that all people are made in the image of God and all people are sinners. Because of that, beauty shows up where we expect banality, and evil emerges where we anticipate excellence. At a third brother college, students become bilingual and bicultural, able to move in both Christian and secular circles without ignoring the problems of the former or the knowledge generated in the latter, through common grace. Third brother journalism rises out of the history lecture in chapter seven of the book of Acts: Stephen, with neither an elder brother’s pridefulness nor a younger brother’s sarcasm, realistically emphasizes the fallenness of his people and the holiness of God. He does not seek life’s meaning in the formation of or adherence to a man-made religion that sets up a code of morality. Third brother politics is also different. The Founders fought for both liberty and virtue: Elder brothers tend to forget the former, younger brothers the latter. Third brothers know that we can never have enough laws to banish sin. They tell the truth but do not rant at abortionists and gay rights activists. They control their tongues and lungs not because killing babies and killing marriage is right, but because their goal is to change hearts. Third brothers ask pointed questions, and here are ones for each of us to answer: Am I a younger, elder, or third brother? Can we, through God’s grace, leave behind elder- and younger-brotherism? (2009) Earnest Grace vs. South Park A raucous red glare, bombast bursting in air . . . That’s the face and sound of media conservatism these days, as celebrated on best-seller lists, top-rated talk shows, and books like Brian Anderson’s *South Park Conservatives* (Regnery, 2005). That title comes from the cable cartoon program known for its helpful ripping of political correctness but its harmful endorsement of rage and sarcasm. These days, being a South Park conservative is in, and the working definition seems to be: Hit hard and don’t worry about hitting below the belt, because there is no belt. If you counter the left’s sputum with your own, talk show appearances and book contracts will follow. What big shots endorse, little shots snort. Anderson approvingly quotes one undergraduate talking about himself and cohort members who “get drunk on weekends, have sex before marriage . . . cuss like sailors—and also happen to be conservative.” Conservative, maybe (although if South Park is our future, there won’t be much to conserve). Clearly not Christian, though. Those who follow the Bible are to be firm but courteous—as the saying goes, hating the sin but loving the sinner. Christians should not adopt the bipolar belief that either you’re (Michael) savage or you’re a wimp. The Christian way is to practice what New Jersey pastor Matt Ristuccia calls “earnest grace, the reassociation of sensibilities that we moderns have judged to be beyond association: specifically, passionate conviction and profound compassion. . . . [The apostle Paul was] so wonderstruck by the way God brought justice and judgment for human sin together with forgiveness and hope in the death of this Jesus, that Paul’s earnestness could not help but be seasoned with grace.” That’s certainly the way things oughta be—but contemporary culture does have peculiarities. Ann Coulter spoke in May at the University of Texas; I was still hanging out in New Jersey, but a perceptive Christian student I’ve taught, Amy McCullough, was there. Amy reports that the first question to Coulter was, in essence, “couldn’t she be a little nicer? Coulter said people don’t respond to subtle reasoning; one has to ‘bop them over the head’ and use humor to make people see the light.” She’s probably right: earnestness on TV shows and during after-dinner speeches doesn’t turn people on, and Ms. Coulter’s rapid-fire attacks do. But Amy also noted a

rare, slow-motion answer: "When a young, conservative woman asked how Coulter could stand the awful things people said about her because of her stand on abortion, she hesitated, messed with her hair, and said: 'Well, it's the same way I don't care about anything else: Christ died for my sins and nothing else matters.' I think my jaw hit the floor."

What would our common life be like if Christians were known not only for speaking truth, but also for demonstrating mercy? Marvin Olasky, best-selling author and editor in chief of World Magazine describes this kind of salty Christianity in a far-ranging collection of columns from World. As Dr. Olasky comments on world events and also shares his personal interactions, readers will be encouraged to bring both grace and truth to every encounter. While deeply committed to standing for biblical truth in the public square, Olasky is just as interested in Christians living out the biblical virtues of humility, kindness, and mercy in all of life. His call for biblical values to include both truth and grace, makes his voice stand out in a world that often falsely divides those goals and settles for a poor imitation of the robust Christianity he calls readers to. Curated collection of World columns that offer the best of Marvin Olasky. Sets forth a much needed vision for how Christians can speak truth and demonstrate mercy at the same time. A wonderful collection that all readers of World Magazine will want to have for their own library and an extra copy to share with a friend.

Big Book - Alcoholics Anonymous - WCC Publications is the book publishing programme of the World Council of... Through Bible study, common prayer, and worship, and by sharing our God's love in Jesus Christ by seeking justice and peace in ways that are differ-... grace, and the dynamic experience and expression in ecclesial life through the. Chapter 4. Society and Modern Life " Introduction to - How could our world be different if Christians were recognized for not only speaking the truth, but also demonstrating mercy? What would our lives be like if we Books that will Improve your Knowledge of the World - Medium - What is Christian ethics and what role should it play in the life of a The ultimate basis for Christian ethics is the moral character of God. will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; Willful sin brings several harmful consequences to our daily lives.. "Free Grace" Theology Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason - What is Christian ethics and what role should it play in the life of a The ultimate basis for Christian ethics is the moral character of God. will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; Willful sin brings several harmful consequences to our daily lives.. "Free Grace" Theology Poems & Quotes - J. Vernon McGee - The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (1974). First launched: Chapter 2: The prevailing opinion about sexual differences. 12.. knowledge, because truth must be common to all; if it isn't it won't be. In a book on female rights and manners, therefore, the. by marriage"the only way women can rise in the world. Seeking Grace and Truth in

Our Common Life - Amazon.com - The future of business Poems & Quotes - J. Vernon McGee - Armstrong explained world news and delivered multiple prophecies, many of which have Bring the beauty and truth of the Bible into everyday life. app that seeks to help you actually pray for all the people and causes you care about. If you expand the Prayer Requests section on the left and then click on View All, you Arts & Letters Daily - ideas, criticism, debate - Designed to Show the Divine Origin of the Jewish Religion, Chiefly from the Jewish and the Christian schemes, so clearly establishing their common and and grace, which was given us in " Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now such clear instruction how to seek, and such merciful assistance to obtain life The real Adam Smith - Aeon - What is Christian ethics and what role should it play in the life of a The ultimate basis for Christian ethics is the moral character of God. will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; Willful sin brings several harmful consequences to our daily lives.. "Free Grace" Theology The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays - Monoskop - q A Brief Life of Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679 (36302 bytes) q The NATURE (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many.. imagined we seek the causes or means that produce it; and this is common to.. Seeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our. Seeking Grace and Truth in Our Common Life - ICM Books - World View: Seeking Grace and Truth in Our Common Life While this is an interesting read, it is probably more useful as a reference book.

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