Jones, *Call It Grace* **Chapters 5, 6, 7**
Wesley Advocates **16 January 2019**

This week we will begin in Chapter 4, pp. 80-81, reviewing Jones's comments about despair—see previous list of quotations.

"Barth and Niebuhr in the Bell Tower"

Going to church became one of the most stimulating times of the week for my imagination." (89)

The image set which perhaps most triggered my imagination and charged my fantasies was one from my favorite hymns, "Be Thou My Vision." (90)

"You have no idea how horrible what you just said is," my dad said, his voice trembling with rage. "I can't imagine an appropriate punishment. I am going to give you a choice, young lady. We don't go to the pool, and you never have another birthday party again. Or we go to the pool and you get to have parties each year. That simple." (92)

In my mind, my dad had forced me to pick—be moral or keep my friends. (93)

He had snapped at me as he did at Dick Jones—he was equating me with Dick Jones! I felt the horror of saying something racist and sinful and feeling as if it is the absolute end of the world. (93)

What didn't escape me, though, was the simple fact that the power my peers had over me was stronger than the conscious lessons I had learned from my parents. (96)

Caught in sin we didn't choose, we are nonetheless responsible for it. (96)

As a young lawyer, Dick Jones helped dream up the previous unimaginable legal concept that one could separate the surface of the earth from the ground underneath it and sell that unseen-underneath as "mineral rights." He old us he came up with this idea—for which he is now well-known—because he wanted to help land-rich but dirt-poor Native Americans sell their underground rights for profit, while keeping the topsoil for farming. (98)

"This little book [Barth's *Der Romerbrief*] was so powerful, so groundbreaking at the time that it was as if Barth had stumbled into the Safenvil churchtower and pulled its bell's rope, ringing it so loudly that all of Europe came running." (100)

Re-read, please the long paragraph dominating page 101: "I heard this so often . . . soon to break out among them."

In addition to being a seminary professor, Dad was committed to his work in local politics . . . endeavors had redeemed the family name from Dick Jones, not so much publicly . . . but internally (for our collective shame at Dick Jones—and his shame about us. . . . (103)

“You and me and those men, we are children of the same God.” (104)

“ . . . it’s critically important that we never allow ourselves to believe we are fundamentally better than anyone else.” (105)

The theology I was reared on wasn’t just a series of grand cosmic dramas. It was a way of life. It was made up of actions, like campaigning for change and being kind to mean people. (106)

“The Impoverished Souls”

He [Freddy] sat on his bike for the whole goodbye, fastened to it like a shining metal honor amidst the strangeness of the college scene. (114)

I had grown up in a household where we avoided talk of the afterlife, in good Calvin fashion, but suddenly heaven was all I could think about. (117)

When James Baldwin wrote, “Love takes off the masks we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within,” he was right. (121)

[Gutierrez] calls this joining together, when it’s grace-filled, “solidarity.” To b in solidarity is to be bonded with others in their plight, knowing you are not the same, but committing to share in a common endeavor. (122)

The part of his theology I felt uneasy about—but understood completely—was his insistence that Christianity’s obsession with other-worldly salvation was a massive Christian cop out. (122)

“I Once Was Found, But Now Am Lost”

After Freddy’s death, the prairie faith that held together my childhood confidence in God’s grace was blown about like tumbleweed. . . . All that Divine love didn’t make one bit of difference when it came to how the world actually worked. Divine diffidence appalled me. (128)

Amidst the grinding powers of injustice, grace was weaker than sin, overwhelmed by it. (130)

Where you stood when you studied theology profoundly changed how you viewed God and how you lived theology. (132)

My effort to overcome my state of being had failed. Later, having witnessed loved ones die, I would compare it with the last keen moment many people experience before dying. (142)

And gradually, unintentionally, I just gave up. I curled y head down, past my knees, towards my gut, closed my eyes, and came undone. . . . I let go of my life. . . . I felt death as a fluidity and not annihilation. (144)

His disinterest in my undoing somehow brought me a perverse peace. I had become nothing, to no one, neither to humanity nor God. I was dissolving, and my unimportance, my liquidity, flooded me again with overwhelming consolation at the blending of the world into one infinite flow. (145)

How was I to tell the difference between what was divine and what was delirium? (146)

Please re-read and note the four stages of prayer outlined on pp. 146-147: meditation, quiet prayer, beholding the divine, rapturous unknowing.

With unflinching directness, John of the Cross describes the terrible theological experience of losing oneself. When one descends into the dark night of the soul, the self—which is made up of all the stories we tell ourselves about our identities and place in the world—is slowly stripped of all its attachments, not just to worldly objects, but to our most precious ideas about who we are, our memories, thoughts, even our concepts about God and love. (147)

The language he uses for this stripping away is harsh—but it resonated with my experience. "Utter desolation," "violent purgation," "complete aloneness and lostness—and all this even before he describes coming undone. (147)

That possibility enveloped me on that train platform, in my delirium0I am nothing but a temporary invention of my own mind, and my spiritual imagination is merely a figment of that falsehood, another "self-deception." If this is true, then who is the "self" that carries the weight of being sinful and graced, asleep or awake, just of unjust? (151-152)