

“Forgiveness”

Covenant means “contract” . . . and the idea of a God who negotiated, who made deals with God’s people—and that we had to honor our own end—resonated with my religious upbringing. Oklahoma was, in many ways, a God-covenant kind of place. (177)

We believed God bonded Godself to the world by promising to love humanity. That God-bond is another word for *grace*. (178)

The market for God-talk, I had come to realize, was big despite the seemingly massive decline in official believers in the West. (180)

. . . to whom I confessed that McVeigh had made me question, if not lose, all the grace-beliefs my theological life and career had been built upon. He was the only one to whom I had confessed that, some days in the classroom, I felt as if I were teaching lies to my students—especially when it came to forgiveness, something I couldn’t muster myself. (189)

. . . McVeigh’s face never drew feelings of compassion from her, only a sense of coldness. . . . (192)

We had always been an anti-death-penalty family, and our theology backed it up. And here I was, at the moment the rubber really hit the road, breaking ranks. I wanted him dead. (192)

Quoting Kindy, “I’ve seen it before. Guys like him get turned on by the thought of people watching them die in the spotlight, being famous and all. Not that they get it, you know, that they are going to *actually* die. Be gone. No more.” (193)

So many times in my life as a teacher and a theologian, I have failed to summon the strength to be pastoral, to encourage theological thinking, to give comfort. I used to be ashamed of this, but the McVeigh event would soon make me more patient with myself as a theologian. (194)

[Howard Thurman teaches] that hatred was something “the human spirit cannot tolerate.” It destroys us from the inside out by allowing the harms of others to define who we are. (198-199)

Quoting Thurman, “I purpose in my heart that I shall not use my memory to store up those things which fester, poison, and destroy my living, my life, or the living and the life of others.” (199)

. . . he forced me to see my own ransacked blood-lust for McVeigh's murder as part of a larger human will to violence and the delusion that it will cure the pain we suffer. (200)

But I could decide not to harm her [Charis] with my rage, not to let my fury destroy her vision of life and love. (204)

To forgive is to let go of what weighs you down so you are freed to do the work of love in the world. Freed also to let your self be loved. (207)

There was no pretense of regret or redemption. (209)

"Breath"

When I sift through my wiser, hard-won imagining of God, four pillars now stand out: breath, justice, mercy, and love. (217)

Our imagination is the lens through which we experience everything. (218)

It's what we strive for—realizing the divinity in each of us and treating each person and the planet as cherished and divine. (219)

Mercy is the promise that divine love ultimately wins, and life is fulfilled in God's love and in its cosmic fullness, despite its brokenness or unfairness. (219)

Cancer is a very special condition . . . because it distills and clarifies for me precisely what the human condition is: uncertainty, doubt, vulnerability, and utter contingency. Cancer also distills all that defines life—and does it every day, every hour, some days every minute. It gives definition to our desire to live. Love comes to the forefront. Cancer perversely exposes the force of love. It shows us why it is we want to live. (224)

For Kierkegaard . . . the stages were really overlapping spheres—aesthetic, ethical, and religious, both a progression and a cumulative journey. (226)

I began . . . my own description of a Bush-supporting Jesus, a white male, blue-eyed, steel-jawed, gun-slinging Jesus, with a Texas twang emerged, looking much like my high-school friends. (227-228)

About Luce Irigaray: early in her career, she began to ask deep questions about the patterns of thought that undergirded western thinking, like the tendency to divide everything into dualism, with one being good and the other, bad. . . what if we tried not to think dualistically? What if we rejected hierarchies? (237)

