

Drop the Charges: The Continuous Struggle with Offences and Forgiveness

Agnes Mensah-Bonsu

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A co-pastor of a church in the United Kingdom, Agnes Mensah-Bonsu believes that Christians must learn to forgive those who transgress against them.

Few would argue that the Christian obligation to forgive others, in the same way that Christ forgave all the sins of humanity, is one of the most difficult tenets of the faith to uphold. As Mensah-Bonsu puts it in the first chapter of *Drop the Charges*, “Everyone has a Cain in his life.” She argues that there is no man or woman alive who does not suffer an offense for which he desires to seek revenge—even to the point of committing murder, as Cain, in the Old Testament, slew his brother over a perceived slight from God Himself.

In a manner that is both compassionate and authoritative, Mensah-Bonsu examines her subject and its ramifications from a number of angles. She begins with the absolute basics, describing myriad ways in which an individual may take offense, and progresses to more complex issues, such as why forgiveness is an unequivocal imperative for the well-being of Christian souls and how such a state of seemingly impossible grace may be obtained. At each step of her argument, Mensah-Bonsu builds her analysis on a solid foundation of biblical passages, leaving little doubt that the problem of learning to forgive has been a challenge for people since time immemorial.

Despite the overall strength of its central message, the book’s composition leaves quite a bit to be desired. What seem like minor errors in style, grammar, and syntax soon become consistent patterns of careless or uninformed writing, as in the case of this subhead: “Why Does the Righteous Suffer?” At its best, the narrative style is concise and commanding. At its worst, it is riddled with run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and other problems.

The persuasiveness of Mensah-Bonsu’s work is not helped by the lack of focus she brings to her subject in the last few chapters of the book. She ends by including numerous excerpts from both the Old and New Testaments, followed by a brief analysis of each passage. Earlier in the book, her examination of biblical texts provided essential theological support for her assertion that encouraging people to hold grudges is the “devil’s number one strategy” for claiming Christian souls as his own. By the book’s end, however, the Bible quotes seem more like afterthoughts than a robust finale to a compelling argument.

An imperfect book in important respects, *Drop the Charges* still provides sound theological guidance for Christians wanting to improve their ability to truly forgive those who have sinned against them.

DIANE TAYLOR (September 26, 2012)

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