



BRENNAN MANNING

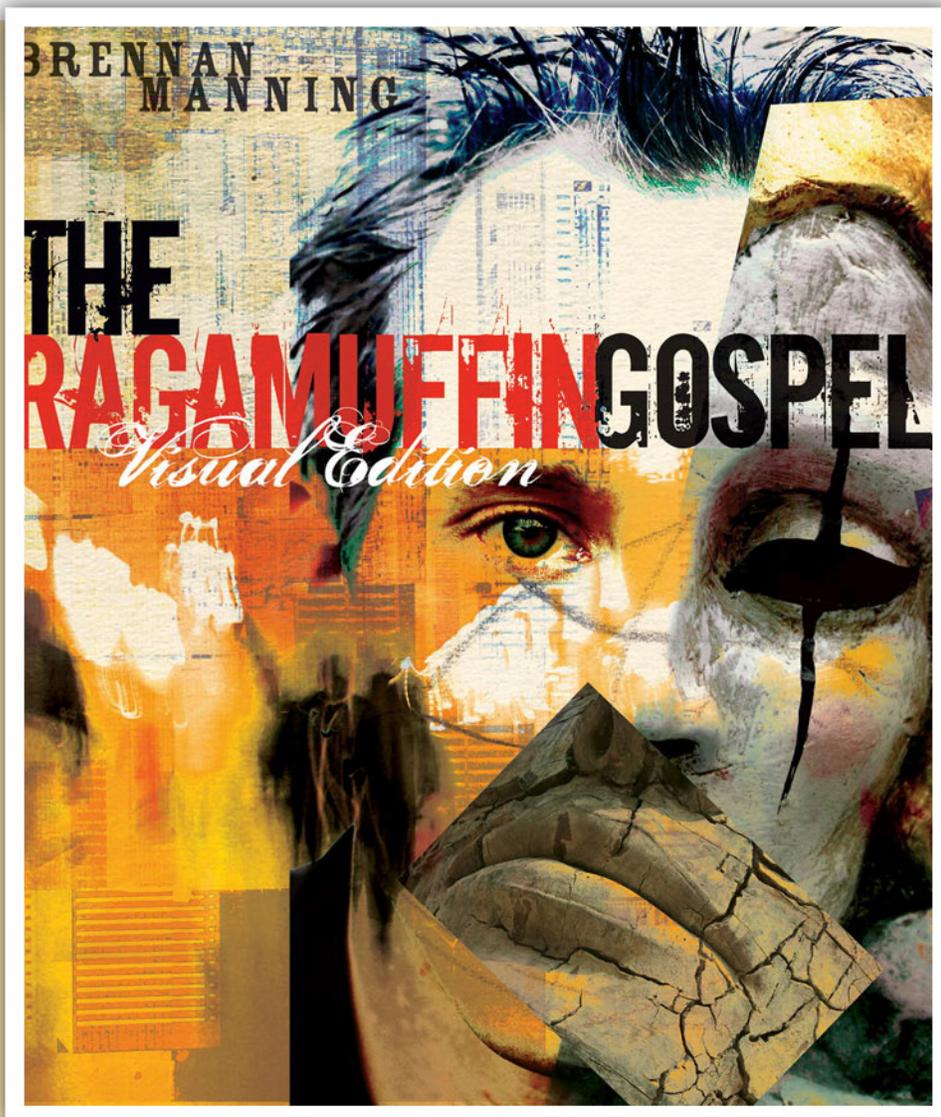
**THE  
RAGAMUFFIN GOSPEL**

*Visual Edition*

MULTNOMAH PUBLISHERS, INC. • SISTERS, OREGON

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All text in *The Ragamuffin Gospel Visual Edition* was taken from the 2005 edition of *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning.

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In the words of Francis of Assisi when he met Brother Dominic on the road to Umbria... "Hi."

On my first reading of the book you're holding, I was stretched. How dare the publisher include a mere 15 percent of my original manuscript! On the second reading, I was stunned by the power of images to expand and even transcend the power of words.

The Ragamuffin Gospel Visual Edition is a gem.

I pray that it touches you in the same way it has touched me.

Under the mercy,

*James*



# A Word Before

*The Ragamuffin Gospel* was written with a specific reading audience in mind.

This book is not for the superspiritual.

It is not for muscular Christians who have made John Wayne, and not Jesus, their hero.

It is not for academics who would imprison Jesus in the ivory tower of exegesis.

It is not for noisy, feel-good folks who manipulate Christianity into a naked appeal to emotion.

It is not for hooded mystics who want magic in their religion.

It is not for Alleluia Christians who live only on the mountaintop and have never visited the valley of desolation.

It is not for the fearless and tearless.

It is not for red-hot zealots who boast with the rich young ruler of the Gospels, "All these commandments I have kept from my youth."

It is not for the complacent who hoist over their shoulders a tote bag of honors, diplomas, and good works, actually believing they have it made.

It is not for legalists who would rather surrender control of their souls to rules than run the risk of living in union with Jesus.



If anyone is still reading along, *The Ragamuffin Gospel* was written for the bedraggled, beat-up, and burnt-out.

It is for the sorely burdened who are still shifting the heavy suitcase from one hand to the other.

It is for the wobbly and weak-kneed who know they don't have it all together and are too proud to accept the handout of amazing grace.

It is for inconsistent, unsteady disciples whose cheese is falling off their cracker.

It is for poor, weak, sinful men and women with hereditary faults and limited talents.

It is for earthen vessels who shuffle along on feet of clay.

It is for the bent and the bruised who feel that their lives are a grave disappointment to God.

It is for smart people who know they are stupid and honest disciples who admit they are scalawags.

*The Ragamuffin Gospel* is a book I wrote for myself and anyone who has grown weary and discouraged along the Way.

Brennan Manning

**On a blustery October night** in a church outside Minneapolis, several hundred believers had gathered for a three-day seminar. I began with a one-hour presentation on the gospel of grace and the reality of salvation. Using Scripture, story, symbolism, and personal experience, I focused on the total sufficiency of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on Calvary. The service ended with a song and a prayer.

Leaving the church by a side door, the pastor turned to his associate and fumed, "Humph, that airhead didn't say one thing about what we have to do to earn our salvation!"

### **Something is radically wrong.**

The bending of the mind by the powers of this world has twisted the gospel of grace into religious bondage and distorted the image of God into an eternal, small-minded bookkeeper. The Christian community resembles a Wall Street exchange of works wherein the elite are honored and the ordinary ignored. Love is stifled, freedom shackled, and self-righteousness fastened. The institutional church has become a wounder of the healers rather than a healer of the wounded.

Put bluntly, the American church today accepts grace in theory but denies it in practice. We say we believe that the fundamental structure of reality is grace, not works—but our lives refute our faith. By and large, the gospel of grace is neither proclaimed, understood, nor lived. Too many Christians are living in the house of fear and not in the house of love.

# Super





# r Christian

Though the Scriptures insist on God's initiative in the work of salvation—that by grace we are saved, that the Tremendous Lover has taken to the chase—our spirituality often starts with self, not God. **Personal responsibility has replaced personal response.** We talk about acquiring virtue as if it were a skill that can be attained, like good handwriting or a well-grooved golf swing. In the penitential seasons we focus on overcoming our weaknesses, getting rid of our hang-ups, and reaching Christian maturity. We sweat through various spiritual exercises as if they were designed to produce a Christian Charles Atlas. Though lip service is paid to the gospel of grace, many Christians live as if only personal discipline and self-denial will mold the perfect me. The emphasis is on what I do rather than on what God is doing. In this curious process God is a benign old spectator in the bleachers who cheers when I show up for morning quiet time. †

A low-angle photograph of a person with a grey beard, wearing a blue denim jacket over a black hoodie and a colorful beaded necklace. They are holding a piece of torn, brown cardboard with the words "will work for salvation" written in black marker. The background features a modern building with a grid-like facade and a sky with light clouds.

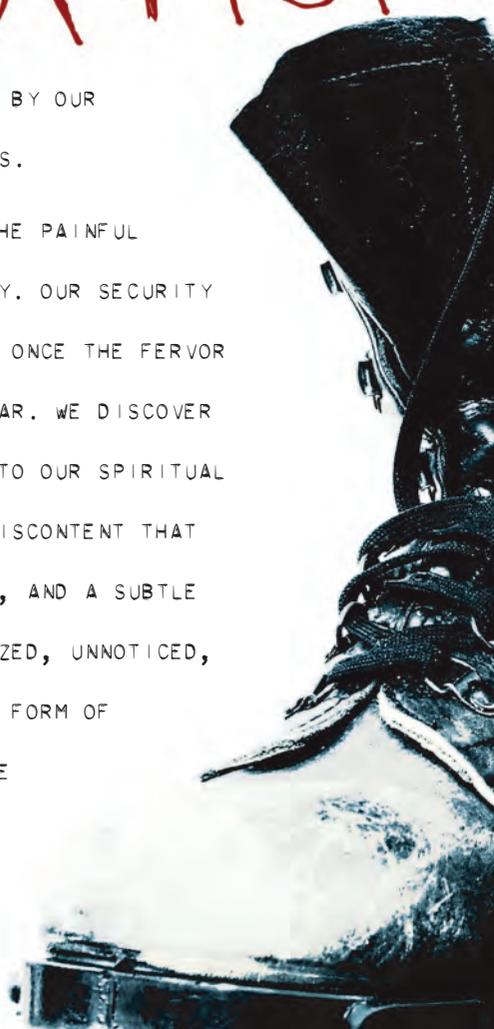
will work for  
salvation



# inadequacy insufficiency

WE BELIEVE THAT WE CAN PULL OURSELVES UP BY OUR  
BOOTSTRAPS—INDEED, WE CAN DO IT OURSELVES.

SOONER OR LATER WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE PAINFUL  
TRUTH OF OUR INADEQUACY AND INSUFFICIENCY. OUR SECURITY  
IS SHATTERED AND OUR BOOTSTRAPS ARE CUT. ONCE THE FERVOR  
HAS PASSED, WEAKNESS AND INFIDELITY APPEAR. WE DISCOVER  
OUR INABILITY TO ADD EVEN A SINGLE INCH TO OUR SPIRITUAL  
STATURE. THERE BEGINS A LONG WINTER OF DISCONTENT THAT  
EVENTUALLY FLOWERS INTO GLOOM, PESSIMISM, AND A SUBTLE  
DESPAIR—SUBTLE BECAUSE IT GOES UNRECOGNIZED, UNNOTICED,  
AND THEREFORE UNCHALLENGED. IT TAKES THE FORM OF  
BOREDOM, DRUDGERY. WE ARE OVERCOME BY THE  
ORDINARINESS OF LIFE, BY DAILY DUTIES  
DONE OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

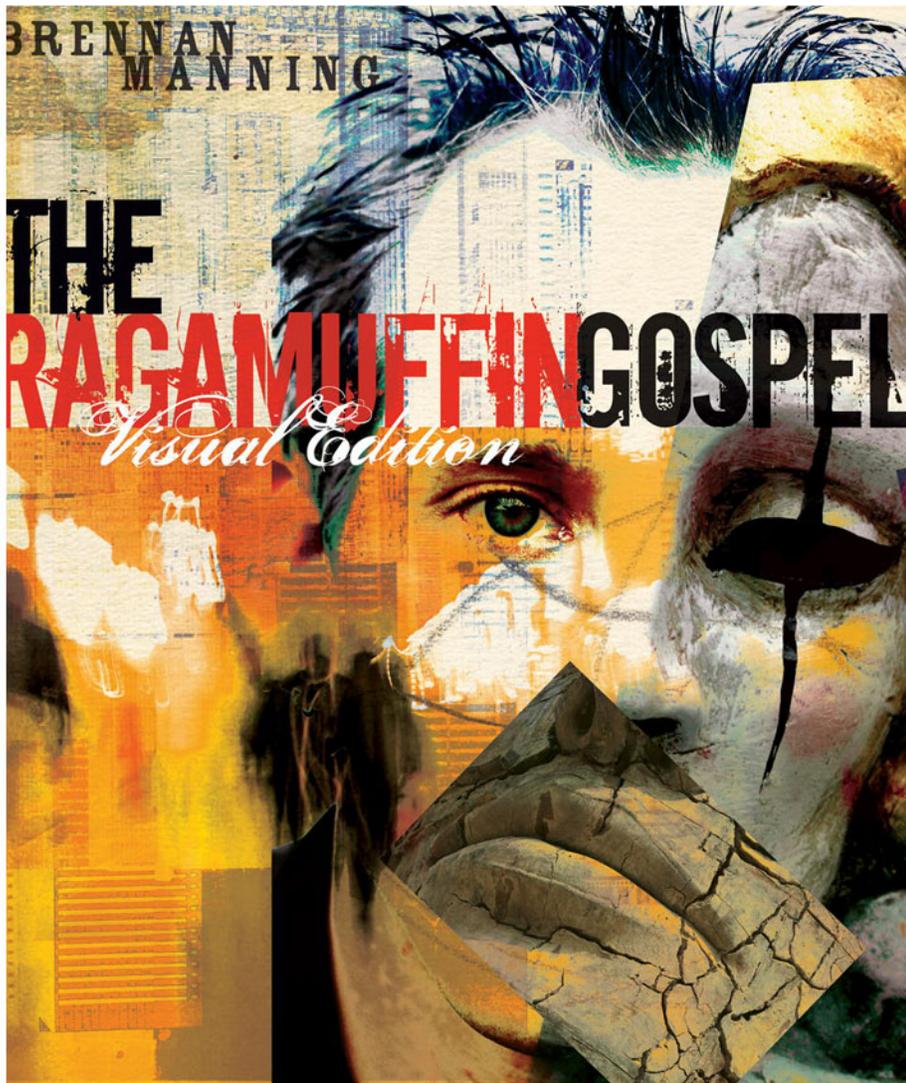


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