

THE RECONCILER

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THE GOD OF THE BIBLE OR THE GOD OF ISLAM?

Jews, Christians and Moslems all believe that there is one God who is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, to whom we owe our existence and to whom we are accountable.

Though the monotheistic religions have this great belief in common, they are divided by their understanding of what the nature and character of God is. Jews and Christians have a totally different understanding of God's nature than Moslems. Moslems believe that God is totally singular and separate from us. He does whatever he wills without man's cooperation. For them an immense and unbridgeable chasm exists between him and us. If we submit to him (they believe) there is a good possibility (but no guarantee) of being promoted to Paradise after death.

The Bible, and especially the New Testament, reveals a completely different portrait of God. Here we see God not as remote and distant, but as One whose nature is love and who desires relationship with us. He does not impose His will on us, but reveals His will to us and gives us free will to choose. He seeks our cooperation and partnership with Him. Since God's relationship with us is based on His gratuitous love for us it functions in the context of freedom. He does not force His love on us. He has

given us the freedom to receive or reject His love and care.¹

If God is love then the Islamic view of God as being totally singular *cannot* be correct. If His nature is love, He cannot live in isolation and He *cannot* be merely singular. He must have an object of His love, because love cannot exist in isolation. The Hebrew word for God 'Elohim' gives an intimation of this because it is always in a plural form. "*Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if you know?*" (Pv. 30:4) the Bible is clear that God is not singular but plural, and He has a Son. "*Hear, O, Israel. The LORD our God is one LORD.*" (Deut. 6:4) The word here does not mean that God is singular, but that He is perfectly unified. The Hebrew word "echad" translated here as "one" is the same word that is used in Genesis when it says "the two shall become one." The word here means perfect unity. (Genesis 2:24)

¹ The contemporary notion of the 'unconditional love of God' is not exactly accurate, for it implies that we can enjoy God's love whether we respond to it or not. God's love is 'unmerited' rather than 'unconditional'. He paid an infinite price to make it available. God's love is unconditionally directed towards all but is only activated in our lives as we deliberately receive it through the Atonement.

The Biblical view of God is as follows: The Father (whose nature is love) poured out all His love upon His Son in all eternity. The energy and bond of that Love is the Holy Spirit, who is God in communicable form. And so Father, Son and Holy Spirit lived in all eternity before time began in their wonderful glory of the bliss of love and total completeness.

At some point God decided to extend His love even further. He decided to create man, so that man too could enjoy the love and glory of the Father. The creation of man came about because God in His love (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) decided to **enlarge the family** and include us in the divine family. *“Let us make man in our own image and likeness.”*

Relationship with God is therefore the defining thing about God for we were made to be part of the family of God. We were made to receive and transmit God’s love and to live on earth in the glory of heaven’s bliss and completeness. *“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”* (Eph. 1:4-5)

The events of the ‘Fall’ describe how man went his own way, separated Himself from God’s glory and brought oppression upon himself. The redemption is the work of God to provide a way back for all to come to the love, blessing and care of God’s rule through Jesus. The purpose of the redemption wasn’t just to deal with sin but to restore

us to relationship in the eternal family of love that existed before time began.

- The humanist tries to define man apart from *reference* to God.
- The Moslem tries to define man apart from *relationship* with God.
- The Bible makes relationship with God the defining thing about who we are.

Our understanding of who *God is - is the* key factor in understanding *that we are*. Define life without God and life becomes meaningless and relative. Present a distorted view of God and we develop a distorted view of who we are. Man is not just a rational animal. He is one who can receive communication and love from God. He is destined for glory, destined to participate in the divine nature. Any definition of God or man that is short of that clouds the face of God and robs man of His dignity and destiny.

Our long road upward from the pit of darkness requires a fuller revelation of who God is and who we are. The gospel in all of its richness will be seen not just as a covering for sin but as a message which invites all men everywhere back to their destiny in the family and love of God through the open door - Jesus. God wanted to enlarge His family and He made you and me. What a destiny! Neither God nor man can be defined apart from this family relationship.

The revelation of the loving Fatherly God whose care is available to all through Jesus is the only one that can unite our fractured world. It is the great unifying reality - it is the kingdom of God.

Judging & Discerning

Jesus forbids us to judge, and condemn. (Matthew 7: 1) Paul actually says we who judge are guilty of the same thing we judge in others. (Romans 2:1)

We all stand only because of God's grace. Though we deserved condemnation Jesus bore it for us and we have the obligation to extend that same mercy to others continually

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. (1 Cor 6)

This passage seems to contradict Paul's statement in Romans and Jesus' statement in Matthew. Here he is using the word 'judge' in a different way. He is saying that it is the responsibility of leaders to deal with immoral behavior in the church, not to tolerate it in any way and to do nothing to condone the immorality of the one who is out of order. He also writes that we ought to restore the brother who is overtaken in sin. (Galatians 6:1) So judging is a matter of maintaining right order not a matter of giving up on anybody

Putting these two passages together:

- We do not judge to condemn a person.
- We do not judge the people of the world; they need the gospel to emancipate them from their sin.
- We maintain right order by dealing ruling (judging) sin within the church.

Today's church often does *exactly the opposite* to what Paul suggests. It judges the immoral of the world instead of bringing them the good news of the gospel, and fails to deal with the sin in its own ranks. Because we are afraid to judge in the wrong way we fail to judge in the right way.

We have the responsibility to help the person who has fallen to get his life back in order. We also have the responsibility to

restrain the leaven of gross sin and doctrinal error in the church, by confronting and correcting it.

If a minister is found with a serious moral problem he should be made to be the object of the church's compassion but at the same time he should not be permitted to function as a representative of Christ's victory until his life is restored to good order.

We need to avoid the self-righteous spirit of the heresy hunters on the one hand while at the same time avoiding the chaos and permissiveness of ignoring biblical standards in the name of not being judgmental. Both are wrong.

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS RELIGION

- Religion is **man's search** for God - Christianity is **God's search** for man.
- Religion is based on what **we do** for God - Christianity is based on what **God has done** for us.
- Religion is man working **for** God - Christianity is man working **from** God.
- Religion tries to reach God by **our** Sacrifice - Christianity reaches God by **His** sacrifice.
- Religion **restrains** us from sin - Christianity **releases** us from sin.
- Religion is based on **man's** promises - Christianity is based on **God's** promises.
- Religion presents signs **instead** of gospel - Christianity presents a powerful gospel **accompanied** by signs.

"The first thing that will hinder joy is the subtle irritability caused by giving too much thought to our circumstances."

- Oswald Chambers

Dear Friends

We pray that all is well with you since we last wrote . We are happy to be able to update you on our activities over the last five months.

Three of those months were spent in Ireland where we had the privilege at speaking at about 70 different meetings. Truly Ireland is breaking out of its religious shell , and the gospel of the Kingdom is breaking loose everywhere. We like to say that we are moving from a time of denominational competition and strife to a post- denominational era of the kingdom of God.

We spoke in every flavor of church, some as traditional as the Gregorian chant and some as modern as rap music. There is one gospel but many cultural expressions,. We are grateful for the dozens of pastors, church leaders and friends that hosted and helped us. Several meetings stand out as highlights. One of these was speaking at, Hillhead Christian Fellowship pastored by Seamus O'Connor, along with his friend Thomas Farrell. Seamus used to be a leader in a violent paramilitary organization until the Lord got hold of Him. He now preaches a message of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Another exceptional meeting was at the River Of Life fellowship in Nenagh Co. Tipperary. The coordinator of this monthly meeting is a Catholic university professor, Philip O'Regan and the spirit and message at his meeting is clear, Biblical, pure and strong.

We also had an opportunity to speak at Belfast Anglican Cathedral along with some notable church leaders on the theme of 'Healing and Reconciliation. David Jardine

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of the Church of Ireland in Belfast organized the seminar.

We believe that Ireland (that has stained the face of Christianity with its horrendous denominational strife) will lead Europe into a demonstration of real Christianity again. At all of these meetings there were people from every possible background. There were many other great meetings that we could write about - but space does not allow it. We really thank God for all the wonderful workers in every church and fellowship throughout Ireland who are laboring in so many ways to advance His kingdom. May they increase and multiply

In July thanks, to our friend and kingdom of God missionary and pioneer Joe Petree, we had the blessing of speaking for several days at the southeast retreat of DOC (Disciplined Order of Christ). We had a wonderful time of fellowship and sharing in North Carolina with this group of dedicated interdenominational believers,

This month we are working on completing some writing projects as well as taping video messages for our web site.

In October we leave for Israel for Feast of Tabernacles conference sponsored by the ICEJ where we will be speaking. We also have a tour group made up of people from about ten nations who will be joining us in Israel. In November we travel for a series of meetings in Finland arranged by the ICEJ of Finland.

With deepest thanks to all of you who help us with your prayers and financial support - we need you! Let us know if we can serve you in any way. One in His great love and service,

