

The Great Misrepresentation

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As a young evangelist, I was full of youthful confidence that I had been commissioned by God to tell the world the truth about its sin and about the Savior. I was also confident that I had a biblically sound, orthodox and even penetrating understanding of what the gospel was all about. Possessed of a certain pulpit charisma and a real, though minimal, anointing, I was a preacher and gospel singer who could shoot from both hips and my ammunition belt was heavy with sin, judgment and salvation proof-texts. I could even throw in some half-decent piano playing and rousing song leading. I was God's one-man posse, ready to shoot them sinners dead with conviction and raise them to life with the gospel.

I was not a religious charlatan. I had experienced a dramatic and genuine conversion at age sixteen and almost immediately began to sing and preach the gospel with youthful zeal and a contemporary fundamentalist bias. I loved the Lord and sincerely wanted to serve Him. The call of God was on my life and I was convinced that I was thoroughly grounded in the fundamentals of the faith. Yet, while my message had elements of the pure gospel of Christ, it was also laced with doctrinal poison.

I unwittingly incorporated into the message concepts that were subtly diabolical and borrowed from ancient paganism. With the mentoring I had received from sincere men, how could I know my understanding of the gospel included a spiritual-Babylon mixture of truth and error? I did not know that my perception of God's relationship with man had become colored by corrupted religious tradition and that the spirit of Nimrod had infected my mind. This left me with a God who was both heavenly and hellish.

I had a God of forgiveness but one who would only forgive after inflicting sufficient punishment; a God of grace who would be gracious only after extracting a blood-payment. How deviously the pagan idea of deities who demanded the sacrifice of the purest and most innocent before they would grant their bounty, had worked itself

into the edifice of my theology and in fact, made up much of its foundation. I, who went forth to represent God, in the name of Christ, was found often misrepresenting Him.

It is a testimony to the power of the gospel that in my preaching, something of the essence of His grace did shine through and many entered into a saving relationship with Christ.

It is important, I believe, at this point, in order to keep my readers with me, to emphatically declare my allegiance to the great cardinal tenets of the historic Christian faith. I have held them and will continue to hold them dear to my heart. I hold nothing more precious than the Christ of whom they speak. I am one in conviction with you if you affirm the true deity and humanity of our Lord; His virgin birth; the necessity of His sacrificial death for the reconciling of the world; His bodily resurrection from the dead; His glorious appearing to judge the living and the dead and to the God-breathed normative record of this good news given to us in holy scripture! I had to make this clear because from this point on in the article, I will be more specific as to the nature of the perversion that influenced me and by doing so will almost certainly confront some of my readers with their own complicity in the heresy that lies at the heart of conventional orthodoxy.

Is the professing orthodox community completely wrong about everything? Of course not! But they are completely wrong about some very vital things. A picture comes to my mind, even as I write, of playing a game with a flashlight when we were children.

We would go into a dark room and frighten one another by shining a flash light upward under our chins so as to make our faces appear fiendish. We have done this to God's face, with light that is darkness and made the face of our God appear to be that of a fiend. What follows strikes at the heart of the matter, but is not at all exhaustive, so God willing, I will enlarge upon things in future articles.

At the heart of the fallacies of fundamentalism (not to mention the lies of liberalism) is the distorted perception of the doctrine of reconciliation as believed by the majority of Christians. Let me attempt an explanation of this understanding which is certainly

undergirded and encouraged by conservative theologians. Here we go: We have all sinned (evangelicals seem to always take sin as their starting point).

Our sin has so offended the righteous, holy God that He cannot in justice overlook it. In fact, He is so offended that His justice demands that we go to the place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), since we have followed the devil in his sin, and there be tormented forever and ever without end in the fiery pit of hell. Nothing less than unending anguish without end can satisfy the wrath of the offended deity. (I never heard anyone explain how, since it never ends, it could ever satisfy God's justice, but let's not complicate things early on.) This rationale goes on to say that God doesn't really want this to happen to anyone; so He came up with a plan.

He would accept a substitute to vicariously "do the time" for us. This substitute would not really go to hell for all eternity for us, but simply suffer awhile and then die for our sins and that would be acceptable as a substitute, since the value of His life (God's son's life, that is) is worth more than all of our lives and would be the equivalent of our going to hell forever. So the suffering and death of Jesus, God's son, appeases, propitiates, and satisfies God so He no longer has to do those terrible things to us.

Unfortunately, He ends up doing it to the vast majority of those who will ever live because most of the race will not accept what God did for them and that will make God mad again even though most of them have never heard the good news that God beat up on His only Son for them.

Now to repeat, at the heart of the preceding scenario, is the idea that God needs to be reconciled to man. Pardon my language, but let's put it in the common man's language - God is ticked-off! He's looking for blood. Of course, it's an act of love since He gave His own Son and not someone else's, but this makes it confusing. Just what kind of a God is He? We are told to believe that Jesus' death made Him conciliatory toward man. Otherwise, He's got this enormous petulant perfection problem in His heart, but Jesus' blood takes care of that - well, kind of.

But you see, the New Testament never speaks of God being reconciled to man. Without exception, it always teaches the reconciliation of man to God, by the death of Christ, to be sure, but there is no teaching in the Bible that would lead us to infer that the reconciling work of Christ was necessary to solve a problem within God, a problem within Himself that would keep God from being conciliatory toward us until He was presented with atoning blood. Such a god was the god Baal (I Kings 16:31-32; 18:26-29; Ps. 106:28; Jer. 11:17; 19:5; 32:35; Zeph. 1:4-5) and the god Molech (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Jer. 32:35) and the gods of the Mayans and Aztecs from whose altars ran a literal river of blood to insure that the demon posing as a god would hear their petitions.

True divine justice does not take an obstinate stance of condemnation until it gets its pound of flesh. True divine justice justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Why? Because at the heart of the message of the cross of Christ is the truth that God takes responsibility for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19). God in human form permitted us to murder Him to convince us that He is resolute and steadfast in His love for us. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate friend of sinners.

In the old covenant, we begin to see the meaning of the blood when Jehovah says to the Israelites, "I have given you the blood upon the altar" (Lev. 17:11). We need the blood, not God! The Lord spoke these words to me as He unfolded the meaning of reconciliation. He said, "I am not the god who demands blood. I am the God who gives blood" Oh, precious words!

What is it about the death of Christ that reconciles us to God? According to II Cor. 5:14-15, when Christ died, the whole world died with Him. "We thus judge that if one died for all then all died" (Vs. 14, best translation). So we were present in Christ when He died - we were included in Him, but God was also in Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." (Vs. 19). God and man were present there in Christ on the cross. God was communicating to man His conciliating love and man, in Christ, got the message. The blood got to Him and man was reconciled. On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30).

As the Son of God, the fullness of Deity was present in Him and as the son of man, all of humanity was present. As man struck the mortal blow to Jesus, God kissed the killer and broke his rebellious heart. What is it about the death of Christ that reconciles us? It is this: that the love of God does not miss a beat, does not falter, does not hesitate, does not raise a conditional warning or even an objection, but forgives us while we are torturing and killing His Son. Please, dear reader, ponder this thought:

When Christ prayed "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34), His prayer did not initiate, inspire or motivate the Father to forgive, but rather, His Father's forgiveness freely given in the moment of supreme offense, moved Christ to agree in prayer. Yet many of our historic Christian confessions imply or clearly state that the Father can justify us ONLY IF there is a vicarious blood-letting. God was not waiting for the blood of Christ to be present to Him so that He, in justice, could be free to forgive, but instead God, who was in Christ, presents His blood at the door of our hearts, freeing us to surrender to His forgiveness. You'll note that this is the exact opposite of what the church has been teaching for centuries.

The Father seeks worshippers to worship Him in Spirit and in Reality. For this reason, the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. He came to bring us to the Father by bringing the Father to us. The word "worship" comes from "worthship" meaning God seeks to bring us to know His worth. We are made whole as we realize the worth of God and only then, in the light of His worth can we know our own. Conventional theology in the area we have discussed de-values God; makes of Him a base material rather than the gold that He is and disables us from worshipping Him with the loving abandonment He deserves.

Once we allow the inclusion of heathen concepts about placating the deity, it becomes much easier to believe as the majority of Christendom does that when all is said and done, this God who goes to such gory lengths to satisfy His justice will never be satisfied but will end up with a comparatively tiny little flock to party with throughout all eternity while countless millions writhe in an endless hell of unimaginable horror.

There is a growing number of believers who are beginning to see through this satanic portrayal of our Father, those whom He has called. This is the day of His appearing, His parousia, the unveiling of Him that we might see Him as He is, no longer through the stained glass of idolatry. Yes, I mean idolatry, for we have taken to ourselves the heathen propensity to imagine superhuman versions of their own fallen selves and then call those imaginings, gods. We, in turn, have taken our fallen ideas of vengeance, vindictiveness and retribution and have projected them onto our Father and Savior and have created an idol. Am I saying that there is no true vein of worship in the organized church? Of course not!

What I am saying is that it is mixed with heathen worship as has been the case so often in the history of the people of God. The great tendency has always been to mix the religion of Babylon with the religion of the prophets, and only in the most extreme occasions to totally deny the God of Israel. "In times past, God winked at their ignorance but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). At the beginning of the gospel era, this living command went forth from the throne of God and has been steadily bringing minds and hearts under its sway.

Though at many times it would appear that the darkness would overcome the light. Nevertheless, with this living command comes an energy that is causing the light to shine in ever increasing intensity. It cannot be hid under a bushel, but will shine as a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14-15). It will arise as the dawning of the day to dispel all darkness from the land.

Soon Christ, who is the radiance of God's glory will shine forth from His people so that the Father's image will no longer be defaced and His name no longer suffer gross misrepresentation, for "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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