



## The Reconciliation

LONG AGO the One-and-Only God declared, “I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, . . . which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8, emphasis supplied).

Before “the beginning” (Genesis 1:1) of space and time, with its external relationality, God must have been alone in his internal triune constitution as Being (Father), Becoming (Son) and Effecting (Spirit).<sup>1</sup> While God was thus internally relational, he lived in

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isolation, without anything or anyone else beside him. Recognizing this problem, God determined to create “otherness” — for, to and with whom he could eternally relate (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9).

However, in fulfilling this eternal purpose, God was faced with another predicament. Though he was ultimately self-emptying love (*kenosis*) (Philippians 2:6-8), he necessarily had to create by command and, subsequently, by possession and the exercise of power.<sup>2</sup> These necessities imposed an initial dualism on the One-and-Only God — a God of self-emptying love and, at the same time, a God who necessarily exercised command, possession and power in his creative activity.

Furthermore, since God created in his own image (Genesis 1:27), the created “other” reflected this dualism, which emerged in mankind as “good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).<sup>3</sup> In the face of command, possession and power, the “other” simultaneously submitted to these requirements, attempted to reject these requirements, and rebelliously exercised these requirements. As a result, God himself existed for millennia in a profound quandary.

### Promissory Reconciliation

Then, about three to four thousand years ago, God acted to choose a people for, to and with whom he could express his self-emptying love. These Chosen Ones

were the Habiru, who had been exiled from their home in Mesopotamia, had become enslaved in Egypt, and were then liberated by God himself through the Exodus. God chose them to represent him and to express his compassion and mercy for humanity and all Creation. This was his Promissory Reconciliation. However, for nearly 2,000 years, the relationship between God and his Chosen Ones was often turbulent.

## Inaugural Reconciliation

Then God decided to resolve the long dilemma by himself becoming the Hebraic human — Jesus Christ. Throughout his life and ministry, in his words and actions, Jesus sought to supersede command, possession and power and to thus express the innate love of God for all humanity and all Creation. Finally, he accepted the

consequences of command, possession and power in his execution on Calvary's cross. By his death he took the old dualistic God and the old covenant of command, possession and power, with its consequences, to inaugural death. In this submissive act God achieved his Inaugural Reconciliation with all Creation.

. . . [Christ Jesus] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.  
— Philippians 2:7, 8.

. . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments . . . for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross; having slain the enmity [in himself] . . . — Ephesians 2:15, 16.

Tragically, over the last 2,000 years the followers of Jesus have largely failed to understand and accept the revelatory words and actions of Jesus in his life, ministry, death and resurrection. Instead, they have perpetuated God's creational predicament of command, possession

and power — using that predicament for “evil” (Genesis 3:4) by seeking personal empowerment apart from “others.” Moreover, in this postmodern world there are religious fundamentalists who are determined to terminate Creation itself by exterminating all “others” and supposedly assuring their own “rapture” to cosmic oneness. The ominous fact is that religio-political fundamentalists — so-called

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followers of God — are virtually equipped to fulfill these intentions. The only assurance for the survival and transformation of Creation is the fact of God’s own irrevocable and noncontingent act in forever linking his own existence with Creation in his birth, life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection.

## Final Reconciliation

At this critical stage of human history, we are called to respond to God’s invitation to be human witnesses to testify on his behalf in the final judgment (Acts 1:8; cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Upon his Paraousaic (“enthronement”) return (Second Coming), God will convene the judgment as and of himself (Matthew 24:27; Hebrews 9:27; James 5:8; Revelation 14:7). He will resurrect all human beings who have died and gather them with all those who are alive (Matthew 25:31, 32; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

In view of the reciprocal human relationality inaugurated at his First Coming (John 15:15), we can conclude that the Parousia will enlighten humanity about the predicament God faced in launching the created order.<sup>4</sup> It will reveal that the early emergence of the “negatives” was far better than delaying them for eternity and that the existence of evil has been a profound educational experience for all Creation (cf. Nahum 1:9; Zephaniah 3:15; Matthew 6:13).<sup>5</sup> We can further conclude that the Parousia will involve a universal enlightenment about the reconciliation that God inaugurated and the subsequent burdens that he necessarily bore for unnumbered generations (Philippians 2:6-11; cf. Romans 14:10-12). Finally, we can conclude that this revelation will involve the invitation for human witnesses to confirm his testimony and the invitation for risen humanity, as representative of all Creation, to accept his judgment and receive the gift of his self-emptying love (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Philippians 2:5-11).

... [Oh,] that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — Philippians 2:11.

All who respond to God’s judgment will be transformed into his own image for all eternity (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 John 3:2). This will constitute the Final Reconciliation!

... [T]hanks [then] be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. — 1 Corinthians 15:57.

## Summary

God necessarily created the cosmos and life, endowed with free process, and humanity, gifted with free will. As a result, Creation adopted God’s own use of command, possession and power, which emerged in mankind as a force that wreaked havoc on this world for millennia.

God then intervened in history and selected his Chosen People to represent him and his fundamental attribute of self-emptying love to all others. This

characterized the Promissory Reconciliation of God with Creation and of Creation with all “others.”

After the turbulent history of his Chosen People, God chose to himself become human as the child of Hebrew parents and to live, suffer, die and rise

again in the ultimate manifestation of self-emptying love. This was the Inaugural Reconciliation.

Upon his Parousaic return God will convene the final judgment as the old age veers toward its self-imposed demise. The final judgment will involve witnesses who will testify on his behalf, and it will reveal the significance of the “negatives” as the eternal insurance against any subsequent departure from his love. Then, in a glorious and Final Reconciliation, the Creator will eternally transform Creation (Revelation 21:1, 4-5). For “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23)!

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## Endnotes

1. See Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960), pp. 38-48.
2. See “The Divine Predicament,” *Outlook* (January/February 2005).
3. “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things” (Isaiah 45: 6, 7).
4. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World IV: The Gift of God,” *Outlook* (February 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World V: The Gift Abused,” *Outlook* (March 2008).
5. Ibid. Cf. John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 84.

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