

Dear People Whom God Loves,

GOD IS PATIENT AND SUBTLE

I

Theology is the study of God. There are also many different studies and investigations of the universe and the various types of beings within the universe. The study of God and studies of the universe have different principles that need to be followed. Both kinds of studies can be helpful to each other, but there is a crucial difference between the two.

That difference is that the first (theology) studies the creator, and studies of the universe (scientific studies) investigate creatures. Theology studies not a being, but the source of beings. Studies of the universe explore creation. Theology studies the one who is existence, while scientific studies of the universe explore the nature of beings whose existence is dependent on their source. Theology studies the one who is not part of the universe, but is active in the universe, while science explores the various parts included in the universe. While theology tells us why there is something, scientific studies cannot tell us why there is something, rather than nothing. Theology tells us that when the universe, as we know it is gone, there is something more. Science tells us that the universe will expand into destruction, or will collapse into destruction.

I believe that theologians and scientists can be very helpful to each other because both are talking about the same universe. I also believe that theologians, as theologians, should not draw conclusions that are in the field of science, while at the same time scientists, as scientists, should not draw conclusions that are in the field of theology.

Faith is a way of knowing, because being human, we are made in the image and likeness of God and we share some of the transcendence that God is. Reason is another way of knowing. Here we use experimentation and our intelligence. I might say it this way. We need both heart knowing and mind knowing.

II

I would like us to reflect on two famous sayings. The first is from Carl Jung: "Coincidence is a fortuitous concurrence of causes." The second is from Albert Einstein: "Coincidences are God's way of working and remaining anonymous."

I understand the first one to mean that there are things that happen that we can't explain. We can't find a cause connection for it happening. In the future we may or we may not find an explanation. Quantum physics has revealed many strange things.

I understand the second to mean that God is active in our world, but we have no proof that it is God working.

III

The history of the word "God" is long and varied. In the long ago ages everything was divine. It was "God" that was real. All creatures were just the appearance or illusion of God. Later there were many "Gods" and these were tribal "Gods." Members of the tribe would be protected as long as they were able to placate their "God." This was done by various kinds of sacrifices. The tribes would be protected by their "God" only within their own territory. There was a different "God" in alien territory.

After much struggling, the descendants of Abraham came to the belief that there was only one God, the God of all tribes, all nations, and everything. When we listen to the great Jewish prophets, we hear how important it was for God, that his people live good lives. They were to care for the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the poor. God was not interested in sacrifice. What God wanted from the people was that they show mercy. We see the genius of the Jewish people in the Ten Commandments. The last seven were similar to the laws of Hammurabi, the King of Babylon, but that was not the genius of the Jewish people. The genius was in the first three dealing with their relationship with the one, true God – their true God not false “Gods.” The worship that their God wanted was for them to be good people – good in all their relationships, especially those relationships alluded to in the last seven commandments.

It was into this Jewish culture that the man Jesus was born, the man who grew in wisdom and who was also God, fully human and fully divine.

IV

Let us look at some more modern beliefs about “God.” These ways of thinking came about in order to keep belief in “God” after scientists discovered additional regulations and patterns in nature that filled previous holes of knowledge and answered questions about what was going on in nature without needing the intervention of God.

One belief is Pantheism. Pantheism means that God in his being and nature is one with the whole (PAN). God in his being and nature “God” is one with the whole of reality. G. Bruno (1545 – 1600) was the first to think of this world as infinite and consequently of God and the world as identical. B. Spinoza in the 17th Century asserted: “God and nature remain, being distinguished as *natura naturans* (nature actively creating itself) and *natura naturata* (the system of what is created).”

A second belief is Deism which was strong in the Enlightenment. “Deism was ‘natural religion,’ or the embodiment of normal religious truth, to which everyone has access without any dependence on the supernatural.” “...God...who has formed the world after the master builder and clockmaker, and now allows it to operate in accordance with its own natural laws...” (*Note 1*) Of course, the theory of relativity and quantum physics change our idea of a *mechanical* world.

V

A third belief is Atheism. “Atheism in the strict sense came into existence only in the modern age.” We should not be confused by the word “atheist,” which was used to describe people who did not worship the local “Gods.” Christians were called atheists because they did not worship the Roman gods. (*Note 2*)

VI

The Christian understanding of God is quite different. God is the loving source from which the universe has come and God keeps the universe in existence. God is separate from the universe and at the same time is active in the universe. God comes into the universe in a unique way in the man Jesus who is also God. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. In Jesus, God saves the universe from sin and death. God continues this saving power by the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised we would have until the end of time. This saving power results in the state of love and goodness that makes us as much like this love and goodness of God as is possible for us to be. Sin and death have been wiped away. This is the state that we traditionally call heaven. It is the gift (not earned) that God gives us out of love and

mercy that God is. The love that God is shows itself as deep mercy and compassion. The love that God is sees the pain and suffering that is caused by our human sins of hatred, discrimination, oppression, and also hopelessness that comes to many from a lack of forever meaning to life. This does not mean that God was surprised and had to make some changes. I think that this is verified by the fact that the word Christ applies not only to Jesus but to the reality of the Christ that exists for everything from the beginning of creation to the end of time.

Smile, God Loves You,

Father Clay

Note 1: **The God of Jesus Christ** by Walter Kasper, pages 22 – 24

Note 2: **The God of Jesus Christ** by Walter Kasper, page 16