

## God in Body Armor?

3/8/13

Lately, I feel more and more a spiritual revulsion when I encounter Scriptural accounts of—or praises to—the God Who Conquers by his might. My heart turns away from the snuffing out of every human life in the known world, but eight, in the flood which God sent in the time of Noah (Gen. 7:13-23), from the destruction by heaven-fire of the whole population of innocent women and children in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1-22), from the victory paean sung over the Egyptian corpses floating in the Red Sea the next morning (Ex. 15:1-18), from the slaughter of the Amalekites that God ordered from King Saul (1 Sam. 15:1-9), and so on and so on and so on.

I much prefer the God of Jesus, who said, “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt. 26:53). – But, he implies, I’m not going to do that because I know that my God is with me through whatever you do to me, and that he will be there waiting for me afterward.

Slaughter is for cheap potentates like Herod. It’s for inflated egomaniacs like Pharaoh and Hitler and bin Laden.

Slaughter is not for God, the Creator of All Things. Slaughter is too petty for the God who controls the existence of every being that exists at every moment. God knows that he has no enemies—that no being is powerful enough to pose an actual threat to the One on whom every being relies for its existence. God knows that those who declare themselves to be enemies of God have no power. They are merely fist-shakers, on the verge of tears, for not getting their way. The angry ones; the greedy, insecure ones; the selfish ones—they’re the slaughterers. Not the God who made everything in love.

So, leave me be about your God of Vengeance. (The God who declares, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Rom. 12:19) is not promising to take vengeance on our behalf; what he is saying is that *we* should not take vengeance.) Spare me from your God of Retribution. Spare me from your God who condemns *your* enemies. Spare me from your God who punishes the creatures he created with love, by everlasting separation from himself.

Give me the God of Jesus—the patient, loving God who punishes actions, and waits for the prodigals to turn back to him. Give me the God into whose hands Jesus commended his spirit; the God whom Jesus knew as his Father; the joyful, benevolent God who was the goal for him—and is the goal for all of us—the lover waiting patiently and expectantly on the other side of the gate.

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