

WHO IS GOD?

There are people in our culture who do not believe in God (atheists) or are uncertain as to God's existence (agnostics). However, which God is it that they do not believe? For some the God they do not believe is an old man who lives in the sky and wants to help us but is unable. Well, I do not believe in this God either. Others do not believe in a God who is merely an impersonal force that is identified with the world (rather like the "force" in *Star War*). I do not believe in an impersonal God like this at all.

The first point of the Christian message in the Bible is that God is the personal creator of the universe and in charge of the world. He is the ruler, the supreme President, the true Prime Minister, and the king. Unlike human rulers, however, God always does what is best for his subjects. He is the kind of Prime Minister and government you would like to be ruled by. God is good, just, and loving. He is against all evil and injustice. God rules the world because he made the world. Like a potter with his clay, God fashioned the world into just the shape he wished, with all its amazing details. He made it, and he owns it. Notice what the book of Revelation says about God in chapter 4, verse 11: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." It is precisely because God creates all things, he owns all things and has "rights" as owner; just as painter who paints a painting has rights of ownership over the painting. He says to the sun "rise!" and the sun rises. All things in the universe run because of God's absolute will and power. As the creator, owner, and ruler of all things he expects obedience from his subjects, just as those of us who own pets expect obedience from them.

God also made us. God created people who were something like himself (i.e. persons with the capacity for thought, emotions, and relationships) and put them in charge of the world—to rule it, to care for it, to be responsible for it, and to enjoy all its beauty and goodness. He appointed humanity to supervise and look after the world, but always under his own authority, honouring him and obeying his directions. This is what the first chapter in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, in verses 26 and 27 says: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." We are created with a capacity for a personal loving relationship with God our creator, (we are his image and likeness) and we have the honoured role of being his ambassadors to the creation. We have a unique place in God's creation.

It all sounds rather ideal — God in heaven, people ruling the world according to his directions, and everything right with the world. However, everything is very obviously not right — with the world or us. Next month I will explore what has gone wrong with the world.

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