

This kind of god is not worth dying for

By Witt's End, a modern look at religion

"SHE died for God," said Mrs. Rutherford.

"Not for my God, she didn't," I replied. "Not for the Christian God, she didn't."

"There's only one God," said Mrs. Judge, hovering in the background.

"Only one true God," I answered. "One true, living God. But there are countless false ones. And it's the phony ones that demand human sacrifice. I've known men who've made business their god and sacrificed their families to it."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Rutherford, her foot still wedged in my doorway, "so people haven't died for your Christian God."

"I think he's more interested in people living for him." I said. "Lay down your lives for your friends, certainly. But to prove some abstruse Old Testament point about blood? Hardly."

"It sounds to me," said Mrs. Judge "as if your God isn't worth dying for."

"I reckon," I said, "you've got everything back to front. My God thinks I'm worth dying for, so he's done the dying bit. He's made the only human sacrifice worth talking about. He's done it so I can enjoy life to the full."

"On certain conditions," said Mrs. Rutherford.

"But of course," I said. "His conditions. The conditions of loving Father. Not a cantankerous old so and so."

"Cantankerous old so and so indeed," said Mrs. Judge, getting uppity.

"A God who gives a woman a child with one hand and then demands that she die to prove her allegiance to him is a cantankerous old so and so," I said. "He's a torment. And I won't have a bar of him."

"He has his reasons," said Mrs. Rutherford.

"He's given me reason too," I said.

"And not everyone can understand," added Mrs. Judge, "only the favored few."

"But he wants everyone to understand," I said. "He wants everyone to live. He wants to attract everybody. That's the trouble with you. You've made him such a niggly, isolated, little person."

"The Bible shows God . . ." began Mrs. Judge.

". . . in Jesus," I continued. "And Jesus shows God at work in all sorts of situations. He's there in the back of a pub; they can't keep him out of this world; even when they get rid of him as a public nuisance, he's back having a picnic with his friends at the lake side.

"He uses a kid's lunch to feed a crowd, washing up water to provide wine for a wedding reception, spittle to give a man sight. You can't limit him."

"Who's trying to?" asked Mrs. Judge and Mrs. Rutherford.

"If he can be seen at work in a carpenter's shop," I said, "you can find him in a hospital ward. If he can use Judas's greed, he can use a surgeon's know how; if he takes someone's bread and wine to give me his body and blood, he can use someone's blood to . . ."

"Not that," said Mrs. Judge and Mrs. Rutherford together. "There are certain things that God will not permit. Things that sinful, man has concocted."

“The chief concoction of sinful man,” I replied, “is death. It is one of the things that God will not have a bar of. ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is a very ancient divine command.”

“Sometimes,” said Mrs. Rutherford, “God makes hard demands on his chosen ones.”

“My God,” I said, “never makes unreasonable ones. Nothing that is not for my good in this life and the next.

“And this I suppose is the chief difference between us. Yours demands his pound of flesh. Mine gives it.”

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