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Polarization or Reconciliation

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POLARIZATION OR RECONCILIATION

Now that we are again at an "authority crisis" in the evangelical community of the church, the title becomes a relevant issue. I opt for the "word of reconciliation." (II Cor. 5:19) Paul urges this in the context of Jesus' ministry to us, the "ministry of reconciliation." The way of reconciliation is always higher and better than polarized confrontation.

God and the world were certainly polarized, a confrontation between holiness and sin. But God's way was not to perpetuate the battle; He sent Christ to reconcile "the world unto Himself," and to commit "to us the word of reconciliation."

To seek reconciliation does not suggest not contending for the faith (Jude 3), nor does it suggest weak compromise with the forces of evil. It does suggest that there is a better way to "fight" than to "draw the issues in battle array." Jesus gave us these principles in the sermon on the mount--principles that capitalize on the power of non-resistance, of example, of love. This is a level above the "battle" in which one side must "win" by subduing the other side.

Since the issues involved in Biblical authority (inerrancy of the Scriptures) include both faith and understanding, why not avoid both extremes of mechanical dictation and partial inspiration, declare our faith in the Bible, define our terms for understanding, and seek the way of reconciliation in the love and unity of Christ.

If this sounds to some like "soft surrender," my own belief is in the absolute authority of the whole Bible. On the other hand, lest this sound like dogmatic literalism, I call for definition that recognizes

the various modes and styles of communication, figures of speech, rounded numbers, individual recollections, etc.

It is my opinion and faith that, within these parameters, reconciliation of the stable components of evangelicalism is possible. Only the erratic splinters will be lost, while the great gains that have been made in the past forty years will be preserved and reconfirmed.

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