

It's surprising really that people should see God in that way (though I must admit to having done it myself for many years)—after all we humans transcended the merely algorithmic long ago, and it's hard to see that God should be constrained in a way that his creation has moved beyond. But there it is. Among the many negative attributes that we regularly heap on our God, this is one.

To elaborate this example, the bible tells us that God in certain times and places may choose to overlook sins, and in other times and places He 'commands all men to repent'ⁱ. What, the algorithm has changed? At one time God can overlook a sin, and at another time take it seriously and demand action? That's what it says. Or perhaps God never really had an algorithm at all. Perhaps He's just not an algorithmic God.

And it's not just a change over time, is it? God overlooks many, many sins in my life. Then every so often, He picks up on one particular one and demands I address it. Why this one and not that one? I don't know. That's God's business, not mine.

This is where we get into trouble when we start pontificating about gay marriage or gayness in general or any kind of relationship for that matter. God can look at two relationships which to our eyes may be identical and say, *This one I overlook, but on that one I demand action*. That's His right and we need to respect it. I can start criticizing something, and I may even have a point; but what if God has decided that He wants to overlook at this time? How much damage might I be doing by my own narrowly algorithmic approach?

This is why we need to be careful when discussing other people's real or supposed sins. We could even be right—who know? But it's not really our call, is it. God may be working outside our algorithm. Algorithmic thinking is contrary to the principle of love, it's contrary to God's nature. It's fundamentally legalistic, and it's a basic Pharisee trait. It's a trap we need to avoid.

ⁱ Acts 17:30. I like the original KJV translation: ***'And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.'***