

WHAT GOD GIVES FOR OUR ANGER

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CHILD DEDICATION

When the little Boy of 12 watched His first Passover at Jerusalem, He wondered what it meant. No one could explain it to Him. He had to reason it out through His inspired mind and conclude that it meant that Someone sinless must come and be sacrificed as the Lamb of God.

What's amazing is that this teenage Boy did not fight the conviction that He was called to die as the "Lamb of God"!

We know He accepted the call, because the first words we have from His lips were what He said to His mother when she later found Him in the Temple, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). That 12 year old Boy was dedicated! He was the first of many who have out-thought their parents, and yes, their pastors, in understanding the leading of the Holy Spirit.

That "Boy" stayed dedicated to His Father's "business" until He "set His face" to go to Jerusalem to be crucified (see Luke 9:51).

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Have you ever been angry with God? For any reason? You prayed for something that you felt you needed, maybe healing, maybe happiness in

marriage, maybe for a child, maybe for an honest job—and your prayer wasn't answered. Seemed like Heaven was closed to you. This is a common problem many people have; and some just turn their backs on the Lord. "If He doesn't care enough for me to help me, I'm through with Him!" But that's not the solution!

We have borrowed a cat from our neighbors that is noted for its success in dealing with groundhogs. It is well named "Tiger," because its disposition is fierce. It seems to be in a state of perpetual anger with the world. It snarls if you pick it up. The neighbors who own it care for it, feed it nicely; but they have had to conclude that it must live outdoors (which it seems to enjoy).

Apparently Tiger had some experiences in "kittenhood" that made it forever after sour on humans. And I know of no redemption for it. It will forever be on the outside, looking in on the happy "party" that it has chosen to refuse participation in. But there is Good News for you and me who have suffered experiences in our childhood that have wounded us. There is redemption for us! We don't have to be cast out into that "outer darkness" where we are doomed to watch alone the lights of the heavenly party that we miss going on inside (see Mt. 8:12).

God knows that we human have deep inner problems that stem from heredity and childhood, even pre-natal experiences. He says of us, "Your heart and mind are sick. From head to foot there is not a healthy spot in your body . . ." (Isa. 1:5, 6, GNB).

Drugs may temporarily relieve symptoms of our heart-alienation and/or clinical depression—these inner malfunctions more real than Tiger’s learned alienation from the little world she lives in. But drugs cannot be a substitute for the healing of the wounded psyche that only the Great Physician can provide.

An angry, threatening elephant was blocking the main road from Kampala west to the Mountains of the Moon area. Finally, the game warden had to be called, who reluctantly had to shoot the beast.

It was found that it had a painful abscess in a tooth. This is what caused its irrational rage.

Often we humans feel driven to anger, to impatience; yes, we do and say things that later we see are irrational. We create unpleasant crisis. Like Paul in Romans 7, “I don’t do what I would like to do, what I do is what I don’t want to do” (vss. 15, 16, GNB).

Could that unfortunate elephant teach us something? We have some painful abscess in the heart; we don’t understand ourselves any better than the elephant understood himself. All we know is that something mysterious hurts deep inside. And then we fly off the handle, get impatient with each other, our spouse, or the kids, and get irrational and tear up the road.

The “abscess”? To tell the honest truth, it’s bad heart feelings against God, often buried so deep we don’t know them, like the elephant’s pain. Things go wrong for us, we don’t know why. We’re frustrated, and that’s when we go ballistic and can even make fools of ourselves. We’re out of sorts with God.

He knows that, and He doesn’t blame us any more than He blamed poor Job who had a monstrous “abscess;” but He can do something the game warden couldn’t do. He can heal our “abscess.” It’s called, “Be ye reconciled to God.” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.”

He “healeth all thy diseases.” He “renews” our “youth” (Ps. 103:3-5). As a Good Shepherd He “seeks” the wounded, lost soul. His business is happiness that flows from reconciliation. How has He learned to be the Great Physician of our wounded psyche? Here is the answer: On His cross He endured the total darkness of alienation from His Father (“My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”) and He conquered it by faith! Infinite, glorious achievement! Now this “faith of Jesus” He gives you and me. In it is virtue to heal us from our “head” to our “toes”—every cell of our inner being. Thank Him for that!

A big reason why we are angry is that we perceive God to be angry with us sinners. The sacrifices of the heathen were always to placate the wrath of the angered gods. Quite common among the pagans in the Middle East as well as North, Central and South America. Note their pyramids and altars.

No matter how many gods they worshiped, every civilized pagan nation has had a tradition, more or less vague and fanciful perhaps,—a tradition forgotten by the multitude, it may be, and only cherished by the elite, the educated few, and yet a tradition still,—that there is one God back of all these gods, who made them, and who made all things. Why did they not worship him?—Because

they did not believe that He cared for them. They thought Him so great and so far away that the human soul was beneath His notice, that the crushing out of all the race of man would be no more to Him than the crushing of a worm to us.

And because this God was so far away, they went on inserting gods and demigods, and kings and priests between Him and the human heart, till no sorrowing, suffering soul would ever think or dare to reach up the trembling hand of faith for the soothing, sympathetic touch of Him who was truly and really divine. To such a world as this Jesus came to reveal the true God, and the God He revealed was Emanuel, God with us; and to such a people as this Paul taught the sublime truth that God is "not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . for we are also his offspring."

The same thing that Satan accomplished in paganism he has also accomplished in the papacy. To papists, God is the stern, the distant judge, incapable of human sympathy or love, and Christ the mediator and intercessor, whose duty it is, if possible, to touch the heart of God with a feeling of our needs, and arouse his compassion. But even Christ is not touched with the feelings of all our infirmities; so he must be approached through the mediation of the Virgin, His mother, and of canonized saint, and living pope, and bishop and priest. Thus again God is placed far away, and the beautiful and living fact of His love is denied. He is no more "our Father," who takes delight in giving good gifts to His children.

Every pagan religion has its sacrifice, and this sacrifice is derived from the true Sacrifice by which the world is to be redeemed, through degeneracy from the true type of that sacrifice which God gave to man at the gate of the forfeited Eden. But Satan has brought it around so that the pagan sacrifice means just the opposite of the true. The meaning of the true sacrifice is this: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Every sacrifice truly offered was a revelation, an expression of that great sacrifice by which God was to give the pledge to all His intelligent creatures of all worlds that He so loved them that, if need be, He would give His life to redeem them.

But the pagan sacrifice speaks of a god of wrath and anger, whose wrath must in some way be appeased, perchance by the blood of a lamb, or it may be only by the blood of a fair maid, or innocent child, or some other human victim. When He smells the freshly flowing blood, they believe His vengeance will be satisfied, He will be propitiated.

What shall we say of the false idea of the atonement, held even by many in the popular Protestant churches of today, and expressed in a late confession of faith in these words, "Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us"? It is the pagan idea of sacrifice applied to Christianity. God, they think, was angry; He must pour forth His wrath upon some one. If upon man, it would eternally damn him, as he deserved; but this would interfere with God's plan and purpose in creating the worlds, so this must not be. And yet God must not be cheated of His vengeance; for this reason He pours it forth

upon Christ, that man may go free. So when Christ died, He was slain really by the wrath and anger of the Father.

This is paganism. The true idea of the atonement makes God and Christ equal in their love, and one in their purpose of saving humanity. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The life of Christ was not the price paid to the Father for our pardon; but the life was the price which the Father paid to so manifest His loving power as to bring us to that repentant attitude of mind where He could pardon us freely.

The contrast between the true and the false ideas is tersely stated by the prophet in these words: "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). Thus Satan has transformed the truth of God's love into a lie, and even infused this lie into the very doctrine of the atonement of Christ.

Why doesn't God destroy our wicked world now? There is an answer in the sanctuary service of Israel:

(a) Two lambs were offered "daily" on the altar of burnt offering, morning and evening, in behalf of everyone within the boundaries of Israel. "Strangers" and Gentiles were included as the beneficiaries. No repentance was required, no confession; no questions were asked; the lambs were "offered continually," whether anybody believed or not (Ex. 29:38-42). All you had to do was to be a human being, and you were under the umbrella of God's abounding grace.

(b) This was the gospel by "moonlight" (Rev. 12:1). As we come to the "sunlight" of the New Testament, the meaning is made clear: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). "God has encircled the world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air we breathe" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 68). The daily service of the two lambs was a ministry for the whole world. When Jesus came to John asking for baptism, he refused. Jesus had to give him a Bible study there in the water, convincing John that He was the antitypical Lamb of the daily service. "Then he suffered Him" (Mt. 3:15).

(c) The next day John introduced Him, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). Not "maybe," "perhaps," or "He would like to be," or "He takes away the sin of a few."

Why this universal sacrifice of atonement? "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).

(d) The "incense" offered on the altar of incense daily or continually was also a type of a universal ministry of intercession. Only the blood of Jesus continually ministered keeps this wicked world from being destroyed.

What does it mean to be a true Christian today? How can we honor Him in this period of world history? The answer is in the Bible teaching of the cosmic Day of Atonement, the "cleansing of the sanctuary" typified by the ancient Hebrew Yom Kippur. That was the only day in the year when God's people were required to fast. Why? Was God angry with them? No! It was the day for a final

reconciliation with Him (the word “atonement?” means at one with), the day when the last vestige of buried, unrealized alienation from God was to be healed. That alienation is the result of sin: “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). We don’t realize the depth of that “enmity” (“thou knowest not that thou are wretched, miserable, blind, poor and naked.” Rev. 3:17). The ancient Levitical day of atonement was only a play-school kindergarten lesson: “on that day shall the [high] priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord (Lev. 16:30). The real Day of Atonement is now, accomplishing a work of atonement never before fully achieved for the body of God’s people. As most of an iceberg is hidden beneath the sea, so most of our sin is hidden from our consciousness, buried, so that we invariably are self-deceived about our real character before God, not ready for the final issues in “the great controversy between Christ and Satan.” Hence God has provided a special opportunity of preparation known as the Day of Atonement, the real thing, not the kindergarten edition of long ago.

Thank God He still ministers today in the Most Holy Apartment! That has to be Good News! And you and I can respond today! And that’s Good News.

There have been no new worlds or planets created in the universe since God kept that first. “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them,” says Gen. 2:1. What has kept God busy since then? The answer: a work of reconciling

heaven and earth, because “there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels” (Rev. 12:7). The great controversy has involved the universe as well as this fallen planet, for vs. 12 says that because of the victory won in this reconciliation, “Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” Finally, it will be said: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation.” This blessed harmony will be the result of God’s work on His cosmic Day of Atonement—which means simply, His Day of Reconciliation, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the ending of alienation.

Is your human heart reconciled to God? Are you alert to realize that your natural human heart “is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be” except through the atonement of Christ? Do you still wrestle with a lingering sense that somehow you must make yourself good before He can be reconciled to you, and before He can really accept you and respect you? Do you have that nagging feeling that He cannot truly be your Friend until you are worthy? While you are sitting in the pigsty, do you wish you had a Father who would forgive and accept the prodigal? If so, you need to know about the Day of Atonement; as never before in world history the world’s attention is directed now to the atoning sacrifice of Christ where “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. . . .

We beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:19, 20). But you *can't* "be" unless you first believe He is reconciled to you! So, "spend a thoughtful hour" contemplating the cross where that reconciliation was accomplished.

The question came up in a Bible class: "Why does the Bible say that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,' when the world has not been reconciled to Him? It's still in rebellion against Him?" (2 Cor. 5:19).

That's profound! If we say that the world was legally "reconciled" by Christ's sacrifice on His cross (that's when "God was in Christ, reconciling the world"), then the question comes up: "What does it mean to be 'legally reconciled' when experientially the world is not reconciled?"

(1) If the alienated world were honest and understood what Christ accomplished, it would be reconciled because that revelation of the justice and love of God "in Christ" was complete. No lingering question was left: Christ's self-emptying love was so total that He "poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12), "emptied Himself" like you drain an empty bottle dry (Phil. 2:7), "tasted death for every man" (cf. Heb. 2:9), and in that way He died the "second death" for the entire world (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:14). Therefore He is not "imputing [our] trespasses unto [us]" (2 Cor. 5:19 again).

(2) That's enough to "reconcile" any alienated person who is honest! Therefore, it was an "objective" reconciliation accomplished; the truth is there waiting for any honest person to see it and believe, and in that way "*be* reconciled."

(3) The "subjective" reconciliation takes place in the next verse when you and I "beseech" people, "ministering *the Word* of reconciliation," pleading, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). The "legal" or "objective" reconciliation then becomes "subjective," or "experiential."

It cannot be denied that Mrs. White (and the Bible writers) consistently represented the death of Christ as being a revelation of God's love to man, an attempt to reconcile him to God. "The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; it was not made to produce a love that was not in existence; but it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God's heart . . . We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us . . . The death of Christ was expedient in order that mercy might reach us with its full pardoning power, and at the same time that justice might be satisfied in the righteous substitute" (*Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895.)

Being completely reconciled to God (the word "atonement" means "at-one-with"). It's the opposite of being scared of God; it's living totally, fearlessly, in harmony with Him. It's *not* wearing hairshirts or walking on hot coals or starving yourself (Hinduism has been specially designed as a gross counterfeit of it). It's *not* being ascetic, going off in the desert to be a nun or a monk (the Dark Ages idea was a total distortion of it). It's *not* the *karma* idea of piling up "good works" to make up for all the bad things you've done. It's *not* fear-motivated living; it IS love-motivated living. It's totally being at-one with Jesus,

of living in heart-union with Him. It's *not* fanaticism or dour self-torture. It's *not* singing sad hymns all the time.

So, what *is* Day of Atonement living? It's "growing up" out of spiritual infancy "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), and loving every moment of it! It's a mature "comprehension" of His thinking, His feelings, His aspirations (3:14-21). It's identifying with Him to the point of being "in Him," of looking at the world as He looks at the world and being supremely happy in that identity.

Yes, since time began there have always been "some few in every generation" who have "grown up" out of the kindergarten sand-box idea of worshiping God and have been at-one with Him, like Enoch who "walked with God," and Moses, whose heart was so in tune with Him that he was willing to have his name blotted out of the Book of Life rather than see Israel go down the drain (cf. Heb. 11:5; Ex. 32:31, 32). But now on this cosmic Day of Atonement, this "antitypical" one, God has a worldwide corporate "body" of people so unitedly "at-one" with Him that they become a Bride to Christ who "has made herself ready" for "the marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7). Every moment of every day becomes an exciting adventure "with Him."