

SPIRITICITY, April 1956

The Atonement

By Robert Applegate

The Atonement is the Good News, the Gospel. And like Paul, we are "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation (deliverance) to every one that believeth." The Atonement is the most significant Fact of history, the one important Event of history. There has never been anything like it; it is unique. It is hard to grasp the magnitude of it, for there is nothing that we can compare it with. That Jesus Christ took upon Himself all the error of mankind, past, present, and to come, seems impossible, an unbelievable fairy story; yet it is true. That because of this Fact, we live in a redeemed and ransomed world is contrary to all evidence of the senses and all worldly wisdom; yet this also is true. This is the central Truth of Christianity which has been lost sight of by Christians, although they superficially acknowledge it. Yet the Atonement has changed the face of the whole world. And it has remade the life of everyone who has accepted it, to the extent that he has honestly believed in it.

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth," declared Isaiah. And other inspired men foresaw, centuries before Jesus Christ, that someone had to reconcile man to God and in so doing, overcome death and error - the false conceptions of mortal thinking. The Atonement, the reconciliation of man to God, was God's plan from the beginning of time. The illumined of all ages saw this, but only Jesus of Nazareth was strong enough to perform the reconciliation. Only He was humble enough; only He was meek enough to become in Himself the Atonement for all human perversity.

Since man by his willfulness and pride, had turned away from God until he became a prodigal in a far country seemingly far removed from his Creator; since man had by this perversity brought into being the physical world with its disillusionment and death, it was necessary for someone to reverse the process. It was necessary for someone, by perfect meekness and obedience, to go through physicality to complete spirituality; to become wholly a spiritual being, visibly in the sight of men. This Jesus did. He became "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Only He, of all who have walked this earth, could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Ever since the Advent of Jesus, men have been trying to explain the Atonement, but none has ever succeeded; for the unique cannot be explained in terms of the familiar. The most we can do is to compare the Atonement with that with which we are acquainted, knowing that the comparison is never adequate, but only illuminates slightly one aspect of the tremendous Fact. Thus the writers of the New Testament referred to the Atonement of Jesus Christ as a ransom, comparing it with the act of freeing someone from captivity. In those days, it was not uncommon for a person to be captured by pirates or taken a prisoner in war; and his friends had to ransom him by paying the price of his freedom. Similarly, before the Advent of Jesus Christ, men were held prisoner (as many still seem to be today) by their belief in separation from God. It was necessary for someone to pay the price to ransom mankind from its adversary, its own false concept. This price could be nothing less than the complete demonstration of God's oneness with man, which required the overcoming of the

false notions of materiality and death. This was the great service that someone had to perform, and Jesus Christ did it.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The Atonement is frequently referred to in the New Testament as a reconciliation, as when friends are reconciled after a fight or a period of hard feelings. Man had seemed to be in a state of enmity with God; for man in his turning away from God, had come to feel, first, that God was far off; then that God was watching him with disapproval and judging him. Man attributed his own littleness to his Maker, his own tendency to criticism and condemnation; and so he came to fear God. Since we hate that which makes us afraid, man came to hate God. He came into a state of enmity with God. Man felt guilty about his unworshipful feelings toward his Creator, and to ease his conscience, he had recourse to ritual and pretended adoration. Thus man became "separated" from God and hostile to Him. It was necessary for someone to reconcile the two, to bring God and man back into friendly relation. This Mediator had to be able to address both man and God. He had to be in a human form, "one like the Son of man"; yet not subject to human weakness. Being in a human form, he had to be subject to every human temptation; yet without any deviation from pure spirituality. This impossible assignment Jesus took upon Himself and fulfilled. He reconciled man to God, so that man need no longer feel estranged from his Lord, nor feel inferior or unworthy of God's Goodness; but might, rather, return to the direct, friendly communion that a son should have with his Father. Paul knew this and wrote:

"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

So willing has man been to ascribe his own failings to God, to shift the blame for his plight from himself to God that he has often spoken of the Atonement as the reconciliation of God to man, instead of the reconciling of man to God. Instead of admitting he had forsaken God because of his foolishness and hard-headedness, he maintained that his Lord had forsaken him in anger and petulance. He therefore believed that God had to be placated, mollified - or, in the theological term, propitiated. This was the origin of the idea of sacrifice. God was angry, and it was necessary to give Him a present to mollify Him, so that He would return His favor. The more angry it seemed that God was (that is, the more cause there seemed to be for His anger), the greater had to be the sacrifice that was offered Him. Following this line of thought, men felt that there would have to be one great and perfect sacrifice that would completely remove God's anger from the human race, that would atone for all the mistakes of all men in the world. At one time, the Jewish nation felt that it was this sacrifice, and it glorified itself as "the suffering servant"; but after the Advent of Jesus Christ, it was seen that He was, truly, the perfect "sacrifice."

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

The idea that God could be angry with man is an absurdity, for "God is love." The idea that God could withhold any good from His beloved or could send evil or punishment is ridiculous. What is called "the wrath of God" is the mechanical outworking of man's false beliefs, which result from his turning away from his Creator to worship his own imaginary powers. It is the showing forth of man's imagination that God could be separated from him and could be engaged in condemning His own creation. The idea of God's anger produces the appearance of God's anger, but the idea is completely false. The destroying of this unholy idea is man's reconciliation to God.

The New Testament writers often speak of our Lord's Atonement as the propitiating of God, but this is with them a figure of speech adapted to the time in which they lived. But theological man in his narrow-mindedness has interpreted the figure literally and has even dropped out the more important half of it. He has kept the picture of the angry God, but has forgotten the fact of the anger being completely placated by Jesus Christ. God does not condemn us; but as long as we refuse to acknowledge the Truth, it is as though God were judging us. But the propitiation has been made; the false idea has been overcome; the Truth has been revealed; the eternal, changeless Oneness of God and man has been completely demonstrated. "Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." The "work of God" is that we accept and believe it.

What does that Atonement mean to you and to me? It means just as much as any one of us will permit it to mean. It means eternal life - here and now - if we accept it. It is "the power of God" to deliver all who believe. And that means deliverance from bondage to materiality with its accompanying disillusionment and death. It is peace with God. It is conscious oneness with Him. It means joy. It is the Good News.

"From him to whom much is given much shall be required." Much has been given to every one of us who has been instructed in Truth, and much will be required of us. But that "much" is mostly that we remember what has been done for us, that we remain humble. The honest acknowledgment of the Atonement gives us this humility, and this humility is majesty. With this humility, our lives offer us the opportunity to grow in awareness of the Glory that surrounds us and fills us, which Jesus Christ revealed to us, "to whom be glory for ever and ever."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

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SPIRITICITY, April 1956

Easter Symbology

By Alden Truesdell

To children, Easter means colored eggs and fuzzy rabbits, or possibly day-old chicks. To the ladies, Easter means new hats and dresses. To the religious, Easter is represented by sunrise services. Easter includes all these which represent in one way or another newness of life.

No one has seen God at any time, but all mankind has a vital interest in how God works. Thus certain symbols are used to show the Working Power of God.

Should we care to do so, we might develop our own symbology by giving definite meaning to the above-mentioned eggs, rabbits, hats, and dresses. And, of course, the sunrise service, which is self-explanatory. The new, clean day, so promising of fulfilled aspiration. The brilliance and freshness of the dawn, when it is easy to know that "at morn each soul is born anew." The exaltation of remembering the joyous and transcendent events of the first Easter Morning.

The child admiring his basket of eggs (the colorful symbols of eternal life), may serve to remind us of Jesus' words: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom."

The rabbits may represent to us the proliferation of spiritual realizations; the baby chicks may remind us of the new life that is ours every instant. The Easter bonnet can be worn to indicate the new state of mind, identified with limitless life. As it is the customs for men to take off their hats to honor ladies, so it seems right for ladies to put on hats to honor the God of glory.

The new dress may be representative of the garment of righteousness, "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isaiah sings, "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." And John tells us: "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments."

Actually, everything can be used to symbolize the Easter message; for all life, growth, and achievement are but a reflection of the Activity of God; and as such, all have been immeasurably stimulated by the ministry of Jesus Christ, whose steadfast integrity enabled Him to become Himself a symbol of spiritual identity.

Accepting the Easter revelation, man is filled with a life and a strength formerly unexperienced. He no longer thinks of retiring from active work at a certain age, but sees himself entering into his real Life-work at a certain stage of his ongoing. Letting the old, personal, selfish, limited concepts be crucified, he finds himself resurrected into the impersonal, universal, and eternal Truth. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

SPIRITICITY, April 1956

Analyze God

By Nell Truesdell

"Analyze God," the practitioner urged his caller on long-distance telephone. "Instead of analyzing your husband and your troubles, analyze God!"

An analysis of God and praise of God are similar, in a general way. Whenever we attempt to break God up into pieces we are forced to use descriptives that exalt Him. As we continue to think about Him we are stimulated in such a way that our minds are elated and our feelings are calmed.

We experience an ecstatic delight that carries us into another sphere of existence. We are changed for the better right where we are.

We cannot think seriously about God and remain in a downcast and dejected state of mind. It is utterly impossible for us to lift our attention God-ward and, at the same time, exist uninterruptedly in a negative condition. God is never touched by our negative reports of the circumstances, the things, and the people who appear to be annoying us. He is responsive only to our praise of Him. To praise Him we must give our full attention to Him. To make a conscious contact with God, we always have to turn away from what is bothering us and give Him our undivided attention. This is the only way to get the full benefit of His ministrations, which are always available.

Perhaps one of the most difficult points for us to understand is that it is not the circumstances, the things, or the people around us that affect us one way or another. Our own personal reactions to them cause our discomfort, our unhappiness, our distress. When we mistakenly try to deal with the apparent source of our trials we stimulate only our own personal reactions, and the resulting waves of emotional disturbance produce acute suffering throughout our consciousness: mental, physical, psychic; and even spread into our social and material environments to throw them into chaos. Too, these negative reactions in us act as an impenetrable barrier to any help that may be at hand - the comfort of a friend, the counsel of a teacher, or the ministrations of God Himself. No assistance, human or divine, can crash through our own emotional rampart that bars any effective cooperation near at hand.

The harassed person unwittingly analyzes every detail of the disturbance that plagues him. He is so transfixed by his grip on it that he does not want to turn away from his problem. However, the turning away is the first movement in the healing of the so-called problem. When the practitioner advised his caller to analyze God, he was being honest and faithful to his calling. Help can come from no source other God.

We shall, in this article, review a few points that should be considered by anybody who wants to rise above any trials that beset him and thus free himself from their apparent grip. Actually, the trials are not holding the victim; he formulated the trials and is holding fast to them.

Whenever we give our attention to God, the first thing we realize is that he is present with us. Regardless of where we are or what is happening to us, when we remember God, there He is, instantly available. Though we had lost sight of Him when we were consumed with anxiety, the moment that we turn to Him, He is immediately present. God always responds when we give Him our attention. He is Omnipresence, the One Real Presence; and our undivided attention to Him erases or blots out all appearance of what ever is unlike the Divine.

Whenever we face God we change. We begin to recall how good He has been to us through the years. We would not be alive were it not for His abundant Life. He shares His Life with us; we are lived by His Life.

Since our life is the Life of God then that Life must have the proper clothing. Good health is the only fit garment for God's Livingness. Consequently, our bodies must be well, sturdy, beautiful. When we know that God's Life is our life, we are careful what we believe; for our beliefs show on our bodies.

Peace envelops us when we commit ourselves to God. In the peaceful attitude our strength is renewed: not only physical strength, but strength of affairs and of inter-relationships with the people with whom we live.

Peace is power. The only Real Power there is, is the Power of Love. God is Love. When we love Him we are filled with newness of life, quickened strength; we know a harmony of affairs. The Apostle John reminds us that God loved us first; therefore we ought to love Him in return, for that is the way we can show our gratitude to Him.

When we are grateful to God, we delight ourselves in Him. Joy wells up in us. We may burst into song. And Joy is the carrier of the Life-Principle. Our blood is refreshed and courses through our bodies to carry to all cells the message of gladness. We tingle and are happified.

Joy stimulates our mental apparatus so that we are aware of an accelerated Intelligence. We are wiser; we are kinder to others; we take thought for the other fellow. We bless him and want him to be prospered, healed, uplifted. Miraculously, what we give out comes back to us and increase; and we are happier, more successful, more at ease.

Thus, one thought leads to another. Thou we may expand our analysis of God infinitely, it takes but a few earnest thoughts about Him to change us for the better. And as we change inwardly it appears that the people around us change for the better, and our circumstances reflect a new prosperity and freedom. Our steadfast attention toward God is the secret of a continued, steady hold on our good.

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Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

APRIL 1956

2. ATTEND upon the Lord without distraction.
3. BELIEVE on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ.
4. We are CHILDREN of God.
5. DO all things without murmurings and DISPUTINGS.
6. Seek that ye may EXCEL.
7. Wisdom is FULL of mercy and good FRUITS.
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9. Thy GENTLENESS hath made me GREAT.
10. Thy right HAND HATH HOLDEN me up.
11. IN the IMAGE of God made He man.
12. Being JUSTIFIED by His Grace, we should be made heirs.
13. He that KEEPETH his mouth KEEPETH his life.
14. LAUNCH out into the deep.
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16. MY MOUTH shall speak of wisdom.
17. Peace to him that is NEAR.
18. We are OF God.
19. Wisdom is without PARTIALITY.
20. Make him of QUICK understanding.
21. Give thanks at the REMEMBRANCE of His Holiness.
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23. Thou hast given me the SHIELD of Thy SALVATION.
24. I will TRUST, and not be afraid.
25. UNITE my heart to fear Thy Name.
26. See VISIONS of peace.
27. WORSHIP in Spirit and in Truth.
28. Take My YOKE upon YOU, and learn of Me.
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30. The Lord shall bless thee out of ZION (peace).

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

SPIRITICITY is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle,
As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.