
IMAGES OF THE ATONEMENT – RECONCILIATION

Introduction

in that country

The atrocities of the Rwanda genocide and the works towards reconciliation give us a striking picture of reconciliation as we consider this image of the atonement.

In pre-colonial times, the people of what is now known as Rwanda lived amicably and with relatively good relations. However, in modern times, ^{*the story is much different*} from April to July 1994, members of the Hutu ethnic majority in ^{*this*} ~~the~~ east-central African nation of Rwanda murdered as many as 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi minority.

Begun by extreme Hutu nationalists in the capital of Kigali, the genocide spread throughout the country with staggering speed and brutality, as ordinary citizens were incited by local officials and the Hutu Power government to take up arms against their neighbors. By the time the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front gained control of the country through a military offensive in early July, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were dead and many more displaced from their homes.

NYT – Portraits of Reconciliation

~~Last month,~~ ^{*T*} the photographer Pieter Hugo went to southern Rwanda, two decades after nearly a million people were killed during the country's genocide, and captured a series of unlikely, almost unthinkable tableaux. In one, a woman rests her hand on the shoulder of the man who killed her father and brothers. In another, a woman poses with a casually reclining man who looted her property and whose father helped murder her husband and children. In many of these photos, there is little evident warmth between the pairs, and yet there they are, together. In each, the perpetrator is a Hutu who was granted pardon by the Tutsi survivor of his crime.

March 4, 2018 – 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

The people who agreed to be photographed are part of a continuing national effort toward reconciliation and ^{they} worked closely with AMI, a nonprofit organization. In AMI's program, small groups of Hutus and Tutsis are counseled over many months, culminating in the perpetrator's formal request for forgiveness.

KARENZI: "My conscience was not quiet, and when I would see her I was very ashamed. After being trained about unity and reconciliation, I went to her house and asked for forgiveness. Then I shook her hand. So far, we are on good terms."

NYIRAMANA: "He killed my father and three brothers. He did these killings with other people, but he came alone to me and asked for pardon. He and a group of other offenders who had been in prison helped me build a house with a covered roof. I was afraid of him — now I have granted him pardon, things have become normal, and in my mind I feel clear."

MUDAHERANWA: "I burned her house. I attacked her in order to kill her and her children, but God protected them, and they escaped. When I was released from jail, if I saw her, I would run and hide. Then AMI started to provide us with trainings. I decided to ask her for forgiveness. To have good relationships with the person to whom you did evil deeds — we thank God."

MUKANYANDWI: "I used to hate him. When he came to my house and knelt down before me and asked for forgiveness, I was moved by his sincerity. Now, if I cry for help, he comes to rescue me. When I face any issue, I call him."

With that startling anecdote of reconciliation on our mind, let's consider this image of the atonement.

Reconciliation: What Is It?

Definition: the re-establishment of friendly relations

(*"God's Words"*)

relational image
legal/judicial - justification
financial - redemption
religious - propitiation
familial - adoption

J. I. Packer: "To reconcile means to bring together again persons who had previously fallen out; to replace alienation, hostility and opposition by a new relationship of favour, goodwill and peace; and so to transform the attitude of the persons reconciled towards each other and to set their subsequent mutual dealings on a wholly new footing.

Theological Definition: God's restoration of a harmonious relationship with sinful humanity through Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 ESV

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God Is the Author

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself”

God is the author of reconciliation; God is the initiator of reconciliation.

Most of the verbs have God as the subject, this is God’s doing, God’s work

- Reconciliation is from God
- God through Christ reconciled us
- God gave us the ministry of reconciliation
- God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself
- God was not counting their trespasses against them
- God was entrusting them with the message of reconciliation
- God was making his appeal through them
- God made Christ to be sin

2 Corinthians 5:18 CEV God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others.

The initiative is God’s - *this is incredible*

Rwandan reconciliation – the perpetrator initiated reconciliation

With God, we see that it is the injured party that initiates *and apart from God's work it would never happen*

John 3:16 ESV For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 4:34 ESV Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

God is never the object of reconciliation – God reconciles, we are (passive) reconciled

However, both parties need to be reconciled

- God is wrathful, he must be satisfied in regards to our sin
- We are hostile towards God
 - **Romans 5:6-11 ESV** ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if **while we were enemies** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
 - **Colossians 1:21-22 ESV** ²¹ And you, who once were **alienated and hostile in mind**, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,
- But I didn't feel like this!
 - . children of wrath.
 - . sons of disobedience
 - . enemies of God

Summary: Despite being the one sinned against, despite being the one who stood in the right, in regards to the hostility and alienation between the Creator and the creatures, God initiated reconciliation and is the author of the reconciliation.

Are we reconciliation initiators?

- ① are we the first to try and reconcile
- ② are we first even if we are the ones wronged

Christ Is the Agent

*All this is from God, who **through Christ** reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, **in Christ** God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation*

Christ's work on the cross was a work of reconciliation

The tense of the verbs is important: through Christ reconciled, in Christ God was reconciling

PAST TENSE ⇒ OUR RECONCILIATION IS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED

- **James Denney:** The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached....Reconciliation...is not something which is being done; it is something which is done. No doubt there is a work of Christ which is in process, but it has as its basis a finished work of Christ. It is in virtue of something already consummated on his cross that Christ is able to make the appeal to us which he does, and to win the response in which we receive the reconciliation.

How did God accomplish our reconciliation through Christ?

¹⁹ *not counting their trespasses against them, ...* ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Our sins were not counted against us

- God mercifully withheld judgment—death
- But God must be satisfied
- For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin – Jesus bore our sins, he took our sins and gave us his righteousness
- Imputation – our sins were reckoned to Christ, Christ’s righteousness was reckoned to us

Great exchange: Great trades

*Almighty - 12 den to our sake
with us
in the heart*

- **Second century – Epistle to Diogenetus:** ‘O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single Righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors.’
- **John Bunyan:** One day, as I was passing in the field, this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ, at God’s right hand; there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away. Now I went home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. (*Grace Abounding*, paragraphs 229-32, pp. 129-31)

*his sins for
Christ's righteousness*

This is the work God worked through Christ: re-establishing friendly relations with us by the removal of our sins and crediting of Christ’s righteousness to us.

COMMUNION

We Are the Ambassadors

entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us

Grace:

- the injured party initiates reconciliation, accomplishes reconciliation through suffering, employs the guilt who have received reconciliation as heralds of this sweet exchange
- Former enemies are to become friendly emissaries

1. You are ambassadors!

- Mission Peru
- Moms, Dads, kids,

2. Be reconciled