

"*Chorus:*

Gods of the younger generation, you have
 ridden down the laws of the elder time,
 torn them out of my hands. I, disinherited,
 suffering, heavy with anger shall let loose
 on the land the vindictive poison dripping
 deadly out of my heart upon the ground; this
 from itself shall breed cancer, the leafless,
 the barren to strike, for the right, their
 low lands and drag its smear of mortal
 infection on the ground."

-THE EUMENIDES
 (Aeschylus 1953:163)

20. THE ANGER CANKER

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INTRODUCTION:

Among the behavioral characteristics that will loom large in the judgment process^[1] is anger. In fact, within this model, one notes that it is one of the most significant characteristics that will be evaluated, although it receives less than average attention in SMD^[2]. The latter is probably due to the difference in emphasis in that model of the POS, as opposed to the present one, which does not include a clear description of the impact of behavior on our spirit matter. The reason it is so important in judgments is that the presence or absence of anger illuminates something significant about our souls. Curiously enough, there is no 'ten commandment' forbidding such a display. Rather, the New Testament exhortation to 'love one another'^[3] is the affirmation of the opposite behavior, anger thereby being implicitly proscribed^[4]. We are exhorted to be long-suffering, gentle, meek, patient, etc.

CURIOUS CONTRADICTION:

¹ We over-simplify things here by referring to "the judgement", and the reader probably automatically refers to the Great And Final Judgement. However, we believe that anger behaviors are manifested by us all in all three testing phases, so as the secondary judgements are made within or between phases, anger will also be one of the cardinal measures evaluated each time.

² Within Buddhism, anger stands as the 'paramount' sin:

"The body is poisoned by the secretion of passions' poisons, and vitality or Prana is lessened and injured. The mind under the influence of anger (According to Indian notions, anger is the worst of sins.), lust, malice, and other passions, is first distracted, and then, on the principle what a man thinks that he 'becomes,' is centered on, and in permanently molded into and becomes, the expression of Adharma (unrighteousness) itself. (1953:188)

So anger, to a Buddhist, is the worst sin one can commit. And the reason for this is that a person "becomes" Adharma (unrighteous). (etymologists take note of the "a-" in 'adharma'. It is the cognate of the alpha-privative (not to be confused with the aorist augment "a-") of Greek, a daughter of Sanskrit from whence came this affix.) "As a man thinketh, so he doeth." That is the fundamental concept of this model as well.

Also note the comparable Christian doctrine in this quote: as a man thinketh, so he becomes/is.

³ It is nothing short of astonishing how many parallels there are between the present conception of the POS and Buddhism. In the present case, we quote from Avalon/Woodroffe regarding what is the ultimate responsibility of an individual:

"Dharma is thus the law governing the universal evolution, or the path of outgoing (Pravritti), and the involution, or the path of return (Nivritti). And only those can attain the liberation to which the latter path leads who by adherence to Dharma co-operate in the carrying out of the universal scheme. For this reason it is finely said, 'Doing good to others is the Supreme Duty' (Paropakaro hi paramo dharmah)." (1953:187. Originally 1918)

Does that sound like John 13:35:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."?

As noted above, no other qualification is required to be His disciple. Only love. That is why the entire human race can be His disciples, even though they don't know Him. Baptism and tithing are not required, sacraments are unnecessary and even priesthood isn't needed. Just "Doing good to others" is required. Buddha and Christ taught the same thing, then.

⁴ The most revealing scripture we know of in the Christian canon regarding the effect of anger is Christ's stricture in Matthew 5:

23. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment:..."

No further details are offered, but (unjustified?!) anger clearly is dangerous for a soul.

There is a peculiar contradiction in Christian doctrine that most Christians have probably noticed at some time in their lives. God describes Himself as a jealous God, as a God who gets angry and punishes us for our badness.^[5] The scriptures are, in fact, full of this sort of behavior.

Why is it that He is allowed to exhibit a behavior that is proscribed for us?

We blindly accept the dogma that, "He is perfect and knows what He does," etc. Since He is who He is, it's OK, so goes the tired rationalization or explanation^[6].

But: would we tolerate that sort of double standard in Him in regards to other behaviors? For example, would we be able to rationalize a double standard for Him in regards to honesty? Could we tolerate dishonesty in Him? We doubt it, so why is this behavior invested with a double standard? We don't know. The only guess we can make is a long shot.

There are several possible reasons for the reservation of the right for Him to be angry. It seems to be a short-hand notation, that could stand for several things. One reason for this shorthand would be that we wouldn't understand the deeper reasons if they were given^[7]. Another reason could be that He doesn't want us to understand any more about how things work than this. If either of these reasons is possible, the right reserved to Him would be noted in the canon because He doesn't want us to be surprised if we are punished.

However, we believe here that punishment is NOT something that He personally bestows on us. He simply administers an eternal legal code with its attendant, pre-defined penalties. The laws are set up and connected to blessings and punishments. When we obey, we earn the blessing, and when we disobey, we earn punishments.

⁵ The New Testament, Old Testament, D & C and Book of Mormon make a great deal out of this behavior of the Father, always in a context that makes us feel bad and tiny and worthless. And unfortunately, we respond in a predictable manner and then perceive Him as a distant, aloof, uncaring individual. That is patently false. Noone can be more compassionate, understanding or caring than He. The NT message still hasn't gotten through the interference of the OT Jealous God.

⁶ To us, that sounds like the well-intentioned rationalization offered by the injured party who is involved in a co-dependant relationship. Allowing Him to be mean to us, while agreeing that we are weak and have poor impulse control when WE are angry, is to perpetuate an unhealthy relationship and understanding of Him.

Any reader who has put up this long with this navel-contemplating book is obviously interested in the mechanics of his/her own life, so probably had pondered his/her own codependence with parents, spouses, siblings, children and others. So the offer of insightful reading is probably needless. Nonetheless, we would suggest that anyone who hasn't delved into this aspect of all of us, which we start learning the first hour of our mortal lives, would do well to dip into some of the work of Melody Beattie, as in CODEPENDENT NO MORE: HOW TO STOP CONTROLLING OTHERS AND START CARING FOR YOURSELF. She is only one of many authors who have dealt with this topic, but she is one of the best known, and offers cogent explanations and suggestions for self-help.

The point of this note is to suggest that the Jews, who are an aggressively co-dependant lot in my personal experience (which is not minimal) cast God in the image of their perception of their own mortal fathers. Then passed that image on to us. And we willingly accept it because that is how we each view our own fathers, and respond to them. And we feel guilty for being angry at them, but accept their anger at us naughty, naughty children.

This is another obvious over-simplification. But it is to make a point.

⁷ However, we are not asserting that the Anger Doctrine is the only doctrine that is skimmed on in the canon. No Christian doctrines receive much of an exegesis in the canon, this simply being one of the many.

But both blessing and punishment derive directly from the involved law of heaven that is manipulated by the behavior in question, without the need for Him to become involved. True, He set things up for this world, so in a real, though generic sense, He is ultimately responsible, so the dictum may appear to be true^[8]. But these punishments, in our estimation, don't necessarily entail any real anger, at least not as mortals comprehend it, on His part.

CALVIN AND ISRAEL:

As we age, we are less and less able to conceive of an angry God. That is an Old Testament, deeply Jewish and Calvinistic sort of God that we are not sure we can, or wish to, love. That is too much of an imperfect, mortal model or description, like that exhibited by us mortal parents, for comfort. Mortals have created God in their image when they attribute jealousy and anger to Him.

We seriously doubt that God is mean to us, that He gets upset in the conditional, capricious way we mortals do at things our children, friends and associates do^[9]. Punishments, within this model, derive directly from the operation of the laws of heaven. God only feels love and admiration for us when we succeed, or sorrow, compassion and sympathy if we fail. He doesn't wish us to hurt and He doesn't hurt us in anger. But He cannot deny justice its due, so if that makes Him an angry God, then I suppose He is. But He isn't.

We know. There are ample scriptures about His anger, e.g. Christ cleared the Temple in "anger" twice. But we still wonder whether most of those stories and accounts aren't more figurative than literal, sort of like the "6-day" creation story^[10].

⁸ This is a strong claim. It appears to remove Him from a position of real control. So we note that we believe He does have control over this universe through high-level manipulation of the priesthood. This claim merely reflects our belief that the laws of heaven and the principles of righteousness, which pre-dated Him, are the things that bestow blessings or, in this case, punishments on us. His control is broad, but it is constrained by the laws of righteousness or laws of heaven.

⁹ In LIFE AFTER LIFE, those who reviewed their lived through the agency the White Being of their lives, specifically commented that when the two of them encountered unsavory parts of their lives, they felt no condemnation or anger, only compassion and understanding. That is how we conceive of Christ and the Father. They only love us and never are angry.

True. There are many OT scriptures, as well as some NT ones, that speak of anger and recrimination and punishment, etc. If that is the way it really is, then I am in the wrong camp. I refuse to believe it because it doesn't make sense. Mortals would not countenance disobedience by their supreme court judges, and we don't believe that God is above obedience to the same laws we are.

The only way we can account for these expressions of negative things is to interpret them to be descriptions of how we codependent people that we are, interpret the consequences of less-than-wise choice to be those negative things. But that doesn't mean that the Lord intends us to feel that way. We choose to feel that way out of our guilt, codependence, etc.

¹⁰ Clearing the temple was done in anger, so we really can't take away that emotion and behavior. The only other occasion we recall where the Christ personally exhibited anger involves the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees. But note, we believe the anger was at the hypocrisy, not the people. In this we may be mistaken. But we maintain that distinction to support our claim that He doesn't display punishing anger at us.

In this we are creating a narrowly defined exception to that claim. The exception was anger at hypocrisy, the wilful, intentional sanctimony of a person professing a faith that was contradicted by his life, particularly a profession of deep religiosity which was contradicted by the behaviors. The only anger display we will accommodate in this model is not based on general types of sins, if we can so speak of them. Punishments for these general sins are accounted for by the powers of heaven and principles of righteousness which operate mechanically. Justice is the prime-mover behind the application of punishments. Hypocrisy is

THE JAPANESE SAW:

Let's look at the operation of anger within the context of this model. Let's assume that it is 'bad', and then look at why it is by using an example. Take a dad who goes into his workshop to find his fine \$75.00 Japanese saw that he purchased for a particular type of quality woodworking. Let's have him hunt around for a while, and finally discover the saw buried under something. There is glue on the teeth which were also dinged on nails, and are now covered with rust from having been left out in a lawn sprinkler. Is dad going to be angry? And if he's angry, is he possibly going to ream the 8 year old son who really was responsible for the glue, dullness and rust?

The answer is unfortunately obvious for most mortal dads. They will be angry. Then: will the dad ream the kid? Probably 95% of the dads will ream the kid. There are a few benevolent souls, but most of us are going to get a dig in someday, sometime because we kid ourselves by saying, "He needs to learn!", or, "He should be punished for his mistake", etc. So, yes, dad missed his cue in the backyard and couldn't wait to grab the kid and lambast him for his foolishness.

Now what are the consequences of that anger? Twofold, really. The kid is scarred, and, more importantly within this model, the dad is scarred! Both suffer from this exchange where an unbridled tongue is exercised. The kid can, and will -we all do- get over it since he will mature into an adult with his own agency who can make choices about how he is going to organize his own life^[11]. He will be able, hopefully, to discard the scar.

But what about dad who did the deed? What happened to him when he got angry? Physically and emotionally he shows predictable changes. His blood pressure went up in response to a complex biochemical response to the mental signals of anger. His face flushed, he breathed faster, he walked faster and his strength increased. These were all temporary biological responses that vanish as the mental state simmers down and the circulating biochemicals that were initially secreted are metabolized.

But what about his mental state? Actually, it turns out that we can't answer this question without splitting it into TWO questions:

(a) what about his mortal mind^[12], and

not a garden variety sin, and it, alone, earned the unremitting, scathing anger of the Christ. It is not a general type sin.

¹¹ The Lord set up the mortal test this way. We learn dysfunctional behaviors from the first hour of life through adolescence, and then spend the rest of our lives trying to un-learn them.

¹² We recognize that the complex organ bottled up inside of our cranium has its own type of capabilities. So there is a mortal brain "program" independent of -but intimately conjoined with- the spirit "mind". See 24. BRAIN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY for details about this matter.

(b) what about his spirit mind?

That distinction must be made to lead to the likely answers that are significant here.

MORTAL MIND VERSUS SPIRIT MIND:

So take the mortal mind. The answer to the question, what is the impact on the mortal mind, depends on how we conceive of the mortal mind. If we perceive it as having a reality independent of the spirit, we have one situation, but if we perceive of the mortal mind as basically a byproduct of the merging of a three-dimensional biochemical transducer with the spirit, we have another situation. We expect it is obvious that in this model we generally support the latter explanation. We do not believe that there is a mortal mind that is truly independent of the spirit. What resides as the software of the brain is a set of organic algorithms which interface the mortal and spirit together. But the conscious mind we refer to here is actually a characteristic of the spirit itself. So the situation we choose to address is: what is the impact of anger on the spirit?

The impact of anger on the spirit is simple to describe in a general sense. When the spirit itself becomes angry, and remember that in this model it is the spirit that is exercising agency and choosing to display anger, the spirit matter is altered. In some manner, anger displays will alter the matter of the spirit itself. We noted the outward physical manifestations of this sort of process above. We claim that there are analogous manifestations in the matter of the spirit^[13]. An individual who allows himself to continuously display anger, does so with increasing ease. There is minimal inhibition of that behavior, and we conclude that this is because the spirit matter has been altered.^[14] The obvious eternal consequence of this is that after we go to the other side(s), anger will be a normal, natural behavior for us over there. We will have conditioned ourselves to automatically react that way to stressors. This is a real problem.

Stop a minute and look at the business of "getting" angry. English, at least, is a marvelous language to use when discussing how we get involved in anger displays. English provides us with phrases like, "You make me angry!", "That makes me so mad!", "You

¹³ As in all previous chapters, we are unable to estimate what the specific changes in spirit matter for obvious reason, so we can't here either. However, the change are real and measurable.

¹⁴ I have watched my own children express anger. And it seems evident that they have had to LEARN how to be angry. One of them only began to regularly express anger in the 6th grade. Up to that age, she was the most pacific of the lot, and even when provoked, did not display anger. Her feelings were hurt and she withdrew into herself, but she did not lash out at the offender until she saw such displays often enough and then decided that she, too, could and should act that way. But she didn't come that way. She had to LEARN anger, and that is how we mortals are. We learn and then choose to express anger.

make me feel bad!", etc. These phrases enable us to shift the responsibility for our anger to the person or thing or situation we expressed anger at. We are able to manipulate words and ideas to delude ourselves into thinking that we had no choice, that we were in fact FORCED to be angry. This way, we are not responsible for what we do. Our behavior was 'caused' by the external stimuli that we really don't have control over. We are justified, then, in our anger displays.

Then we commit the greatest self-deception of all, by saying "That's just the way I am!" "We can't help it if we get angry when she does that!" Wonderful psychological manipulation of self and of others who are too codependant to understand what's really happening. The reality is that anger is a choice we make. We are in control of our selves at all times, at least at a high level, recognizing that habits become so entrained that they do appear to convert us into automatons. True, we don't meditate on the decision to show anger, but that is only the consequence of having already conditioned ourselves into allowing -even willfully using- anger displays. Displays of anger are the result of a decision we make, an exercise of our free agency, so there is some sort of impact on the spirit itself.

METATHEORY CONDITION:

Anger displays are behaviors that are probably subject to metatheoretical conditions. Anger is proscribed because of its pervasive, negative impact on our spirits. In a manner analogous to the discussion of honesty in chapter 4. THEORY AND METATHEORY, anger is not a simple commandment like, "Pay tithing." Anger displays -or lack of such- are a pervasive aspect of our lives. This means, then, that anger has a remarkably profound impact on the development and evolution of our spirit, which in turn, profoundly impacts our future position.

As noted above, this anger behavior is the one which perplexes me the most within the Christian dogma. Christianity inherited from Judaism this notion of a mean, angry, vindictive Father. But we personally do not believe that He is angry at us. So, you ask, how do we fit into this model all of the scriptures that do describe His jealousy and anger, etc.

Our answer is this: those prophets either exaggerated or miscomprehended what God meant when He said that death, destruction and punishment follow sin. He did tell us those things, because they are true, and we do need to know about them. But in the process of getting the message communicated to mortals, prophets may have confused the message with the Man. They may have interpreted those warnings to be expressions of the anger of God. Indeed, they even have Him saying the He is an angry or jealous God. But we believe that those warnings were no more than descriptions of what will happen to us if we are bad, which things will as a result of the application of the impersonal, indifferent

laws of heaven and laws of badness, not the result of the Father angrily spanking us.

CONCLUSION:

As noted above, we base this belief on the descriptions of the love in the near-death literature, of God or Christ or whoever the being is that is encountered. People who encountered the Being of Light describe him as expressing a type of love that we cannot comprehend and that cannot be described. They say that during His conversations with them, they felt no censure or criticism. Only an intense love. That is what we believe things are like.

We also base this belief on our personal experience as a parent of a child who nearly destroyed herself, and us in the bargain, but for whom we only feel love and affection. If we mortal parents are capable of over-looking severe disorder in our off-spring and can love them, in spite of it, then certainly the Father is even more understanding and compassionate than we can ever be in mortality. Christ allegedly experienced everything that mortals can experience -a rather stunning assertion, given the incredibly broad range of experiences here^[15]- in order that he could understand and be compassionate or some such thing. If He did in fact experience things for such reasons, then His capacity for loving us in spite of our imperfections exceeds that of mere mortals.

Note the supremely beautiful story of Christ interacting with the Nephites in III Nephi 17. In that lovely story^[16], He refers to the disbelief of the Jews, but does He express anger or threats? No. He expresses grief and even weeps about it. He weeps. What an extraordinary thing for a Savior. Weeping at the wickedness of the Jews. Later in this story, He calls the children to Himself and blesses them individually, and then prays on the behalf of the multitude there. Those who heard Him testify that mortal words cannot express the marvelous things He expressed on their behalf. That is how we think God works. He will only love us and have compassion and empathy for us.

The retribution for sins is exacted by the laws of heaven by

¹⁵ Do we really believe by that assertion that even depraved, base acts are included in this experience? Alcoholism, drug dependence, suicidality, perversions, etc. The doctrine seems to imply that, but we have a bit of trouble accepting it literally.

We also question whether or not this assertion includes the experiences which are experienced only by female bodies. How can a male truly experience those things? If He could, then there are curious implications about gender differences -or lack of gender distinctions in other phases - that we will not delve into at this point. (see 21. MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM...) We need not enumerate them, but they exist, and appear to be included in this doctrine, if we take it as a literal, all-inclusive statement. Not a peep in the canon about this, but pushing general doctrines to their logical extremes raises these curious dimensions.

¹⁶ In my book, this chapter wins hands down as the most moving, revealing insight, in the entire Christian Canon, into the character of the Christ. No wonder the Nephites were well-behaved for 200 years after His visit. The powerful influence of this visit was handed down from generation to generation, conveying a truth that was felt long after His visit.

which He, too, is limited^[17]. The demands of justice^[18] and the priesthoods will exact any penalty which we earned through our actions, if the penalty isn't neutralized through the atonement and repentance. Punishments are primarily the consequences of the mechanical application to our spirits of the penalties for violations of the laws of heaven. God doesn't need to do anything to us. In the judgment, His only emotions toward us will be sympathy and empathy, of a type and depth that we cannot comprehend.

¹⁷ This statement probably grates on SMD nerves which don't tolerate a God who is constrained in any way. But He must be constrained by the demands of justice and the priesthood, even when taking the atonement into account. My belief is that if He could, He WOULD elevate us all to the celestial kingdom. But He is limited in what He can do so cannot do that. This is just another of those paradoxes: perfection in obedience produces total freedom, yet that total freedom is nonetheless constrained. The difference is that the perfected individual's behavior will not stray outside the bounds of acceptability, so within the boundaries he has selected for himself, he has total freedom.

¹⁸ What is this Justice? Is it part of the Priesthood, or an entity separate from it? Is it personified in some body, or is it an influence like a magnetic field which will impinge upon imperfect spirit matter, forcing changes, sort of like the way the magnetic field of a Magnetic Resonance Imaging unit will erase the data on credit cards, pull old metal slivers out of the eyes of welders, pull pacemakers out of chests, etc. The field is there and acts impersonally on whatever substance responds to it. Is that what Justice is? What ever it is, we do not here believe that it is the Father who punishes us. Justice does that.