

THE WORD

DEEMBER, 1908.

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

Why is it sometimes said that Jesus was one of the saviours of mankind and that the peoples of antiquity had also their saviours, instead of saying he was The Saviour of the world, as is held by all Christendom?

The statement is due to several causes. Some make the statement because they have heard it made by others; some, who are acquainted with the history of the ancients, because the history of ancient peoples records the fact that they have had many saviours. The saviours of different peoples differ according to the needs of the people to whom they come, and the particular thing from which they are to be saved. Thus one saviour appeared to deliver the people from a pestilence, or famine, or from the invasions of an enemy or wild beast. Another saviour appeared to free the people to whom he came from savagery to teach them languages, the arts and sciences necessary to civilization, or to enlighten their minds and understanding. Anyone who has read somewhat of the religious systems of the world will plainly see that saviours appeared centuries or thousands of years before the date when Jesus is said to have been born.

If Jesus is said to be the saviour of the world by all Christendom, such declaration would be a manifesto of the ignorance and arrogance of all Christendom, but fortunately for Christendom this is not so. In late years especially, the western world has become and is becoming better acquainted with the histories and the scriptures of other peoples, and a more friendly feeling and good fellowship is being shown to those of other races and their faiths. The western world has learned to value the stores of wisdom contained within the literary treasures of ancient peoples. The old spirit of a few people being elected by God or self elected to be saved from the countless numbers of the past has disappeared and in its place is coming a recognition of justice and the rights of all.

Can you tell us if there are any people who celebrate the birth of their saviours on or around the twenty-fifth day of December (at the time that the sun is said to enter the sign Capricorn?)

The twentieth day of December was a time of great rejoicing in Egypt, and a festival was held in honor of the birthday of Horus. Among the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the sacred books of China, the festival of other old religions is closely followed. During the last week in December, at the time of the winter solstice, the shops and the courts are closed. Religious solemnities are then celebrated and are called the festivals of Gratitude to Tie Tien. The Persian Mithras was called the mediator or saviour. They celebrated his birthday on the twenty-fifth of December amid great rejoicings. It was recognized that at that time the sun stands still and then begins to return northward after his long sojourn in the south, and it is said that forty days were set apart for thanksgiving and sacrifice. The Romans celebrated the twenty-fifth of December with a great festival in honor of Bacchus, as it was at that time that the sun began his return from the winter solstice. In later times, when many Persian ceremonies were introduced into Rome, the same day was solemnized as a festival in honor of Mithras, the spirit of the sun. The Hindus have six successive festivals. On the twenty-fifth of December people decorate their houses with garlands and gilt paper and universally make presents to friends and relatives. So it will be seen that at this date the peoples of antiquity as well worshipped and rejoiced. That it was at the time of the winter solstice cannot be mere accidents or coincidents. It is far more reasonable to suppose that, within all the apparent coincidences of the past, there is an underlying truth of deep mystic significance.

It is said by some that the birth of Christ is a spiritual birth. If this is so, why is it that Christmas is celebrated for the physical body by the eating and drinking, in a material way, which is the very opposite of our conceptions of spirituality?

The reason for this dates back to the Christians of the early centuries. In their efforts to square their doctrines with the beliefs of the pagans and heathen, they incorporated the festivals of them into their own calendar. This answered a double purpose: it satisfied the customs of those people and led them to suppose that the time should be sacred to the new faith. But, in adopting the feasts and festivals, the spirit which prompted these was lost and only the most brutish symbols preserved from among the men of the north, the Druids and the Romans. Wild orgies were indulged in and full license was permitted; gluttony and drunkenness prevailed during that

time. With the early people, the cause of their joy was due to their recognition of the Sun's having passed the lowest point in his apparent course and from the twenty-fifth of December began his journey, which would cause the return of spring and would save them from the cold and desolation of winter. Nearly all of our observances at the season of Christmas have their origin with the ancients.

In 'Moments with Friends,' of Vol. 4, page 189 [p. 1 in the December 1906 Moments with Friends PDF], it is said Christmas means 'The birth of the invisible sun of light, the Christ Principle,' which, as it continues, 'Should be born within man.' If this is so, does it follow that the physical birth of Jesus was also on the twenty-fifth of December?

No, it does not so follow. In fact it is stated in "Moments with Friends" above referred to that Jesus is not the physical body. That it is a distinct body from the physical—though it is born through and from the physical. The manner of this birth is there set forth and a distinction is there made between Jesus and the Christ. Jesus is a body which insures immortality. In fact, immortality is not attained by any individual until Jesus or the immortal body is born for him. It is this immortal body, Jesus, or by what ever name it was known to the ancients, which is the savior of man and not until its birth was he saved from death. The same law holds good today as it did then. One who dies has not become immortal, else he could not die. But one who has become immortal cannot die, else he is not immortal. Man must therefore attain immortality before death, or else reincarnate and continue to reincarnate, until he is saved from death by his immortal body Jesus. But Christ is not a body, as is Jesus. To us and for us, Christ is a principle and not a person or body. Therefore it has been said that Christ must be born within. This means, for those who are not immortal, that their minds are enlightened by the presence of the Christ principle and they are able to understand the truth of things.

If Jesus or Christ did not live and teach as he is supposed to have done, how is it that such an error could have prevailed for so many centuries and should prevail to-day?

Errors and ignorance prevail until they are replaced by knowledge; with knowledge, ignorance disappears. There is not room for both. In the absence of knowledge, be it material or spiritual knowledge, we must accept the facts as they are. Wishing the facts to

be different will not change them a jot. There are no facts in history concerning the birth of Jesus or Christ. The terms Jesus and Christ existed centuries prior to the reputed birth. We have no record of such a being at the time he is said to have been born. That one who had lived—and who had caused such a disturbance and recognition as an important character—should have been ignored by the historians of that period is absurd. Herod, the king, is said to have caused many infants to be slain to make sure that the “young child” should not live. Pilate is said to have sentenced Jesus, and Jesus is said to have risen after his crucifixion. None of these extraordinary events have been recorded by historians of that time. The only record that we have is that which is contained in the Gospels. In the face of these facts we cannot claim the reputed birth to be authentic. The best that can be done is to give it a place among the myths and legends of the world. That we continue in our error concerning the supposed birth and death of Jesus is not strange. It is a matter of custom and habit with us. The fault, if there is a fault, lies with those early church fathers who made the claim for and established the dogma of the birth and death of Jesus.

Do you mean to say that the history of Christianity is nothing but a fable, that the life of Christ is a myth, and that for nearly 2,000 years the world has been believing in a myth?

The world has not believed in Christianity for nearly 2,000 years. The world does not believe in Christianity today. Christians themselves do not believe enough in the teachings of Jesus to live one hundredth part of them. Christians, as well as the rest of the world, oppose the teachings of Jesus in their life and work. No single teaching of Jesus is fully observed by Christians. As to the difference between fact and fable, we have mentioned that there are no facts concerning the historical birth and life of Jesus. Fable and myth are held by many Christians to be the basis of heathen religions, but the Christian faith is in the same class. As a matter of fact, the Christian religion has less basis in fact than have many of the great religions of the world. This does not mean that Christianity is false, nor that all religions are false. There is an old saying that within every mythos there is a logos. A myth is a narrative containing a profound truth. This is true of Christianity. The fact that so many have been benefited in the early history and in our times by the belief in the life and saving power of Jesus must have some secret power; herein lies its strength. The appearance of any great teacher or teaching is

according to a certain law, the law of cycles, or of seasons. The time of the reputed birth of Jesus was the cycle or season for the promulgation and development of a newly revealed truth. We believe that at about that time there was among the people one who attained to immortality, the birth of a Jesus body already referred to, that having so attained, he gave out the teaching of immortality to those whom he considered able to receive and understand it, and that there gathered around him a number who were termed his disciples. That there is no history of this is due to his not being known to the people who were unacquainted with the mystery concerning the immortal life. Remaining and teaching his disciples for a time, he then left, and his teachings were promulgated by his disciples. The reason for the persistence in the belief of Christ and his teachings is that there is within man an underlying conviction in the possibility of his immortality. This latent belief finds expression in the teachings which the church distorted into their present form.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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