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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

What is the rationale of the doctrine of the atonement, and how can it be reconciled with the law of karma?

If the atonement is taken literally, and the causes said to have made the atonement necessary are to be considered literally, there is no rational explanation of the doctrine; no explanation can be rational. The doctrine is not rational. Few things in history are so repellent in ugliness, so barbaric in treatment, so outrageous to reason and the ideal of justice, as the doctrine of the atonement. The doctrine is:

The one and only God, self-existent throughout all time, created the heavens and the earth and all things. God created man in innocence and ignorance, and put him in a pleasure garden to be tempted; and God created his tempter; and God told man that if he yielded to temptation he would surely die; and God made a wife for Adam and they ate the fruit which god forbade them to eat, because they believed it was good food and would make them wise. Then God cursed the earth, and cursed Adam and Eve and drove them out of the garden, and cursed the children they should bring forth. And a curse of sorrow and suffering and death was upon all future mankind because of Adam's and Eve's eating of the fruit which God forbade them to eat. God could not or would not revoke his curse until, as said, "he gave his only begotten Son," Jesus, as a blood sacrifice to remove the curse. God accepted Jesus as atonement for the wrong doing of mankind on condition that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish," and with the promise that by such belief they would "have everlasting life." Because of God's curse, each soul that he made for each body that was born into the world was doomed, and each soul that he makes is doomed, to suffer in the world; and, after the death of the body the soul is doomed to hell, where it cannot die, but must suffer torments without end, unless that soul before death believes itself to be a sinner, and believes that Jesus came to save it from its sins; that the blood which Jesus is said to have shed upon the cross is the price God accepts of his only son, as the atonement for sin and ransom of the soul, and then the soul will be admitted after death to heaven.

To people brought up under the good old fashioned influences of their church, and especially if they are not familiar with the natural laws of science, their familiarity with these statements will salve over the unnaturalness of them and prevent them from seeming strange. When examined in the light of reason, they are seen in their naked hideousness, and not all the threatened fires of hell can prevent the one so seeing from denouncing such doctrine. But the one who denounces the doctrine should not denounce God. God is not responsible for the doctrine.

The literal doctrine of the atonement cannot in any sense be reconciled with the law of karma, because then the atonement would have been one of the most unjust and unreasonable events ever recorded, whereas, karma is the operative law of justice. If the atonement was an act of divine justice, then divine justice would be a misnomer and more unjust than any of the lawless acts of a mortal. Where is there a father who would give his only son to be persecuted and crucified, murdered, by a lot of manikins made by himself, and who, because of his not knowing how to make them act in accordance with his pleasure, had pronounced a curse of destruction on them; then had repented himself of his curse and agreed to forgive them if they would believe he had forgiven them, and that the death and shedding of his son's blood had excused them from their acts.

It is impossible to think of such course of action as divine. No one could believe it to be human. Every lover of fair play and justice would have pity for the manikins, feel sympathy and friendship for the son, and demand punishment for the father. A lover of justice would scorn the notion that the manikins should seek forgiveness of their maker. He would demand that the maker should seek forgiveness of them for making them manikins, and would insist that the maker must stop and correct his many blunders and make good all the mistakes he had made; that he must either do away with all the sorrow and suffering he had caused to be brought into the world and of which he claimed to have had a pre-knowledge, or else, that he must furnish his manikins, not merely reasoning power enough to question the justice of his edicts, but with intelligence sufficient to enable them to see some justice in what he had done, so that they may take their places in the world and go on willingly with the work assigned to them, instead of being slaves, some of whom appear to enjoy unearned luxury and the pleasures, positions and advantages which wealth and breeding can give, while others are driven through life by hunger, sorrow, suffering and disease.

On the other hand, no egotism or culture is a sufficient warrant for a man to say: man is the production of evolution; evolution is the action or the result of the action of blind force and blind matter; death ends all; there is no hell; there is no saviour; there is no God; there is no justice in the universe.

It is more reasonable to say: there is justice in the universe; for justice is the right action of the law, and the universe must run by law. If law is required for the running of a machine shop to prevent it going to smash, law is no less necessary for the running of the machinery of the universe. No institution can be conducted without a guiding or a cumulative intelligence. There must be intelligence in the universe great enough to guide its operations.

There must be some truth in a belief in atonement, which has lived and found welcome in the hearts of people for nearly two thousand years, and today numbers millions of supporters. The doctrine of the atonement is based on one of the grand fundamental truths of the evolution of man. This truth was warped and twisted by untrained and undeveloped minds, minds not enough mature to conceive it. It was nursed by selfishness, under influences of cruelty and slaughter, and grew into its present form through the dark ages of ignorance. It is less than fifty years since people began to question the doctrine of the atonement. The doctrine has lived and will live because there is some truth in the idea of man's personal relation to his God, and because of the idea of self-sacrifice for the good of others. People are now beginning to think about these two ideas. Man's personal relation to his God, and self-sacrifice for others, are the two truths in the doctrine of the atonement.

Man is the general term used to designate the human organization with its manifold principles and natures. According to Christian view, man is a threefold being, of spirit, soul and body.

The body was made from the elements of the earth, and is physical. The soul is the form on or into which the physical matter is moulded, and in which are the senses. It is psychical. The spirit is the universal life which enters into and makes alive the soul and body. It is called spiritual. Spirit, soul and body make up the natural man, the man which dies. At death, the spirit or life of man returns to universal life; the physical body, always subject to death and dissolution, returns through disintegration into the physical elements from which it was composed; and, the soul, or form of the physical, shadow-like, fades away with the dissolution of the body and is absorbed by the astral elements and psychic world from which it came.

According to Christian doctrine, God is a trinity in Unity; three persons or essences in one unity of substance. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. God the Father is the creator; God the Son is the Savior; God the Holy Ghost is the comforter; these three subsisting in one divine being.

God is mind, self-existent, before the world and its beginnings. God, the mind, manifests as nature and as divinity. The mind acting through nature creates the body, form and life of man. This is the natural man subject to death and who must die, unless raised above death by divine intervention into the state of immortality.

The mind ("God the father," "the father in heaven") is the higher mind; who sends a portion of itself, a ray ("the Savior," or, "God the Son"), the lower mind, to enter and live in the human mortal man for a period of time; after which period, the lower mind, or ray from the higher, leaves the mortal to return to its father, but sends in its place another mind ("the Holy Ghost," or, "the Comforter," or "Advocate"), a helper or teacher, to assist the one who had received or accepted the incarnate mind as its savior, to accomplish its mission, the work for which it had incarnated. The incarnation of a portion of divine mind, called truly the son of god, was and is or can be the redeemer of mortal man from sin, and his savior from death. Mortal man, the man of flesh, into which it came or may come, may, by the presence of divinity within him, learn how to change and may change from his natural and mortal condition into the divine and immortal state. If, however, man should not will to carry on the evolution from the mortal to the immortal, he must remain subject to the laws of mortality and must die.

The people of the earth did not spring from one mortal man and one mortal woman. Every mortal being in the world who is human is called into mortal being by many gods. For every human being there is a god, a mind. Each human body in the world is in the world for the first time, but the minds which are acting through, with, or in, the human beings in the world are not so acting now for the first time. The minds have acted similarly with other human bodies of theirs in past times. If not successful in solving and perfecting the mystery of the incarnation and atonement while acting with or in the present human body, that body and form (soul, psyche) will die, and that mind connected with it will have to incarnate again and again until sufficient enlightenment is had, until the atonement or at-one-ment is accomplished.

The mind incarnate in any human being is the son of God, come to save that man from death, if the personal man will have faith in his savior's efficacy to overcome death by following The Word, which the savior, the incarnate mind, makes known; and the teaching is communicated in degree according to the personal man's faith in him. If man accepts the incarnate mind as his savior and follows the instructions which he then receives, he will cleanse his body from impurities, will stop wrong action (sinning) by right action (righteousness) and will keep his mortal body alive until he has redeemed his soul, the psyche, the form of his physical body, from death, and made it immortal. This course of action of the training of the human mortal and the transforming it into the immortal is the crucifixion. The mind is crucified on its cross of flesh; but by that crucifixion the mortal, subject to death, overcomes death and gains immortal life. Then the mortal has put on immortality and is raised to the world of the immortals. The son of god, the incarnate mind has then accomplished his mission; he has done the work which it is his duty to do, so that he may be able to return to his father in heaven, the higher mind, with whom he becomes one. If, however, the man who has accepted the incarnate mind as his savior, but whose faith or knowledge is not great enough to follow the teaching he received, then the incarnate mind still is crucified, but it is a crucifixion by the disbelief and doubt of the mortal. It is a daily crucifixion which the mind endures in or on its cross of flesh. For the human, the course is: The body dies. The descent of the mind into hell, is the separating of that mind from its carnal and fleshly desires during an after death state. The arising from the dead, is the separation from the desires. The ascent into heaven where he "judges the quick and the dead," is followed by the determining what shall be the conditions of the mortal body and psyche, which shall be created for his next descent into the world, with the object of effecting the enlightenment and atonement.

For the man who is saved, whose incarnate mind makes immortal, the entire life of Jesus must be gone through while still living in the physical body in the physical world. Death must be overcome before the body dies; the descent into hell must be before, not after, death of the body; the ascension into heaven must be achieved while the physical body is alive. All this must be done consciously, willingly, and with knowledge. If it is not, and man has merely a belief in his incarnate mind as the savior, and if, although understanding how but not attaining immortal life before death, he

dies, then the next time for the descent into the atmosphere of the world and into that of mortal man, the mind will not enter into the human form which he has called into being, but the mind acts as the comforter (the Holy Ghost), who ministers to the human soul and is a substitute for the son of god, or mind, which was incarnate in the preceding life or lives. It acts so because of the previous acceptance of the mind by man as the son of God. It is the comforter around him who inspires, advises, gives instruction, so that, if man so wills, he may carry on the work for immortality which had been left off in the previous life, cut short by death.

Human beings who will not turn to the mind for light, must remain in darkness and abide the laws of mortality. They suffer death, and the mind connected with them must pass through hell during life, and during its separation from its earthly connection after death, and this must continue through the ages, until it is willing and able to see the light, to raise the mortal to immortality and to become at one with its parent source, its father in heaven, who cannot be satisfied until ignorance gives place to knowledge, and darkness is transformed into light. This process has been explained in the Editorials *Living Forever*, Vol. 16, Nos. 1-2 [pp. 31 and 35 in the PDF editorial "*Living—Living Forever*"], and in "Moments with Friends" in *The Word*, Vol. 4, page 189 [p. 1 in the December 1906 Moments with Friends PDF], and Vol. 8, page 190 [p. 1 in the December 1908 Moments with Friends PDF].

With this understanding of the doctrine of the atonement one may see what is meant by "and god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." With this understanding, the doctrine of the atonement is reconciled with the law of unswerving inexorable constant and eternal justice, the law of karma. This will explain man's personal relation to his god.

The other truth, the idea of self-sacrifice for the good of others, means that after man has found and follows his mind, his light, his savior, and has overcome death and gained immortal life and knows himself to be deathless, he will not accept the joys of heaven which he has earned, for himself alone, but, instead of being satisfied with his victory over death, and enjoying alone the fruits of his labors, determines to give his services to mankind to relieve their sorrows and sufferings, and help them to the point of finding the divinity within, and of achieving the apotheosis which he has reached. This is the sacrifice of the individual self to the universal Self, of the individual mind to the universal Mind. It is the individual god becoming at one with the universal God. He sees and feels and

knows himself in every living human soul, and every soul as being in him. It is the I-am-Thou and Thou-art-I principle. In this state is realized the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the mystery of the incarnation, the unity and oneness of all things, and the wholeness of the One.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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