

# Christian Science.

"My words shall not pass away."

October, 1888.

## THE ATONEMENT.

EMMA (CURTIS) HOPKINS.

Perhaps nothing has disgusted the honest skeptics of our time with the Christian religion like its fundamental dogma of atonement—the pivotal center around which the religion swings.

The literally religious, who are bound to the doctrines taught by their own particular church creed, have an idea of what atonement means which is exceedingly repugnant to the independent thinker; exceedingly repugnant indeed to the commonest sense of justice and kindness in any kind of a thinker.

The different ideas taken of the doctrine by

the Christian professors themselves, are very confusing to the investigator. This makes the careless mind think that it is not worth looking into, and might as well be exploded along with the belief in Satan and matter and disease.

But that which has universally interested mankind, and still holds powerful place in the hearts of the great and good, must not be set contemptuously aside without sensible investigation and such explanation as may help us to clearer light on the subject.

The atonement is a fundamental dogma in the church of the civilized world. What is it and what does it mean?

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state what the people think it is, as well as what it really is.

"An offering to an indignant Deity for sins committed against him"—says the pious church member. "The power that rules the universe, and commonly called God, created us good and perfect," says the honest explainer of doctrine; "but we fell of our own choice into sin and wickedness, when tempted by a wily sinner, whom we had no reason to suspect of being anything unlike his Creator. In our childish ignorance and innocence we trusted him because our good Father had made him and put us in his way. But he betrayed us into error and hardship and suffering. He made sinners of us, who were before sinless; and for these sins which he tempted us into, our Creator is angry and demands propitiation. He is of that nature that he will not be pacified by anything that we can do to atone for the wrong we committed against him except by the shedding of blood. A pure and good human life, or an innocent and spotless young animal must be killed as an offering. Then only will he forgive us for listening to the counsellor, Satan, who deceived our trusting youth."

There is no point in history back of which we can get and not find mankind believing this description of the Father of all humanity, and the Creator of everything that is.

A certain portion of the race are still offering up the loveliest human beings or the most perfect animal life to this God. But another portion believe that by and by this God selected his own propitiatory sacrifice, as nothing yet offered had appeased him. This was no less than his own first-begotten and best-beloved son. He sent him to the world for these believers in sacrifice to kill, and end the sacrificial order of blood-shedding.

Then, whoever believed that the son was sent for this purpose, and having fulfilled it, had ascended up into heaven again—his sins were remitted or washed away in the blood that streamed from the death wounds, and God the Father was pacified. Millions upon millions believe just this doctrine.

There is a tremendous rebellion against its goodness or justice, and fearful unbelief that God ever demanded or originated either the temptation or propitiation, filling the breasts of millions of this age. They are quite as devout of heart, and far more honestly earnest to serve and love the true God than those who so sturdily declare his bloodthirstiness.

They believe more in the prophets who wrote about him in the ancient times than in the priests who taught such things. They see how the prophets lived above and out of the range of the priestly practices, seeming to condemn them utterly. And when they study the ecstatic writ-

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ings of the revelators upon these themes, they feel a certainty stirring within their honest hearts that there is a deeper sense to the words used and transactions recorded than the physical terms would indicate.

The prophets cried aloud to the people: "Hear ye the words of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

"To what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims? saith the Lord. I desire not the holocausts of rams and fatlings, the blood of calves and sheep and goats. When you come to appear before me, who hath required these things at your hands? Offer me no more."

"I the Lord spake not to your fathers, and I commanded them not in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning the matter of burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this one thing I commanded them, saying, Harken to my voice and walk in my way."

But the priests took lambs and slew them upon the altar to interpret these words, and always we find them using the symbol instead of the idea, and teaching the letter for the spirit of the inspired prophets.

Either the priests of those times of the prophets were ignorant and innocent, or they were just what some of our late students of religious

teachings are declaring them—corrupt and falsifying. One close and careful student of history says that they did not want the ignorant masses to know their relation to the Divine Father of their lives and so taught them just what they pleased. This student finds that those books of the Pentateuch which make the sacrifices for sin, blood-offerings, are the works of the priests and not of the prophet Moses. She says that if the people had been taught the truth about these matters, the priests would not have had anything to do, because it was by mysterious rites and deceitful incantations that they compelled obedience and gifts from the ignorant people.

We see in our own day that preachers can deceive multitudes by telling them they have been led of God to demand certain things of the people. How eagerly intelligent men and earnest women pay out their dollars to purchase marble images of saints and gold crucifixes to pay their way through purgatory. How willingly they pay money for their secret sins, and shut themselves into stone prisons to obey ecclesiastical orders. If they will do these things in our enlightened age, what may they not have believed and done in the misty, ancient days?

There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and soon the whole matter will be uncovered for us to determine.

Paul speaks of all these things as symbolic

transactions. As if on a very material plane, they were shadows of high ideas.

Paul was an enlightened mind, and told this boldly. He saw how the voluntary offering of himself, by the Christ, as a sacrifice to the Principle he taught, was fulfilling in the perfect sense the old idea of sacrifice for sin.

He had come into the world and seen the ignorance that kept the people in bondage. He knew the Truth that would set them free. He was absolutely free himself.

Ignorance, and her children, Superstitions, are ever the direst enemies of Knowledge and Truth. So the ignorant opposed his teachings desperately.

The truest mind is most opposed. The holiest life the most vilified. He was called a pestilent fellow and accused of associating with the lowest people in the community. He was called bad, and threatened with death for teaching Truth.

This was sacrificing himself for the people's good; a voluntary offering by the Christhood within him. He persisted in telling this Truth of the relation of every child of earth or human being to the Divine Parent of all. "Call no man your Father," he said; "One is your Father, even God." He declared that he himself was also a child of God, like themselves.

Now the priests had told them of their remoteness from God, so the people hated him for

blasphemy. "Being a man, he maketh himself God," they said. The oneness of the Divine within to the Infinite Divine, or the Divine without, was what he taught. "The words that I speak unto you, it is not I that speak, but the Father that dwelleth in me." Now the Father was the invisible Mind, whose thoughts were made flesh, or made manifest to the people by Jesus Christ. He was called the Christ because he was so wholly true. No errors escaped his lips. That invisible, silent Mind, the Father, which is the silent Truth-Principle, had a perfect medium in him.

Of course error battled against him. "I came down from Heaven," he said. Now they knew his father and mother, and disputed that he came from heaven. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They saw that he was flesh and blood like themselves. They were in error. Error always fights the Truth. It crucifies it. Error hates Truth. Truth is calm. The more of Truth, the more of calm.

When Galileo said, "The earth revolves, the sun stands still," the people who looked out and saw the sun rising and setting, being in error, fought him. They crossed his Truth with error. They crucified him for the Truth he spake.

In those blind, dull times, unless some strong and tremendous event happened, people would not pay much attention. It is certainly true

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that unless the Nazarene had been nailed to a cross, and shed his blood for the sake of impressing the doctrine of the oneness of the mind of man with the Mind that is God, the *at-one-mens*, or one mind doctrine would not have had much of a hearing. In that sense was our atonement made perfect by the Christ.

Christ taught that in origin, nature and office, we are from and like our Parent, God. God is the Eternal Mind. If we spring forth from the Eternal Mind, we are the thoughts of that Mind. As thoughts are of the nature of, and one with their thinker, so are we one with our Original—*At-one-mens*—of one mind.

Christ preached this, and fastened the blessed statements upon the attention of the race, by permitting them to slay him. Nothing could have nailed the race mind to his doctrine as his bold death nailed it.

All the sacrifices for sins, or the sacrifices for Truth's sake, ever made in the world, paled into insignificance now, to those who believed in his doctrine.

To those who accept the great statement he made, That we are the children of the living God, they have begun to prove that the same mind that he had is in them. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus our Lord."

They who speak the same words that he spake,

believing, have partaken of the atonement, one mind, because to speak the same words and think the same thoughts, is to be of the same mind. Coming to the knowledge of our relationship with our Parent, God, is getting home, where we desire to be. There is nothing the universal mind so longs for as to get reconciled to God through the atonement. Now that simply means that there is nothing the whole earth wants like the word of Truth, which puts us to thinking true thoughts and lands us into the right mind.

Right mindedness makes right living. As wrong mindedness makes wrong living, so right mindedness makes right living. Men think it is power and learning and greatness they long for. Or they think it is the gratification of the demands of the flesh. Many a thing the mind of error conjures up that it longs for to get home with; but not one single thing pacifies the heart. Every one palls on the taste.

"I am deeply home sick," said the gifted and greatly admired Margaret Fuller; "but where is that home?"

The sinful mind is in unrest. That is, the mind that has not accepted Christ. What is accepting Christ? Just accepting his true doctrine. What true doctrine? That we are not children of mortality at all, but heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ as children of the

Spirit. To accept this is to drop mortality's dull hard ways and rise out of its ignorance and error. Those who really accept it, are like people who waken out of deep sleep. "Awake thou that sleepest," cried Paul. "Awake to righteousness and sin not," that is, think right thoughts vehemently and do not make silly errors about yourselves.

The prophets and revelators taught us that the Christ was our ransom. He laid down his life to call our attention to Truth to save us out of our errors. Common teaching would not fasten the greatest doctrine mankind can be taught—the at-one-ment of Christ for our sins. He who was called Christ laid down his life to call our attention to his doctrine.

John, the beloved disciple, had a majestic conception of the work of redemption. All, everyone, who should believe on these words should be lifted out of earthly conditions into heavenly ones.

He spoke of our being washed clean by the blood of Christ. He meant that the word of Truth would put the sins or errors of mind away just as perfectly as the cleansing waters wash the soiled flesh. For blood is but a symbol of the word of Truth. He says that the doctrine of atonement makes us all kings and priests; that is, proves our high birth-right. He says that every eye shall see him. Now the eye is a

symbol of the perceptive power of mind. Every mind shall know the truth of its emanation from the Divine Mind.

Long after the blessed Lord of Life and Glory had passed on, he came to John whom he loved so much, and told him things which were in the beginning laid down to be proved by all the Sons of God. He was the first to prove them. But the rest, (every one) are all to prove the same things. Prove that we are not children of material flesh and blood at all, but children of Spirit.

There is no blood-thirsty demand of God to sacrifice something to pacify Him for our sins. It is the law that people who are in error, always say foolish things, and tell untrue things of Truth itself. They fight the Truth when they hear it. We fight the Truth when we hear it now-a-days just the same. In our own way we shed the blood of those who tell it. We make living a crucifixion for them.

There is a Truth that will redeem the world, and save us from all our sickness and trouble.

If anybody repeats that Truth to you, you will oppose it. You will put the one who says it down, and feel contempt in your heart. The words are too strong for you—the rays of pure Truth are too hot for you. Nevertheless, if you will speak them, you will be saved by Christ. If you come up to them and say them, you come

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up to Christ. If you hold them steadily, hold them many days and months and years, you will be at one with Christ. Through and through you will be like him. The words will change your mind from what it is now to be like his, because you speak his words.

If you take the words of Milton, and repeat them till you know exactly what Milton meant, you will be like Milton both in mind and feeling.

From reverencing woman, who symbolizes the Motherhood of God, you may grow to depreciate her worth and rights as he did. But you may rise to the same strength of mind and poetic conception of great themes that characterize his quality. Thinking his thoughts will put you at one with his mind.

If you repeat the thoughts of Paul, or Martin Luther, you will grow like them in mind and character.

Kepler, when he was stating the unfailling planetary laws, cried out in ecstatic awe, "O God, I think thy thoughts after Thee!"

Do you know of one so wise and just—so great and masterful as Jesus of Nazareth?

While you are choosing your words from the language of the great if you will select his mind and character to be one with, you shall enter into that state you are longing for by exactly the right gateway.

For He only taught absolute truth.

Can you see now, how at the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, before they can arrive into that home they are all homesick for?

He only was true.

If you choose Plato's thoughts, or Aristotle's, whom the proud Concord School of Philosophy are quoting, you will mix the speculative powers with which your minds will blossom, with errors cold and cruel like the errors of Plato and Aristotle.

Has any good thing come to the people out of studying them these many years?

One of Boston's thoughtful editors, writing up their long Concord discussions of Plato and Aristotle, said—"No help or suggestion yet to the working masses, living from hand to mouth, who have no leisure to study ways and means for self help, but gladly let the men and women of large leisure and great possessions do the thinking out of their hard problems for them. No scheming to lift the burden of poverty from the pitiful millions; and out of Plato and Aristotle no hint in these crying days, of some way to make men and women love truth and honor better than falsehood and unfaithfulness."

No. Aristotle called woman the failure of blind nature; and Plato's ideas would make of all the cities of earth Sodoms and Gomorrhas.

But Jesus. Sweet, grand, most noble Master! Every word is freedom from poverty—pain—dishonor—strife!

High over every name and character that has ever lived rises his name. "Never man spake like this man."

He called us children of the living God, and told us to keep the words that state it, till we rise up victors over death, and prove ourselves all conquering Spirit, like unto our Father.

Many are speaking them: "I am Spirit, Mind, like God, my Father-Mother, and reflect Wisdom, Strength, Holiness.

As this great Master-Mind declared himself my brother, and said that I like himself have no power in myself to speak or work but only am moved upon and through by the mind that is God, so the words that I speak, it is not I that speak, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Thus God works through me to will and to do as seemeth Him best, and surely exactly that which I ought to do, that I shall do—He keeping me from unwise speaking and foolish doing."

And forth from these speakers of the words of the deathless Jesus there flows a nameless potency, touching with healing, love, and tender joy, whomsoever their thoughts reach.

Sin and poverty and dishonor fade from the presence of the speakers of the words of Jesus,

when they have kept the sayings, when they are at one with Him. Only they who keep them—keep them—keep them till they are at one with the Mind of the great Reformer and Lover of the race, bring forth his works, and grow in character majestic, lofty, bold, powerful like him.

Who does not long to partake of the Atonement—long to be saved by the Atonement?

The blood of Christ, the living word of Truth, slain from the foundations of the world of error, but rising again and again—the Christ that never was crucified, the Christ that never was dead, the Christ who waiteth your repetition of his words to save you to honor and glory and immortal joy by the blessed atonement.

Why will you not say them? "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death."

"Close at hand, the basket stood  
With nuts from brown October's wood."

### THE CREED.

Whoever was begotten by pure love,  
And came desired and welcome into life,  
Is of immaculate conception. He  
Whose heart is full of tenderness and truth,  
Who loves mankind more than he loves himself,  
And cannot find room in his heart for hate,  
May be another Christ. We all may be  
The saviours of the world, if we believe  
In the divinity which dwells in us  
And worship it, and nail our grosser selves,  
Our tempers, greeds, and our unworthy aims  
Upon the cross. Who giveth love to all,  
Pays kindness for unkindness, smiles for frowns,  
And lends new courage to each fainting heart,  
And strengthens hope, and scatters joy abroad,  
He, too, is a redeemer, son of God.  
—ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

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