

The Historical Fallacy of Atonement (part 2 of 2): The Ultimate Sacrifice and Original Sin

Description: A look at how old pagan beliefs crept into Christianity through Paul of Tarsus. Also included, is mention of the history of original sin and salvation from an Islamic perspective.

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The Ultimate Sacrifice

Long accustomed to making sacrifices to their gods, the pagans easily grasped Paul's notion that Jesus was the "ultimate sacrifice" whose blood washed away sin. A common ceremony during this time in various Middle Eastern cults, such as those of Attis and Mithras, was that of the "taurobolium": a person descended into a pit covered over with grillwork upon which a bull (or ram), said to represent the pagan deity himself, was then ceremoniously slain. By covering himself with the blood, the person in the pit below was said to have been "born again" with his sins washed away.

It is worth noting that the Jews had given up sacrifice back in 590 BCE following the destruction of their Temple. Paul's notions, therefore, were in direct contradiction to both Old Testament teaching (Hosea 6:6) and even to the teaching of Jesus himself (Mat. 9:13) which stressed how God desired good virtues, not sacrifice.

While Paul stressed that God's "love" was behind the sacrifice of Jesus (Rom. 5:8), the Doctrine of Atonement instead shows a harsh Deity satisfied only by the murder of his own innocent son. Paul was way off base here, for the Old Testament is full of references to the love and mercy of God to man (Ps. 36:5-10; Ps. 103:8-17) revealed through His forgiveness (Ex. 34:6,7; Ps. 86:5-7), of which even Jesus spoke (Mat. 6:12).

Pagan influence in Christianity even extends to its sacred symbol. Although Paul calls the cross of Jesus "the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18), reference works, such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, Dictionary of Symbols, The Cross in Ritual, Architecture and Art point out that the cross was used as a religious symbol centuries before the birth of Jesus. Bacchus of Greece, Tammuz of Tyre, Bel of Chaldea, and Odin of Norway are just a few examples of ancient pagan gods whose sacred symbol was that of a cross.

Original Sin

Central to the Doctrine of Atonement is Paul's notion that mankind is a race of wrong-doers, having inherited from Adam his sin in eating of the forbidden fruit. As a result of this Original Sin, man cannot serve as his own redeemer; good works are to no avail, says Paul, for even these cannot satisfy the justice of God (Gal. 2:16).

As a result of Adam's sin, man is doomed to die. By his death, however, Jesus took on

the punishment due man; through his resurrection, Jesus conquered death, and righteousness was restored. To earn salvation, a Christian need only have faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:23).

Despite its prominent place in Christianity, the notion of an "original sin" is not found among the teachings of any prophet, Jesus included. In the Old Testament, God says: "... **the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son**" (Ez.18:20-22). Personal responsibility is also stressed in the Quran where God says: "... **no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another... man can have nothing but what he strives for**" (Quran 53:38,39).

The doctrine of original sin gave Paul the means to justify pagan influence in his scheme of salvation. Irresponsibility became the hallmark of Christianity through this doctrine, however, for by "transferring" sins onto Jesus, followers assume no responsibility for their actions.

Salvation in Islam

By the seventh century, the doctrines conceived by Paul had been embellished to the point where Christianity was not almost entirely a man-made religion. At this time, God chose to send Muhammad as His Final Messenger in order to set things straight once and for all for mankind.

Since God is Almighty, He doesn't need the charade concocted by Christians in order to forgive man. In the Quran, God says we are all created in a state of goodness (30:30); He has not burdened man with any "original sin", having forgiven Adam and Eve (2:36-38; 7:23,24) as He forgives us (11:90; 39:53-56).

As we are all personally responsible for our actions (2:286; 6:164) there is no need for a humanly concocted savior in Islam; salvation comes from God alone (28:67).

Thus did Islam seek to restore the true meaning to monotheism, for in the Quran God asks:

"Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith?" (Quran 4:125; 41:33)

The Religion of Man

The evidence is overwhelming that the concept of salvation in Christianity - its Doctrine of Vicarious Atonement - came not from God but from man via pagan rituals and beliefs.

Paul effectively shifted the center of worship away from God by saying that Jesus was the divine agent of their salvation (Gal. 2:20). In so doing, however, Paul set aside all teachings of God's prophets, and even the concept of monotheism itself, since God in Christianity needs Jesus for His divine "helper".

Take a Closer Look

With one's very salvation at stake here, Christians should take a closer look at what they believe in and why. God says in the Quran:

**"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger of God... for God is One God; glory be to Him: far exalted is He above having a son. To him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of Affairs."
(Quran 4:171)**

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