



Meditation 1: atonement narratives

Over time, several views or “theories” concerning atonement have been proposed. We will begin our discussion of atonement by presenting four views or theories in a kind of narrative or story form. As you read these narratives, you are invited to consider each, and which, if any, comes closest to your view of atonement. Identify any aspects with which you strongly resonate and any with which you do not resonate.

Narrative #1

Yielding to the suggestion of very real evil and destructive cosmic forces and being drawn in by powerful, and often unrecognized internal (psychological) lusts, a previously faithful devotee of God thinks, feels, speaks, or acts in violation of God’s wishes. Due to the violation, God, previously friendly and firmly attached to the devotee, withdraws His acceptance and blessed association from the offender, allowing those same evil and destructive cosmic forces (read, “Death, Hell, and the Devil”) to seize and captivate the guilty devotee. In order to “purchase” release from the evil cosmic forces that have captivated the offender, he or she must engage in a transaction that appeases or satisfies those same evil cosmic forces. However, the offender, being finite, lacks the wherewithal to provide sufficient compensation for the infinite harm inflicted. Therefore, God Himself generously supplies the compensation. This compensation is found in the life, suffering and death of His infinite and Only Begotten Son. The Son submits himself to the evil cosmic forces, and they accept him as ransom. With the devotee’s acceptance of the vicarious payment (ransom), he or she is freed from the evil and destructive cosmic

forces and is brought back into a state of acceptance before and blessed association with God.

Narrative #2

Yielding to the suggestion of very real evil and destructive cosmic forces and being drawn in by powerful and often unrecognized internal (psychological) lusts, a previously faithful devotee of God thinks, feels, speaks, or acts in violation of God's wishes. Due to the violation, God, previously friendly and firmly attached to the devotee, now feels dishonored and angry. God thus withdraws his acceptance and blessed association from the offender. This withdrawal leaves the offender discouraged, and more vulnerable to those same evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces (read, "Death, Hell, and the Devil"). In order to "repurchase" divine acceptance and blessed association, and in order to avoid and escape the evil and destructive forces, the offender must engage in a transaction that appeases or satisfies God's hurt feelings, wounded honor, and inflamed anger in such a manner that God is inclined to return to the offender. However, the offender, being finite, lacks the wherewithal to provide sufficient compensation for the infinite harm inflicted. Therefore, God Himself generously supplies the compensation. This compensation is found in the life, suffering and death of His infinite and Only Begotten Son. With the Son's payment, God's hurt feelings, wounded honor, and inflamed anger are appeased and He is satisfied. With the devotee's acceptance of the vicarious payment, God returns to the devotee with acceptance and blessed association thus delivering him or her from the discouraging, evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces.

Narrative #3

Yielding to the suggestion of very real evil and destructive cosmic forces and being drawn in by powerful, and often unrecognized internal (psychological) lusts, a previously faithful devotee of God thinks, feels, speaks, or acts in violation of God's wishes. Due to the violation, and in conformity to cosmic laws to which He, God, has chosen to conform, God, previously friendly and firmly attached to the devotee, must now withdraw his acceptance and blessed association from the offender. This withdrawal leaves the offender discouraged, and more vulnerable to those same evil, and destructive

psychological and cosmic forces (read, “Death, Hell, and the Devil”). In order to “repurchase” divine acceptance and blessed association, and in order to avoid and escape the evil and destructive forces, the offender must engage in a transaction that appeases or satisfies the cosmic law that God observes in a manner that God is allowed to return to the offender without breaching established cosmic laws. However, the offender, being finite, lacks the wherewithal to provide sufficient compensation for the infinite harm inflicted. Therefore, God Himself generously supplies the compensation. This compensation is found in the life, suffering and death of His infinite and Only Begotten Son. With the Son’s payment, and the devotee’s acceptance of the vicarious payment, the law is appeased and satisfied. God is permitted to return to the devotee with acceptance and blessed association thus delivering him or her from the discouraging, evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces.

Narrative 4

Yielding to the suggestion of very real evil and destructive cosmic forces, and being drawn in by powerful, and often unrecognized internal (psychological) lusts, a previously faithful devotee of God thinks, feels, speaks, or acts in violation of God’s wishes. Having yielded to the evil suggestion, the devotee then yields to the false insinuation of discouraging, evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces that he or she has dishonored and angered God and His law such that God must and does withdraw his acceptance and blessed association from the offender. The acceptance of this false witness about God and His response to sin leaves the devotee vulnerable to further discouraging, evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces. In order to be freed from these forces, the devotee must be reclaimed from his or her false ideas about God’s character. However, the offender, being finite, lacks the wherewithal to understand an infinite Being and His character. Therefore, God Himself generously supplies a revelation of Himself. This revelation is found in the life, suffering, and death of His infinite and Only Begotten Son, and is meant to reveal God’s unwavering acceptance and blessed association with offending devotees. With the devotee’s acceptance of the surprising revelation, he or she is always able to understand, feel, and experience God’s acceptance and blessed association, thus delivering him or her from the discouraging, evil, and destructive psychological and cosmic forces.

After reading these narratives and identifying aspects with which you strongly resonate and aspects with which you do not resonate, write your own narrative of atonement, and be prepared to share it along with your thoughts and feelings concerning what atonement means to you personally with others.