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Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 Jn. 4:10).

The law of righteousness. All sin against moral law is followed by suffering. At first glance that statement may not be accepted without qualification; but it is true. "Sin is [the] transgression of the law," is [the] scripture definition of sin (1 Jn. 3:4; Rom. 4:15). No difficulty will arise from that definition, but there might arise difference of opinion as to what constitutes the "law," which to violate would be sin. Of course moral law, or the law of righteousness, varies among different races and nations; and indeed varies in the same race and nation in different periods of time; but no matter how variant the law may be among different races or nations; or how variant it may be among individuals, the principle announced that suffering follows sin will hold good. Of course between the Christian whose conscience is trained in the moral law of the doctrine of Christ, and the heathen, "who know not God," there is a wide difference. Many things which are sin to the Christian conscience are not sin to the heathen races, unenlightened by the ethics of the Christian religion; but, nevertheless, what I say is true; and if heathen peoples do not have the same moral standards that prevail in Christian lands, they have some moral standards; and whenever they violate what to them is the "rule of righteousness," it is followed by chagrin, by sorrow, by mental suffering for them; and so with the Christian people who are instructed in the high, moral principles of the Christian religion. When they fall below their ideals, when they consciously violate their "rule of righteousness," it is followed by suffering, by a sense of shame, by sorrow; and indeed, the great volume of the sorrows of this world springs from sin, the transgression of the moral law.

~~*Possibility of the Spirit suffering.*~~ It is just as real, this suffering of the spirit for the violation of the moral law, as the suffering of physical pain. The mind no less than the body may be hurt, wounded as deeply as the body, and carry its scars as the evidence of its wounds as long. “And it often happens,” says Guizot, “that the best men, that is, those who have best conformed their will to reason, have often been the most struck with their insufficiency, the most convinced of the inequality between the conduct of man and his task between liberty and law”; and therefore have they suffered most. It is possible, and men do suffer for their own sins.

Men suffer because of the sins of others. This we know, also, it is possible for men to suffer because of the sins of others, and they often do. You can scarcely conceive of a man being so far isolated, so far outside the sympathies of the world, that it can be said of him that he lives unto himself alone; that his sinning and his suffering concerns only himself. Men are so knit together in a network of sympathies—not seen, but *real* nevertheless—that they suffer *because* of each other. It is easily proven. Take the case of an honorable father and mother who have led, we will say—and there are such fathers and mothers—ideal lives. They have lived in honor; they have met their obligations to the world with reasonable fidelity; they have lived lives of righteousness; they have set good examples to their children and neighbors; they have taught the Christian truths at the fireside; they have surrounded their family with every advantage that would prepare them for honorable stations among men. They have taken pride as they have seen their children grow from infancy to manhood, and their souls have hoped that a sort of immortality would subsist in the perpetuation of their race through their children. Then out of this family group, over which the parents have watched with such anxious solicitude, there comes forth a reprobate youth, in whom there seems to be scarcely any moral sense. He violates all the conventions of society, and of moral living; he destroys all his prospects by his excesses, and he becomes a vagabond and outcast among men, a degenerate; perhaps finds his way through the sewers of sin, into the prison house, and at last, perchance, may go to the very gallows itself.

And what is the condition of that righteous father and mother the while, when they look upon this sad mischance in their household? Sorrow! The one who has led this shameful life, though he may suffer somewhat for his sins, has not suffered the one-thousandth part of the shame and humiliation and disgrace that has been experienced by this father and mother. They suffer because of the sins of this wayward son.

They illustrate in their experience the fact that men can suffer because of each other; the innocent are involved in the sins and crimes of the guilty.

From this confessedly extreme case all down the line of human experiences and relationships in constantly varying degrees men suffer because of each other.

Men suffer with each other on account of sin. Again: men suffer with each other on account of sin. An outsider, looking at this scene I have presented—I mean one not a member of the grief-stricken family—witnessing the sorrow in the father, and the inconsolable grief of the mother; the mental distress and shame experienced by brothers and sisters; the outsider, the near friend, or neighbor, witnessing all this is distressed with the sorrowing father and mother; he suffers *with* them through common, human sympathy.

Willingness of men to suffer for each other. There is still another phase of this suffering on account of sin, and one that draws very near to the point I am trying to establish. There is among men, and especially among men of highly sensitive natures, a willingness to suffer *for* others. Take the case, for instance, of David and Absalom. Absalom was the most worthless of all David's sons; he had planned rebellion against the old king; he would have clutched the crown from the hoary head of David and put it upon his own. In every way he had warred against the honor and the interests of his father. Yet when news was brought to the king that the worthless young man had been caught in the battle and slain, the old king was stricken with sorrow, and gave vent to the father-cry that rings through all the ages—"Oh Absalom, my son! Would to God I had died for thee!" (cf. 2 Sam. 18:33). In this experience of David's we see the willingness of one to suffer for another. Nor is this willingness confined to parents alone who would so often and so willingly take upon themselves the consequences of their children's sins, though those consequences involved death. The same willingness exists on the part of the children, but perhaps is less frequently manifested, to suffer for their parents. The same is true also as to brothers and sisters, and among friends, where no tie of consanguinity exists; and even among strangers, on the occasion of great, imminent danger, this impulse in man, this willingness to risk his own life for others is frequently manifested. Such experiences make up the history of heroism, which is the chief glory of our human race.

The pity of it, if—! Here let it be understood that I am not introducing the question as to whether men can suffer one for another in

breaches of the moral law. I am inclined to doubt that, as it might lead to the thwarting of ~~in~~justice rather than to the promotion of it in our human life; but I am discussing the evident willingness of men to suffer for the sins of others if they could, up to the point of laying down their lives for them; and with Browning I hold that, “Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do.”^a I am pointing out the existence of such an impulse, inclination or principle in men, in human nature, in order to argue from what we know of this well-attested fact, ~~(and the reader will observe that our old method of earlier chapters abides with us still)~~ that there being such a disposition in man, it may be reasonably concluded that such a disposition *but* more abundantly, and more perfectly, and more intensely, and quite effectively—~~the same willingness and innate disposition~~ will be found in the divine intelligences, or gods; and who at need, as in the case of redeeming man from the “Fall” through ~~an~~ Adam, and from the consequences of personal sins—would, through love, make the necessary sacrifice for the sins of a world, as did the Christ. For if this disposition exists more intensively in gods than in men, what an infinite pity it would be should there be no means in the moral economy of things for such expression of self-sacrificing love!

Vicarious suffering necessary to supreme love-manifestation. “Vicarious suffering,” says some now forgotten author, “seems supremely unjust, yet it is blessed and glorious; for in no other way can love so intensely be expressed—that one suffer for his friend through love.” And I will add the suffering victim being himself innocent, would make his sacrifice all the more impressive. ~~and effective.~~

“Hereby perceive we the love of God,” said the apostle, “because he laid down his life for us” (1 Jn. 3:16). And again: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God ⟨had⟩ sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:9-10).

It is through this means, self-sacrifice, that love gets expressed, and this leads to manifestations of mercy in the divine moral and spiritual economy; and in no other way can they become expressed—this love and mercy! But a divine moral and spiritual economy cannot exist without the manifestation of them. Therefore, to make the scheme of things perfect, there must be place and means of bringing in these two brightest and best elements of such economy, else both a reign of law

^aRobert Browning, “Saul,” 13.9.

and the attributes of deity stand broken and inharmonious in our consciousness. From the very nature of things, then, there must be a means of expressing love, and of expressing it supremely, by sacrifice, else mercy shall not appear, for mercy springs from love as wisdom rises from knowledge.

It is from the above basis of thought that the poet Browning, worked out his conception of vicarious suffering in his "Saul." The poem is the story of David's love for the melancholy, obsessed king of Israel, and David's willingness out of this love, to suffer for the king, even to die for him if only that would restore Saul to his best and maintain him there.

"Could I help thee my father, inventing a bliss," says David, "I would add to that life of the past" (which he had just glorified in song), "both the future—and this; I would give thee new life altogether, as good ages hence as this moment, had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense."

And then the thought: If he, David, being but a man would do this for the restoration of Saul, would not God do as much? Or, as the poet makes David say, do I find love so full in my nature that I doubt God's own love can compete with it? "Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man, dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?" Would I suffer for him that I love? So would God he concludes—"so wilt thou! . . . See the Christ stand!"¹

Intimations of great possibilities. Does this fact of willingness to suffer for others, so abundantly attested in human experiences, bear witness to the existence of no great and eternal principle, that may be of incalculable benefit in the moral economy of the universe? Is it meaningless? I think not. On the contrary it suggests the existence of a great and effective truth, namely, that divine intelligences of the universe are so bound together in sympathetic relations that at need they can suffer for each other, as well as with each other, and because of each other. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down

¹I commend the whole poem to the reader. It is too long to insert here and less than the whole would do an injustice to a masterpiece of thought and composition. It will richly repay the half-score readings that will be required to master it. [Robert Browning's poem "Saul" is based upon the Old Testament story of Saul and David. David narrates the story of his returning to the tent of Saul to sing and play his harp in an attempt to alleviate Saul's fits of madness. His songs have the desired effect, but David realizes that although he loves Saul with his whole soul, he cannot give Saul permanent rest and salvation. At this dramatic moment, David receives a vision of the Christ, recognizing that salvation is only through him.]

his life for his friends” (John 15:13). The same would doubtless be true of God. Shall those intelligences we must needs think of as divine, as making up David’s “congregation of the mighty,” the gods among whom God, the greatest of intelligences, stands and judges (Ps. 82:1)—shall these be denied the privilege of love-manifestation which goes with this giving of all? And shall this suffering for others in such cases have no benefitting effect upon those others for whom the suffering is endured? Shall this love-force of divine intelligences be mere waste of the highest and most refined of all forces—spiritual love-force? Not so, if reason answers the question. Certainly not so if the scriptures answer it. The scriptures abundantly confirm the declaration made that divine intelligences are not denied the power of giving the highest love manifestation for others by suffering for them; and in that love manifestation giving all they can give, even to taking upon themselves the consequences of the sins of others and making effective atonement for them; suffering that others might have placed within their reach the means of eternal progression, and escape the eternal consequences of sin if only they would accept such means as are provided for such escape. Otherwise, of course, the sinners themselves must suffer all the consequences due to their sins; for nothing is clearer in the revealed word of God, developed in this treatise, than that satisfaction must be made to justice whenever the domain of law and justice is trespassed upon, else all is confusion in the moral government of the world; so that if men will not avail themselves of means which love provides for their redemption, then they themselves must meet the inexorable demands of justice.

Vicarious suffering: Its reality and its effectiveness the doctrine of the gospel. This, then, is the especial doctrine of the gospel on which the earth-life mission of the Christ is based. One divine intelligence at need can suffer for others, and ~~for such an one to stand responsible for another; and~~ vicariously endure suffering for another’s sins; make a satisfaction to justice, and bring the quality of love, and mercy its consequent, into the moral economy of the world, and give it legitimate standing under a reign of law, softening somewhat the otherwise harsh aspect of things in this God’s world.

The reign of law and love. To this then our inquiry and discussions lead us; to recognize in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the central truth of which is the Atonement, a reign of law and love; and that to preserve this law, and to manifest this love was the purpose of the earth-life mission of the Christ. To teach and to demonstrate, first of all, God-love for man, by a sacrifice that tasks God that man might be saved; and

second, to inspire man-love for God, by the demonstration that God first loved man, and how deeply God loved him; and third, to teach man-love for man. “(For) Beloved,” says the apostle, ~~whom Jesus loved pre-eminently~~—“if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 Jn. 4:11). In this love for one another the children of God are manifest, he contends.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. . . . We know that we have passed from death (into) [unto] life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 Jn. 3:10-11, 14, 16)

It is not to be marveled at that this same apostle declared that “he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8) or that Paul, accepting the same principle, should say, “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. . . . Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10).

Jesus, however, teaches the matter most perfectly. Accepting the love of God for man as assured, then the great commandment for man is:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matt. 22:37-40)

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Love exists in the earth-scheme of things, in the moral government of the world, in harmony with the universal reign of law. It is not born of some caprice, or mere impulse, howsoever beneficent; but interwoven it is into the very web and woof of things. It is immanent in them, an indestructible presence. It is because love reigns in harmony with law that we mortals can be so sure of it; and rest so secure in it. For as it was not born of caprice, so, too, it will not depart from the world, nor from individuals on caprice; but will endure as space itself endures—from the very nature of it; as truth abides; as law itself subsists; as God lives; for it is of the eternal things—the things that do not pass away.

[Except for pages 451-52, this chapter is nearly identical to *Seventy's Course in Theology* 4:129-33.]