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CHRIST OUR SACRIFICE

“According to the New Testament, primitive Christianity, when it used the words ‘Jesus redeems us by His blood,’ was thinking of the ritual sacrifice, and this conception is diffused throughout the whole New Testament; it is a fundamental idea, universal in primitive Christianity, with respect to the significance of Jesus’ death.” So remarks Paul Fiebig;¹ and W. P. Paterson, summarizing Albrecht Ritschl,² emphasizes the assertion. “The interpretation of Christ’s death as a sacrifice,” says he,³ “is imbedded in every important type of New Testament teaching.” By the limitation implied in the words, “every important type,” he means only to allow for the failure of allusions to this interpretation in the two brief letters, James and Jude, the silence of which, he rightly explains, “raises no presumption against the idea being part of the common stock of Apostolic doctrine.” It was already given expression by Jesus Himself (Matt. xxvi. 28, Mark xiv. 24, 1 Cor. xi. 25, Matt. xx. 28, Mark x. 45),⁴ and it is elaborated by the Apostles in a great variety of obviously spontaneous allusions. They not only expressly state that Christ was offered as a sacrifice.⁵ They work out the correspondence between His death

¹ *Jesu Blut ein Geheimnis?* 1906, p. 27.

² *Die christliche Lehre der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung.*³ 1889, Vol. ii, pp. 161 ff.

³ Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, 1902, p. 343 b.

⁴ Fiebig, as cited, p. 19, remarks on the connection in the Jewish mind of the idea of purchasing, ransoming, with sacrifice,—referring to F. Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, etc.² 1897, pp. 313, 324.

⁵ *E.g.*, προσφορά, Eph. v. 2, Heb. x. 10, 14 (for the meaning of προσφορά see Heb. x. 18), θυσία, Eph. v. 2, Heb. ix. 26; cf. Rom. iii. 25, ἱλαστήριον; viii. 3, περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

THE REASONABLENESS OF VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

The present war is often referred to as the illustration and the proof of the failure of Christian Ethics. Were the latter not powerless, it would at least have ameliorated the horrors of the war, if it could not have prevented them. This powerlessness, we are further told, is not due to any defect in Christian Ethics itself, but to "the outworn dogmas" with which it is associated. Among these archaic and paralyzing dogmas the one to which exception is taken most frequently and most strenuously is "the absurd and revolting dogma of Vicarious Atonement;" and because both of its importance in the Christian system and of its "irrational and monstrous" character, it is widely held responsible for the alleged powerlessness of Christian Ethics. However good in itself the latter may be, it must fail with such an incubus around its neck.

It is the aim, therefore, of this paper, first, to show what is meant by vicariousness, especially in relation to the doctrine of atonement; secondly, to establish that nature is a cosmos or system of reason; thirdly, to prove that vicariousness enters into the warp and woof of nature and, therefore, cannot be unreasonable; and, fourthly, to point out its essential reasonableness. Thus we should demonstrate, not only that the doctrine of vicarious atonement is not an incubus to Christian Ethics, but that it is precisely from "this monstrous dogma of the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God" that Christian Ethics draws its power. It is the constraining love of such, that is, a vicarious, Saviour that is the secret of the Christian life.

I. What, then, is vicariousness?—It consists in acting or in experiencing for another or for others. "The degree to which this is done may vary all the way from substitution in the most exhaustive sense, as when one literally, whether by choice or by compulsion, consciously or unconsciously,

takes the place of another, for good or evil, to mere representativeness, as when one represents another and decides for him, and even to action in another's account yet not in any manner of substitution or representativeness." Practically there is no difficulty in recognizing the thing even in its faintest expression. Such is vicariousness in general.

In Christian doctrine it is set forth as operating both to our detriment and to our advantage. The instance of the former is the case of Adam as the federal head and representative of our race. "The covenant [of life] being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression" (*Short. Cat.*, Ans. 16). This fall "brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery" (*Short. Cat.*, Ans. 17), causing them to "lose communion with God, to be under his wrath and curse, and so to be made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever" (*Short. Cat.*, Ans. 19). In a word, Adam took our place so literally that he acted for us: and, hence, "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. v. 12).

The instance of vicariousness which operates to our advantage is Christ. He is called "the second Adam" because he stood for us and took our place as truly as did the first. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. xv. 22); for "him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. v. 21). His death on the cross on account of sin, as a satisfaction to divine justice, was the death of those given to him by the Father in so true a sense that it removed from them the curse of the law as entirely as if they had themselves borne its extreme penalty. His life of perfect obedience to the law was theirs so truly that, sinful though they are in them-

selves, they are regarded by God as clothed in "the perfect righteousness of Christ." His resurrection was literally theirs; for they shall yet be "raised with him in glory" (I Cor. xv. 43 and Eph. ii. 6). His exaltation at the right hand of the Father is theirs; for they shall reign with him forever as kings and priests unto God (Rev. v. 10, xxii. 5). Hence, as in Adam all die, so all in Christ shall be made alive. Not only is the work of both vicarious, but the vicariousness of the one equals that of the other. Neither merely represents us; both act strictly in our place.

Now it is precisely to this that objection is taken, and no objection is urged more frequently or more vehemently. "If all men," it is said, "are under condemnation, it must be wholly because of their own sins; and if they need salvation, it must be achieved altogether by their own good works. Vicariousness is both irrational and monstrous. Every man must stand or fall by himself and for himself." Such is the objection.

II. Nature is a cosmos or system of reason. We do not hold with the idealist that it is only a system of thought-relations, but we do hold with the idealist that it is a system of thought-relations. The proof of this is that we can grow in the understanding of it and are reducing it to science. We can classify its facts. We can describe its processes. To a limited extent we can predict its future. That we do not have wider and more exact knowledge of it, we feel to be due, not to any lack of correspondence between it and our reason, but to want of capacity on our part. It is adapted to the categories of our understanding, but they are not big enough and delicate enough to comprehend and appreciate it. Hence, when we confront mystery in the constitution and course of the world, as we do all the time and more and more, we never give over trying to resolve the mystery. We never suppose that it could not be assimilated with what we know and be explained by it, if only we knew enough; but we believe, and we cannot help believing, that if we knew enough, we should

find nature in all its parts the expression of reason. We do not need to become Hegelians to discover the world to be "a crystallized syllogism." It is because we feel it to be such at bottom that we study it and enjoy it and live in it as we do.

III. Vicariousness enters into the warp and woof of nature. Society depends for its existence on vicariousness. It is because of, and largely as it was determined by, the preceding state of society. Men act for those, and to this extent in the place of those, who shall come after them; and this is the more significant because they do it unintentionally and often unconsciously. They cannot help doing it. Here is the truth in the doctrine of evolution. What is cannot but be conditioned by what was, and in so far forth at least it is evolved out of it. African society is totally different from what it would have been, had it grown out of the society of mediaeval Europe. Thus no age can live to itself. Each age acts, though without appreciating it, for all that follow; and they prosper or suffer accordingly. This is vicariousness. It is one taking the place of others in the sense of acting for them.

Vicariousness appears more strikingly in the family. Parents act vicariously for their children; and they do so, whether they mean to or not. As the family is constituted, it could not be otherwise. The good father's good name must become the heritage of his children. Drunken parents must entail their enfeebled constitution and their tendency to vice on their offspring. Heredity is one of the best established and most strongly emphasized facts of modern science, and heredity is the scientific name for vicariousness. Nature declares as plainly and forcibly as Scripture does that "God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate him, and shows lovingkindness unto a thousand generations of them that love him and keep his commandments" (Ex. xx. 5, 6).

Vicariousness is seen in the nation. This has a life of its own distinct from that of the race or of the family or of the individual. Hence, it has a unity of its own. A national sentiment is formed. National characteristics appear. There is a national conscience, which can be appealed to and which sometimes acts vigorously. Now in this great form of society, the nation, representation, and in so far forth vicariousness, prevails. The men of one time in this national life act for those of another to all intents as if they stood in their place. They determine for them nationally. Their counsels, their actions, often their sufferings, are in large part for those who shall come after them. Thus frequently in the history of the "Chosen People" they are reminded that upon the conduct of those then addressed depends the destiny of those that shall follow them. Nor did they fail to grasp this truth. How well they understood it may be gathered from their awful cry before Pilate when they demanded that Jesus be crucified, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25). They felt that they were acting for the nation that was to be and that they could not help doing so.

The history of every nation will afford illustration. How does vicariousness appear in the history of our own people? The generation at the Revolution determined whether we should develop into a republic. They would have done so, even had they been unconscious of the significance of their acts. They were, however, fully aware of it, and we accept their transactions as for ourselves. In like manner, though we often forget it, are we acting for generations yet to be. With the nation constituted as it is, it must be thus.

So, too, is it in international politics. Its questions—and in proportion to their importance—are settled vicariously. The ambassador represents his government and people and acts for them. Nor is surprise expressed at this. It is felt that it could not be otherwise.

Equally vicarious is government itself. Every form of

it involves the representation of the governed by the governing. The most despotic monarch cannot but act for his subjects. It makes no difference whether he is aware of this or whether they are opposed to it. The loosest democracy, on the other hand, is no more independent individualism at last than the closest autocracy. Vicariousness in the sense of being acted for is as much a necessity as government. As we must have the latter, so we can have it only by means of the former.

Yet more strikingly does vicariousness appear in natural affection. We identify ourselves with those whom we love. The mother enters into the very life of her child. His pain distresses her more than it does him. His pleasure is enjoyed by her more than by the little one himself. In true natural affection there is the capacity for any amount of vicarious joy or suffering. To express itself to the utmost, natural affection must thus assume another almost to identity. He cannot love truly who has no one to live for.

The necessity of vicariousness is recognized in literature. This is important testimony because letters are the expression of human nature. Now no scholar needs to be told that the chief tragedies of the ancient world largely employ the vicarious mode. It enters into their ground structure. This is, if possible, even more characteristic of modern works. Witness Dickens' Sydney Carton in his greatest novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, in which the vicarious mode in its most extreme form, that of substitution, is employed. Moreover, all this is done, not only without apparent unconsciousness of anything unnatural, but with the evident conviction that these examples of vicariousness are perfectly natural.

Again, physical laws operate in correspondence with the various forms of the vicarious. These laws keep us from evading them. Do men try in a storm to rescue an imperilled crew? Natural law exacts vicarious peril. To

save that crew, you must go out to them and share their danger. Would you care for the sick in time of pestilence? To minister to them, you must go where they are and expose yourself to the miasma which is destroying them. So, too, we are slowly beginning to realize that, if the masses are ever to be elevated, it can be only by the moral and cultured living among the immoral and uncultured and thus literally taking their place. Indeed, human and physical nature combine in testifying that if man would redeem his brother, it can be done only by the use of the vicarious mode, and by a far costlier use of it than has ever been made by man.

This truth we are prepared to believe, though we may not be ready to put it into practice. The extreme examples of vicariousness, examples of substitution, in which property and every earthly good and life itself are freely given up for others, excite the highest moral approval of mankind. Nay, men incapable of such actions themselves are impatient with others when, in some great emergency, they fail to put themselves in the place of those exposed to danger. Beyond this, do we not often find men trying to escape evil themselves by having others bear it for them? The idea of intentional vicarious sacrifice is not unfamiliar. No idea is more familiar to the student of the world's religions. Thus it is written in the *Satapatha Brahmana*: "Prajapati, the lord of creatures, gave himself for them; for he became their sacrifice," and in the *Rig Veda* we find expressions such as this: "Do thou, by means of sacrifice, take away from us all sin" (X. 133-6). Nor may it be replied that the universality and the importance of the vicarious mode are explained by the fact of sin. This is true as regards a vicarious sacrifice for sin, but it is not true as regards the use of the vicarious mode in general. That results from the original constitution of nature. It enters, as has been said, into its warp and woof. The development of sin has occasioned the em-

ployment of the vicarious mode in the atonement for sin; but this mode was universally in use before sin came into the world, as, for example, in natural affection. Indeed, since God "knows the end from the beginning," it is not too much to say that, as he from eternity designed to glorify himself supremely by the vicarious sacrifice of the cross; so, in order to it, at the creation he made vicariousness, in one form or another, a controlling, if not the controlling, principle of all the worlds.

The conclusion should be obvious. If nature be admitted, as it is, to be a system of reason, a cosmos, though essentially and throughout vicarious, we cannot consistently object to Christianity on the ground that it teaches that Adam sinned as the representative or federal head of the race and that Christ died as "a ransom for many" (Mk. x. 45). That is, in view of the universal working in nature of the vicarious, reason may not demur because in the Christian revelation we have the supreme example of the vicarious. Whatsoever may be said of the doctrine of vicarious atonement, it may not be stigmatized as "monstrous"; it must be admitted to be natural and so rational. It is the unique, because the highest, form of the principle which dominates the cosmos.

IV. The reasonableness of this "outworn" doctrine, and especially its singularly high ethical character and tendency, appear in the following particulars:

(1). It is a possible doctrine. That is, penalty or reward can be transferred from one person to another consistently with justice. This does not mean that moral character can be so transferred. There is no more self-evident truth than that virtue and vice are personal and only personal. Neither is, or can be, vicarious. Morally, a young man is what he himself is, not what his father is. The latter may be the most pious man that ever lived; but while the tendency of this should be to make the son pious, and while it will inure to his advantage in other ways, it

will not be in any sense his piety. The father will wish that it could be, but he cannot have it so. No one can be virtuous with the virtue of another. This is just as true in our relation to God. Even those who are absolutely justified by faith on the ground of the perfect righteousness of Christ are still in themselves very far from righteous. It is not likely that they are holier than Paul; and yet after he had been "justified by faith" and had found "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," he discovered that when he would do good evil was present with him, so that the good that he would he did not and the evil that he would not that he did (Rom. vii. 19, 21). Because of Christ's righteousness no longer under condemnation, he felt that he deserved condemnation because of his own sinfulness. Vicarious atonement cannot mean, therefore, that our Saviour transfers his perfect character to us, or that we transfer our sinfulness to him. In the moral sense no one can *be* righteous with the righteousness of another, or sinful with the sinfulness of another. To hold that he could, would be as absurd and as monstrous as that white could *be* black or black *be* white. So far there is no controversy.

Because, however, character as a quality of a person can not be transferred from one to another, it does not follow that the relation of a person to penalty for bad character or to reward for good character cannot be so transferred. This is an entirely different matter. We have been considering moral states, we are now considering legal relationships. We might, therefore, expect that what we have found to be true of the one we should not find to be true of the other.

Such is the case. Dr. Shedd remarks: "The punishment inflicted by justice is aimed, strictly speaking, not at the *person* of the transgressor, but at his *sin*. The wrath of God falls upon the human soul considered as an *agent*, not as a *substance*. The spiritual essence or nature of man

is God's own work, and he is not angry at his own work, and does not hate anything which he has created from nothing. Man's substance is not sin. Sin is the activity of this substance; and this is man's work. God is displeased with this activity, and visits it with retribution. Consequently, justice punishes the sin rather than the sinner, the agency rather than the agent, the act rather than the person. It does not fix its eye upon the transgressor as this particular *entity*, and insist that this very entity shall suffer, and prohibit any other entity from suffering for him. Justice, it is true, is not obliged to allow substitution, but neither is it obliged to forbid it. If it were true that the penalty must be inflicted upon the transgressor's very substance and person itself, as well as upon the sin in his person, then there could be no substitution. The very identical personal essence that had sinned must suffer, and justice would be the only attribute which God could manifest towards a sinner" (Dog. Theol., Vol. ii, p. 451). But as we have seen, the case is radically different, and the way is at least open for a righteous substitute as regards the bearing of penalty or the receiving of reward. This is involved in the reference of punishment and of reward. Either is impersonal.

It will follow, therefore, that while no one can be personally virtuous with the virtue of another, and while no one can be personally bad with the badness of another, the legal consequences of righteousness or of sin may be transferred from one to another, if the latter is in some way reasonably responsible therefor. That is, your goodness cannot make me good; but the reward of your goodness may come to me, if the connection between us be such that in some reasonable sense I am responsible for your goodness. In like manner the punishment of my sin may be visited upon you, if we stand in such a relation to one another that in some reasonable sense my sin may be regarded as yours. But is there or can there be such a sense? This is *the* question. We have seen that the way is open for substitution, if it can be made justly. Now can

it be so made? Is there a reasonable sense in which one can be held responsible for what another does or is or for what another does not or is not?

Such a sense there may be. "Every good jurist knows that there are other ways in which moral responsibility may attach besides the personal doing of the responsible acts, as by the voluntary assumption of the responsibility for the sake of some consideration." Thus if I give my bond for your behavior and you misbehave, I forfeit my bond. I have entered into such a relation to you that, though I myself have done nothing wrong, I may reasonably be held responsible for the wrong which you have done. Again, if a police officer were to hire a gunman to murder an enemy of his, and that murder were committed, the officer as well as the gunman would be held guilty; and both, and both equally, would be held guilty of murder, and that though the officer himself had actually murdered no one. Nor may it be said that it was his intention to have murder committed, and that because of his intention to murder, he was guilty of murder. Human law does not electrocute and ought not to electrocute any for the worst intentions. It may not punish intentions at all. No, the famous Becker case proves that there are ways in which responsibility may be incurred otherwise than through personal action. It is being done on all sides.

It is true that the use of the vicarious mode is much limited by the diminution of barbarism; that penal substitution is not often employed in this age; and that human sacrifices have long been done away, and were never allowed by Christianity or Judaism.

From this, however, it may not be inferred, though by many it is inferred, that vicariousness itself is unethical. The true reason why penal substitution is not much employed in this age and why it would seem to be forbidden in Scripture, as in Deut. xxiv. 16, is that usually no substitute can be found who can fulfil the conditions requisite for

the proper application of the principle, and not because the principle itself is wrong. For example, there must be the free consent of the proposed substitute. It would be monstrous to force any one of you to pay a debt of mine, or to go to prison in my stead, or to die in the electric chair for me. A grosser violation of the rights of personality there could not be than such compelled substitution. But ordinarily only such substitution would be possible. The spirit of self-sacrifice is not common enough or developed enough to admit of any other kind except in the rarest cases; and though most of us would be willing even to die for some others, few of us would be willing to die for those who are brought before our criminal courts.

And if we were, that would not help the situation. It would not be always nor often nor for all that we should have the right to die. Life is a trust from God, and it may be laid aside only as his precepts and promises, interpreted by his Spirit, indicate. Damon might be ready to die for his friend Phintias, but Damon's wife would certainly and rightly have much to say against it. She would urge that her husband owed duties to her which were inconsistent with his becoming Phintias' substitute. Precisely thus no one of us is his own master. Each one of us has his own place to fill; and as no one can be in two places at once, so no one can fill his own place and take another's, too. The only exception is the rare one when your brother's place becomes identical with yours. When, however, and how this occurs and how it may be known that it occurs—all this depends on our relation to that realm of the spirit which the civil law may not enter and of which it may not judge. The objection, therefore, that we are considering does not bear on the rightfulness of the vicarious principle. It only calls attention to and explains the obvious fact that in its higher forms it is and should be employed but little in our courts. It raises no obstacle to its right use in the court of heaven, if only a properly

qualified and duly appointed substitute could be obtained.

Now Christ is such. He fulfills perfectly every condition. A beast might not be substituted for men: it would be too far beneath them. An angel might not be substituted for men: he would be too different from them. Christ, however, became "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." Through the mystery of the incarnation, the Son of God he was also the Son of man. He made himself one of us that he might take our place, that he might bear our sins, that he might render our obedience, that he might fill us with his life, that he might raise us to his throne. All this he did voluntarily. No one compelled, or persuaded, or invited him to take the place of another. He laid down his life of himself. No one took it from him (John x. 18). Twelve legions of angels and more stood ready to deliver him from the cross, but he would not call on them (Matt. xxvi. 53). "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" he asked (John xviii. 11). And this cup his Father gave to him only because he stretched out his hand to take it. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 7, Heb. x. 7). Could there have been a more conscious and willing substitute?

Then, too, he could take our guilt because he had none of his own to bear. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). He was "Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John ii. 1). He was the only begotten (I John iv. 9) and well beloved Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased (Matt. iii. 17). The bankrupt cannot pay the debt of the bankrupt; the criminal cannot take the place of the criminal: but Christ could die as "a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45), because he had nothing to pay for himself; he could be made sin for us and in our stead, because he himself "knew no sin" (II Cor. v. 21).

So, too, he had the right thus to offer himself. "Very

God of very God," he had the autocracy of his own life. "I have power," that is, authority, he said, "to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x. 18). We are limited by laws and duties, but laws or duties could not bind or limit him. His nature is the foundation of law and the ground of duty; and, consequently, the necessity of his being must be that he shall do "according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. iv. 35).

Finally, being himself infinite because God, his substitution of himself for us must have infinite worth and so be adequate for "the sin of the world" or of all the worlds. More need not be said to show that Christ was fitted in all respects to be our substitute, were God in his sovereign grace to decide on that way of satisfying his justice and to appoint him to do it. As in the nature of the case this way was open to God should a proper substitution be found, so in Christ we discern that substitute. This, then, establishes our contention. The "monstrous" doctrine of vicarious atonement is a possible doctrine. That is, it is in no wise inconsistent with justice.

(2). It is essentially and evidently just. This may be shown by pressing the question, Whom does it injure? God, the law-giver, is not wronged. The plan is his own, and he formed it without any compulsion save that of his own love for men. He "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). Moreover, God gains in this way a nobler satisfaction to the penal claims of the law, and to his own holiness, than he could gain by the punishment of the sinners themselves. On the latter supposition the satisfaction would be finite; as it is, it is infinite.

Again, the Saviour is not injured. He gives his own free consent to the plan. He does so, as has been remarked, without constraint or persuasion. He lays down his life

of himself. No one takes it from him (John x. 18). And then he himself gains; he does not lose, by so doing. It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. xii. 2). It was because "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that God highly exalted him and gave him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9-11). That is, our Saviour's exaltation as Mediator to the right hand of God was the reward of his humiliation and suffering in our stead.

Once more, we ransomed sinners are not injured by the method of vicarious atonement. It secures for us deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, freedom from the law as a condition of life, redemption from all evil, adoption into the family of God, moral influences incomparably noble, and blessed union with Christ forever "in heavenly places" (Eph. ii. 6) as "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. v. 10). All this is ours because our Lord was "made sin for us." Nothing of this could have been ours, had he not "died, the just for the unjust" (I Peter iii. 18).

So, too, the unsaved are not injured. They receive only what they deserve. The everlasting punishment which is their portion is simply the just demand of that life which they have freely chosen and in which they have wilfully persisted. They have no one to blame but themselves. Because in the exercise of his sovereignty God has, in revealing and applying redemption through Christ, shown grace to many which he has not shown to them, it does not follow that they have been wronged. The punishment which they receive consequent on having been thus passed over in the bestowal of grace is still, and as much as ever, the punishment of their own sin; it is only their due, and it is *all* that is their *due*. Grace cannot be any one's *due*.

Finally, none of God's innocent subjects in all the uni-

verse are injured, because the vicarious redemption of believing sinners originated a grand system of moral influences far sweeter, nobler and more efficacious than those which they would have experienced without it. It is the mystery into which the "angels desire to look" (I Peter i. 12), and its working out in the development of the Church now makes "known unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10).

Thus the interests of all concerned have been considered, and all the interests of all of these have been found to be safe guarded by the method of vicarious atonement. That is, no one is injured by it. But, as Dr. Dabney asks (*Christ our Penal Substitute*, p. 86), "How can there be injustice when no one is injured?"

Yet this is not all. This "monstrous" doctrine of vicarious atonement is not only, as we have been seeing, essentially just. It also

(3) Exalts and promotes righteousness as is not done, and as could not be done, in any other way. This will appear when we remember that the satisfaction offered for us and in our stead to the law of God by Christ is, as has already been pointed out, infinite. It is the sacrifice of a divine being. Consequently, it has the infinite worth of an infinite person; just as the act of a man has, and must have, the worth of a man rather than that of a beast. Hence, when God offered up his own Son on the cross as the sacrifice for those whom, out of his sovereign grace, he had chosen in him, he made an infinite satisfaction to his law. Had he, however, suffered each sinner to bear in his own person the penalty of his own sin, the satisfaction made would have been but finite. But as much, therefore, as the infinite surpasses the finite, by so much does the death of Christ in our stead magnify and exalt the righteousness of God. It is an infinite rather than a finite satisfaction to his justice.

And this is not all. Strictly, it is, and only it can be,

an adequate in the sense of an exact satisfaction for the sin of the world or even for the sin of any sinner. Because committed against God, that is, against an infinite being, every sin is an infinite offence and so deserves an infinite penalty. Such no man, and not even the whole race of men, can pay; for even the everlasting punishment of such cannot be infinite, inasmuch as it has, and must have, a beginning. Hence, while the everlasting punishment of sin in the persons of the sinners themselves is a real satisfaction to justice—for being the utmost that they can render, it is all that justice may require,—it is not an exact satisfaction. That can be paid only by an infinite being; by “the Lamb of God,” who, because the “Lamb of God,” must offer, “once for all,” an atonement absolutely sufficient for “the sins of the whole world” (I John ii. 2). Could, then, the righteousness of God, the eternal necessity of his justice, be emphasized so strongly as by this “monstrous” dogma of the Son of God giving himself for sinners?

Again, by the vicarious atonement of Christ the law of God is fulfilled as precept no less than as penalty. The penalty of the law is paid by the everlasting punishment of the sinner as far as a finite being can pay it, but there is more than the penalty of the law to be considered. The law requires obedience to its precepts as really as it demands the endurance of its punishment. But this obedience, the impenitent sinner, since he is “dead through trespasses and sins,” can render no more than the electrocuted corpse can keep the law of the land. Nor is the case altered materially, if the sinner be penitent. Though now “alive unto righteousness,” he is far from being delivered from the power of sin; and by its very nature the law of God can be satisfied only by perfect obedience. Hence, if all righteousness is to be fulfilled by anyone so that he may become right before God’s law, it can be only as one qualified and appointed to act for him and in his place “fulfills all right-

eousness" for him and in his stead. But this is precisely what Christ did and came to do. Not only was *he* "made sin for us who knew no sin" (II Cor. v. 21), but "by his obedience shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). Could there be a clearer proof of the ethical nature and tendency of this "monstrous dogma" of vicarious atonement? Its purpose and its result is the fulfillment of "all righteousness." It vindicates the law of God as precept no less than as penalty.

But this is not all. God has other attributes than justice. If he is only just, he is not truly just. That is, if he is only just, he is not all that he ought to be. Though we may not claim mercy from him, he must *be* merciful as well as just. Were this not so, goodness could not be, as we are taught that it is, one of his most conspicuous attributes. How, then, is it in this respect with his method of vicarious atonement? Do his love and grace appear in it as really as his justice?—Yes, and more impressively, were that possible. As Dr. Shedd has remarked, (*Dog. Theol.* ii, p. 446), "The vicarious satisfaction of justice is the highest mode or form of mercy, because it is mercy in the form of self-sacrifice." As applied to God, it may be added, this is specially true. He is under no necessity, objective or subjective, to make such an atonement. The demands of the law could be met by the endurance of everlasting punishment by all men. It must be, then, that, as our Lord says, the atonement was the gift of God's love for the world (John iii. 16). Not only, however, did it thus originate in the divine love, but love, grace, manifests itself more and more at each step in its development. In the first place, the offended party, God, permits a substitution of penalty. In the second place, the offended party, God, provides the substitute. In the third place, the offended party, God, substitutes himself for the offender. That is, the infinite and eternal Judge allows, prepares and is the substitute for the criminal. "How hast thou loved us," says

Augustine, "for whom he who thought it no robbery to be equal with thee was made subject even to the death of the cross; for us both victor and victim, the victor because victim; for us both priest and sacrifice, and priest because sacrifice" (*Conf.*, x. 43) Wessel writes: "Ipse Deus, ipse sacerdos, ipse hostia, pro se, de se, sibi satisfecit" (*De Causis Incarnationis*, XVII).

Nor is there force in the objection that because the atonement meets the demand of justice, there can be in it no exercise of mercy. Our *Larger Catechism* gives the answer, "Although Christ by his obedience and death did make a . . . full satisfaction to God's justice in behalf of them that are justified; yet, inasmuch as God accepteth the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith, which also is his gift, their justification is to them of free grace" (Ans. 71). The demonstration of the love of God is in the fact that he is too just to forgive sin without an atonement which only he himself could provide, and could provide only in himself. What must not that love be which can even rejoice in such self-sacrifice?

Finally, vicarious atonement is the foundation of moral renovation and sanctification. This is so for two reasons. One is that, as we have just seen, it is in the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God for sinners that divine love reaches its climax and so makes its most moving appeal to the human heart. Who can "survey the wondrous cross" and not feel that "love so amazing, so divine, demands his soul, his life, his all?" The other reason is that the sacrifice of Christ in our stead, for our salvation from the penalty of sin, reconciles us to God and his justice to us, and so opens the way for and, indeed, necessitates the gift of his Spirit to save us from the power of sin and to develop within us the graces of the Christian character. "He that spared

not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

Such, then, is the argument. The vicarious principle cannot be essentially unreasonable; for it enters into the warp and woof of nature. As applied to our redemption, it need not be inconsistent with justice and high morality. Indeed, it is evidently just; for it injures none of the interests of those concerned. Most important of all, it exalts and promotes righteousness as could be done in no other way; for it provides an infinite satisfaction to the justice of God; it fulfils his law as precept no less than as penalty; it is the greatest proof and exhibition of the divine love; it is the mightiest power for moral renovation.

Can such a doctrine be an incubus about the neck of any truly moral system? Must not such a system find its only sufficient motive in the constraining love of such a vicarious Saviour? Can contempt of the cross be explained otherwise than on the ground that unitarian conceptions of God make it logically impossible for one to understand it and so must result in failure to appreciate it?

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