

THE ATONEMENT THROUGH SYMPATHY.

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Walter Henry Pater, in his *Marius the Epicurean*,* says, "The constituent practical difference between men" is "their capacity for sympathy." He who is able to apprehend most clearly the wretchedness of those in distress, to feel their sorrows most keenly, to go down to the lowest depths of their misery and suffer with them is rightly esteemed the greatest. Whenever such a man appears, the multitude hails him as a hero.

Now, it is a matter of common observation that those who are purest and best most deeply sympathize with those in misery. To be sure some who have gone to great lengths in sin and crime are at times touched with pity, when they see their friends or neighbors suddenly overwhelmed in some dire calamity. But such cases are exceptional. One of the most awful effects of sin is to harden the heart, to blunt the moral sensibilities. It dries up the fountain of sympathy and tends to make men dead to the woes of others, while the spiritual renewal of men and their consequent fellowship with God in Christ gives them an ever enlarging capacity for sympathy. And the more Christlike they become the more broad and profound is their capacity to suffer with others.

But Christ Himself is absolutely perfect both in knowledge and in compassion. He not only apprehends all the miseries of our race, but through His sympathy and incarnation is identified with all who suffer. Not a sigh bursts from the lips of any one however obscure that He does not hear; not a tear stains any human cheek that He does not see; there is not a quivering nerve, nor a throbbing brain, nor an aching heart that does not

* Vol. 2, p. 203.

stir the depths of His divine compassion. Since He is the God-man He bears on His infinite yet human heart the infirmities, the distresses, the manifold woes of the whole sinful human race.

Let us now note briefly some references in the Gospels to His wonderful sympathy. Again and again we are told that He was moved with compassion, or that He had compassion on those in distress. His miracles of healing were but the outflow of His sympathy. Seeing misery and being conscious that He had the power to alleviate it, His pity spontaneously expressed itself in healing disease, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, and at times in raising the dead, that He might thereby wipe away the tears of the bereaved. In the Gospels, we have specific accounts of scarcely a hundredth part of these miracles of mercy. The great mass of them are barely indicated by general statements, as in Mark 1:32-34.

Later in His ministry, when in controversy with the Pharisees, Christ appealed to the signs wrought by Him as a conclusive proof of His divine mission, but He did not work them just to show that He was sent by God. They were but the natural expression of His tender sympathy with those in sharp distress. Being so understood, they become all the stronger evidence that Jesus was sent by His and our Father to be the Saviour of lost men.

But the religious condition of the multitudes, blighted by sin, and crushed under the burdens laid upon them by their professed teachers, specially broke up the fountain of His compassion, "because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd."

At times His sympathy with those in trouble vented itself in tears. But Jesus was no weakling; He was the most manly of men. No one ever exceeded Him in down-right courage. In the teeth of adverse public opinion, He always calmly and resolutely said and did what He knew to be right. The threats of those in authority,

clothed with all the power of government, never caused Him to swerve a hair's breadth from the straight line of duty. When no one at Jerusalem cared or dared to cleanse the temple from mammon and restore it to spiritual service, He did it single-handed with a scourge of cords. When, standing under oath before the judges of the Sanhedrin, He knew that the confession of the truth as to who He was would nail Him to a Roman cross, without the slightest evasion He made it. He not only answered the question put to Him by the high priest, but lifted the curtain of the future that His august questioner might catch a glimpse of His future glory, majesty and power. But His cheeks that never paled before the face of clay, at times, through sympathy for others, were wet with tears. "Jesus wept." When we consider who He was, these two words are the sublimest utterance of all literature. He came to Bethany, where lived three of His dearest friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. But four days before, Lazarus had died; still He claimed that He could wake him out of his sleep. So He went with the grief-stricken sisters towards their brother's tomb, and His sympathy with them was so profound that it expressed itself in trickling tears.

We turn from this touching domestic scene to an exhibition of Jesus' sympathy national in its scope. He was going up to Jerusalem for the last time. He came to the brow of Olivet. The city beyond the valley of the Kedron was in full view—the city that had so often rejected and stoned to death God's prophets, and now had rejected Him, and was about to demand His crucifixion at the hands of the Gentiles. He, however, seemed quite oblivious to the crowning wrong and shame that He was so soon to suffer, and, without a thought of self, poured out the full tide of His sympathy on the doomed city. As He looked upon it, He could not suppress His tears.

His triumphal entry into it was just at hand. Already the rejoicing multitude was crying, "Hosanna to

the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Already they were strowing palm-branches and their loose-flowing robes in His pathway; but His ear was deaf to their praises and glad shouts of welcome, and His eye was blind to the splendid pageant. While the multitude rejoiced, He wept. He cried, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace!" Jesus left that sentence unfinished; it ended in silent tears, more eloquent than words. After a little, recovering Himself, He added; "But now they are hid from thine eyes."

To be sure, in His cry we catch the note of fervid, national patriotism. As a Jewish citizen, if nothing more, the impending destruction of Jerusalem well nigh broke His heart. His emotional utterance brings to mind the plaintive words of the Jewish captives in Babylon:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her skill.
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy." (Ps. 137.)

But while the patriotic note is unmistakably heard in the cry of Jesus, it is but a sad undertone. The spiritual destruction of the people was the thought that pierced Him through and through. This is clear from His cognate cry, twice repeated. Comparatively early in His ministry, when, according to Luke, He was going up to Jerusalem, some Pharisees warned Him to get away, since Herod wished to kill Him. But in spite of the bloody threat, He determined to go on boldly with His work, saying that "it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Then overwhelmed with the thought of the inevitable destruction of the city, He cried; "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not." Here we see that it was the *spiritual* destruction of her "children" that stirred the deepest depths of His sympathy.

Once more the same cry burst from His lips. It was the last Passover week. Jesus was in Jerusalem. He delivered a remarkable address both to His disciples and to the Pharisees, unmasking the sins of the latter and appealing to His followers to avoid them. In this speech He pronounced upon the chief men of His nation seven woes so awful that they sound like seven thunders of divine judgment in the midst of His gospel of grace. But even these terrible words pulsated with His love. It was the last great effort of Christ to awaken the consciences of the Pharisees and win them to Himself, so the thunder of His wrath ended in a divine sob, as He cried "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem." He stood within the walls of the sacred city when He uttered for the second time these words. It was the headquarters of those whom He addressed and denounced to their faces. "Verily," He said, "all these things shall come upon this generation," and "thy children" is again the burden of His soul. That they should reject Him, their Saviour, for whose coming they had so long looked and perish in their unbelief, broke His heart.

But His matchless sympathy was not hemmed in by state boundaries. A great apostolic writer says that "in the days of his flesh," He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." These words evidently portray the agony of Christ in Gethsemane. He had wept over Jerusalem, which was the life and heart of His nation; in the garden He now wept over a lost world. To save it He resigned Himself to death,

with all that that awful word signifies. His prayer, that He might be delivered from death, was answered in His complete submission to the divine will, which was the unmistakable undertone of every petition that He offered in Gethsemane, "not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Here, just before His death on the cross, we see how His overflowing sympathy encircled the globe, embracing all nations, kindreds and tongues. In the garden and on the cross the sin of our race pressed down on His heart like the superincumbent weight of a mountain. He sweat great drops of blood. He cried out, but it was the strong cry of perfect manhood. Tears coursed down His cheeks; they were the tears of the Son of God and of the Son of man, and they expressed the unbounded love of God for, and the unfathomable sympathy of God with, man.

But He Himself has given a far more profound expression of His tender, brooding sympathy with all men than has fallen from the lips or flowed from the pen of any of His apostles. He was consciously near the close of His earthly life. Gethsemane lay just before Him; a little beyond it was the cross. To His disciples He had more than once announced His death. They were bewildered and perplexed. Not apprehending the nature of His kingdom, His preannounced death seemed to them irretrievable disaster. He sat on the Mount of Olives. The disciples, filled with apprehension and fear, gathered around Him. Full of pity for them, He tried to enlighten them, to tell them what His Kingdom was and what His going away from them meant. He took them beyond the dispensation which by His ministry had been ushered in to the time when He shall come in His glory to judge all men. He drew before them a picture of the general judgment, so clear, so simple, so sublime that it has entered into and shaped the thought of the whole Christian era in reference to the future state of the righteous and the wicked. And the crown of His match-

less statement is the reply of the Judge to the humble righteous, who are unable to recall the good deeds that He declares they have done to Him. "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." He so completely identifies Himself with them, that he who feeds one of them feeds Him, he that clothes one of them clothes Him, he who takes a homeless one under his roof and cares for him, shelters and cares for Christ Himself; he who honors one of His brethren honors Him; he who neglects or despises one of them, even the least, neglects or despises Him.

But how is such identification effected? how brought about? Not by extinguishing personality, not by monism, which teaches that the universe, man and God are one substance; which so obliterates personality as to destroy personal responsibility and accountability. For while all monists are not pantheists, all monism is pantheism. But the great Teacher, while identifying Himself with His people, is still their Judge, and calls them to account for what they have, and have not done.

But what did Jesus mean by "my brethren"? what do these words include? None will doubt that Christ included in the phrase, "my brethren," His own followers. They bear His likeness, possess His spirit and by virtue of their regeneration or re-creation are His sons and daughters. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews probably had in mind the words of Jesus, on which we comment, when he wrote, "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he," in His glorified state, "is not ashamed," or delights, "to call them brethren." Other Scriptures tell us that believers are in Christ and Christ is in them; so that whatever is done to them is done to Him. On this basis the glorified Saviour appealed to Saul of Tarsus, who was cruelly maltreating some of the early disciples, "Saul, Saul, why persecute thou me?"

But did not Christ include in the phrase, "my brethren," more than His undoubted followers? did he not designate by it all men? Those that may differ on this point still agree on some fundamental facts. They alike hold that God made man in His own image, and that, on the ground of spiritual likeness, man was God's child. But since man by sin lost his spiritual likeness to God and his fellowship with Him, he imperatively needs to be created anew by the Spirit. By this re-creation the sinner is restored to right relation to God, to likeness to God, to fellowship with God, to the glad recognition that God is his Father and the joyful consciousness that he is God's child. On the basis of creation man is a child of God, by his re-creation in Christ Jesus he is brought to see this, and to act in conformity to it. Jesus taught Nicodemus that when he should be born from above by the Spirit he then could see the kingdom of God; so a sinner by a spiritual rebirth or re-creation comes to see or apprehend that God is his Father and that he is God's child. But whether he apprehends it or not the fact remains that by creation man was made God's child and Christ's brother. If this be true, then the words of Christ, "my brethren," include not only regenerated and saved souls but all men.

This conclusion is greatly strengthened by the fact that Jesus claimed to be both the Son of God and the Son of man; identified with God on the one hand and with man on the other. In Matt. 25, when proclaiming the general judgment, He asserts that He, "the Son of man," is to be the judge of all men. When in conflict with the Pharisees, John 5, He made the same claim that He was to be the judge of all, and that His authority to execute judgment is based on the fact that "he is the Son of man." Having the nature of men, and being thereby identified with them, He is fitted to be their judge. It is in announcing His judgment of all men that He uses the phrase, "my brethren," making it strongly

probable that He included in it every individual of our race.

If by "my brethren" the disciples of Christ are alone meant, then if a man has compassion on a heathen, or on one depraved and vile in a Christian land, and helps him when in distress, his act of mercy cannot be adjudged as done to Christ, although it may be an act of greater charity, of profounder self-abnegation than if it had been expended on a lovable Christian. It may have required the very highest possible expression of love,—love to an enemy. To limit Christ's words, "my brethren," to His followers would exclude the Good Samaritan from the blessing of having done his compassionate work to the Lord. Nor can we forget that Jesus Himself was most deeply touched with the condition of the godless; His own countrymen, wandering from God without any true and competent teachers, aroused His deepest sympathy. It was *apostate* Jerusalem that broke up the fountain of His tears; a lost world wrung out His heart's blood in Gethsemane; and did He by the phrase, "my brethren," exclude all, who, like Him, weep over, and toil to save, the lost, from the ineffable blessing of being assured that they have done it unto Him? Shall Judson's years of sympathetic toil, before even one idolater savingly received his message, be regarded as not done to Christ, while what he thereafter did to his *saved* brother must be so regarded? Is it not more reasonable to place in the category of Christ's brethren all that wear the human form, and conclude that He regards whatever good we may do to mortal man as done to Him?

Growing out of this, how mighty is the motive to treat courteously, kindly, justly, yea more, to love, and to sympathize with, even the least, the most ignorant, the most depraved of our fellow men. Whatever we do to any one of them, we do to the eternal Lord of us all. How this matchless teaching of Jesus exalts man as

such! How inconceivably sacred it reveals man's person to be!

Now, if we make no mistake, the fact so clearly taught in the Scriptures that Christ through His sympathy and incarnation is identified with our race, solves in a reasonable, natural way some of the profoundest facts connected with our redemption.

First, Christ's suffering, since He was sinless, has always been a baffling mystery. On the surface of things, so far as our observation and experience extend, sin and suffering are always indissolubly yoked together. Where men are most intensely selfish and corrupt, where they most unconstrainedly indulge their bodily appetites and passions, and, regardless of the rights and happiness of others, seek their ambitious ends, there, other things being equal, is the greatest suffering. Where there is most of purity, the largest benevolence, where men most generally seek the highest good and greatest happiness of one another, there is the profoundest peace and the most exultant joy.

But while such general statements are unquestionably true, they make no distinction between physical and mental distress, between aching nerves and the anguish of the soul. There is, to say the least, bodily suffering where there is no sin. So far as we know, beasts do not and cannot sin, but they suffer physically. They fight and tear each other with tooth and claw, and devour each other. Men maim and slay them. Outside of their cruel internecine strifes, man inflicts upon them their greatest distresses. Nor is their suffering wholly physical; they also suffer through fear. Affrighted they flee at the approach of their enemies, whether they be stronger beasts or unpitying men. If they suffer in mind anything more than fear, we cannot ascertain it. At all events, apart from sin, here is suffering, whose metes and bounds we cannot very clearly discern.

Moreover, infants suffer. To be sure they are bound up with our sinful race. To them, by the inexorable law of heredity, is imparted the taint of, and the tendency to, sin. But they have not voluntarily transgressed any law. And while they are unlike God, they are not responsible for it. They have no guilt, yet they suffer. Like animals they have both physical distress and fear, and sometimes grieve on account of neglect. Beyond this we cannot trace their suffering.

Frankly and fully taking into account these incontrovertible facts in reference to the suffering of sinless beasts and guiltless infants, we will now examine, as thoroughly as we can, the vast and difficult subject of the sufferings of the spotless Christ.

We first naturally turn to His temptations or trials arising from poverty, hunger, thirst and weariness, from the artfully seductive suggestions of the devil, from ambition, from unjust and cruel usage, and from the bitter taunts of His insolent foes. He was, says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, "one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb-4:15) "For in that he himself hath *suffered* being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." (2:18)

To these ordinary trials of Jesus, we must add the manifold woes and distresses of men, taken up by Him through sympathy into His perfect mind and heart. While we, on account of the deadening by sin of our moral sensibilities, can, at the best but partially feel the miseries of others, He, the immaculate Christ, through sympathy felt them in all their fulness and keenness. With this fact in mind let us reverently look in upon the mystery of Christ's agony in Gethsemane.

The first thing that arrests our attention is that His suffering was not physical, except so far as His body suffered through its vital connection with His mind. No hard hand of violence had yet been laid upon Him. To-

ward midnight, He went to the garden or park with the eleven. As He entered it, He felt within His soul the mysterious, rising, surging tides of woe. When in great mental distress, men often desire to be alone, or with those with whom they are in closest intimacy. Jesus therefore said to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray." Already His distress was so acute that He felt that He could be relieved only by pouring His bursting heart into the infinite, compassionate heart of His Father. But also craving human sympathy, He chose three disciples, in whom He probably most confided, to go with Him farther into the garden, where they might be beyond ear-shot of the rest. As they walked on these disciples saw, even in the moonlight, that the face of their Lord was clouded with inexpressible sadness, that His eyes betokened strange amazement, and that He was sorely troubled. He evidently marked their anxious solicitude for Him and, in explanation of the woeful expression of His face, said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Then longing for human sympathy on the one hand and for divine help on the other, He said to the three disciples, "Abide ye here and watch with me;" then He "went forward a little," and falling on His face, prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He thus poured out His soul three times, returning, at the close of both the first and second agonizing petitions to the three disciples, to whom He appealed for sympathy. His agony of spirit was unprecedented, marvelous, matchless. His body betokened it. As He prayed, Luke says, "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood, falling down upon the ground."

How can we account for such excruciating suffering of soul in the spotless Son of God? Some have taken the superficial ground that He shrank with unutterable horror from death on a Roman cross; that in view of it He

agonized in prayer, shed bitter tears and sweat blood. There is not, however, a scintilla of evidence in the Gospels that He ever feared mere physical death. Such a view makes a coward of Him, makes Him in sturdy manhood less than hosts even of His weakest disciples, who, out of fidelity to Him, have endured deaths more painful than that of the cross, without complaint or even a tremor, yea more, sometimes with songs of triumph on their lips. Such a baseless, unworthy view of our Lord need not further detain us.

Moreover, in explanation of Jesus' agony in the garden conscience is of course excluded. When, with an unclouded mind, a wicked man approaches death, his past life, deeply stained by sin, stands vividly before him. Conscience wakes from its torpor and stings him; remorse bites him. He begins to feel the gnawings of the worm that dies not, the withering touch of the unquenchable fire. But Jesus was sinless. He never prayed for forgiveness, because He did not need it. He claimed that He always did what pleased the Father. He had no regret for any thought that He had ever cherished, for any word that He had ever spoken, nor for any deed that He had ever done. He looked back over a life of wonderful beneficence. He had opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, loosed dumb tongues, straightened crippled limbs, cleansed loathed lepers, cast out demons, raised the dead, dried the tears of mourners, and preached to the neglected and despised poor the good news of God's love to all men, even to the meanest of them. Yet, while knowing His absolute integrity, and having the unmistakable approval of His conscience and of His Father, His suffering in Gethsemane was so great, that no finite intellect can fathom it. The only possible solution of it, it seems to me, is found in Christ's identification with our race. His sympathy with us was so profound and so absolutely perfect that He felt, as though they were His own, our sharpest distresses. The

culmination of His suffering in Gethsemane was death. He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But what did He mean by death?

In whatever order of being death occurs, we find that it is a separation. When a plant dies, what we call its life, known only by its manifestation, is separated from the root, stalk and leaf, which consequently wither and decay. When an animal dies life is separated from its flesh, blood and bones, which then soon crumble to dust. In the same way man as animal dies; but he is both material and spiritual, has both body and soul; is linked on the one hand to the beasts that perish, and on the other hand to God. As spirit he is made to live in fellowship with God. But when he sins his union with God ceases. He is separated from Him, and that separation is spiritual death, death in its essence; and that death is the penalty of sin. When, therefore, Christ declared that He was sorrowful even unto death, He spoke of spiritual death, sorrowful even unto separation from God; sorrowful because through His divine sympathy He began to feel the awfulness of that separation; began to know by experience the fearful misery of the transgressor, suffering the penalty due to sin. Back from such an experience He shrank with "strong crying and tears," and in inconceivable agony prayed that that cup, if it were possible, might pass away from Him.

But Gethsemane and the cross are halves of one sphere. Christ's experience in the garden reaches its climax on Calvary. In the one we have His sorrow even unto death, unto separation from God, on the other His appalling cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Did God forsake Him? He never forsakes any soul that sincerely seeks Him, however imperfect and unworthy that soul may be. Much less did He forsake His only begotten Son, who was one with Him and always perfectly did His will. How then shall we interpret this amazing, despairing cry of Christ?

He was our elder brother; He had our nature and our experiences, yet without sin. And He had also entered into a profounder and more intimate union with mankind than most Christian thinkers of the ages have ever seemed to conceive. His sympathy with men, lost in sin, was perfect. His heart was the infinite heart of God. He was capable of taking up into it all the woes of our sinful race. And in His unbounded compassion He did not fail to enter fully into the awful experience of those, made to live in fellowship with God, who yet were separated from Him by their transgressions. Through His divine sympathy with them, He felt within His own soul all their woe. And when on His cross He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we hear in those awful words the wail of a lost race.

Now, the only possible sense in which the sinless Christ could bear the sins of men is that He voluntarily bore the penalty justly due to sin. And this penalty was not laid upon Him from without. We have no evidence of any mechanical arrangement between the persons of the triune God, that one should mete out the penalty of sin, and that another, called the second person of the Trinity, should receive it. On the contrary, in the most natural manner, as the spontaneous outflow of His love for men and of His identifying sympathy with them, He fully felt in Himself, on their behalf, the awful reality of their spiritual death.

This view furnishes the most reasonable explanation of the atonement. Christ, by His sympathetic suffering, revealed, as He could have done in no other way, the depth and tenderness of the divine love for sinful men. On the other hand, His soul-suffering even unto death, flowing from His perfect sympathy with lost men, proclaims in tones clear and terrible the awfulness and ineffable hatefulness of sin. It cost the sympathetic, sinless Son of God the pangs of spiritual death. All the hollow depths of hell seem to resound in Christ's ap-

palling cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Separation from God—all that there is, or can be, in perdition is wrapped up in that. Forsaken of God—hell is only that "writ large." And that is the bitter fruit of sin.

The intensity of Christ's suffering for us through sympathy is confirmed by modern scientific investigation, which has shown that Christ probably died not from the tortures of the cross but from the violence of emotion, that literally ruptured the walls of His heart and filled the pericardium with blood. This theory alone explains the extravasated blood, separated into red clot and watery serum, that poured from His side when pierced with a spear. Moreover this is consonant with the suddenness of His death, which at the time puzzled and amazed the Roman authorities. Those crucified usually lived from twelve hours to two or three days, but Christ died in six hours. And when death came He was still physically strong, as is shown by His loud cry just before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He died not from pain of body, but from anguish of spirit. Through sympathy He took the agony of a sinful world up into His soul. In the language of prophecy He could say, "The reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen on me," "Reproach hath broken my heart." (Ps. 69:9,20.) (See Dr. Stroud's treatise, "On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ," also Hanna's "The Life of our Lord." V. p. 323 and Appendix.)

It may be objected that this view of Christ's atonement robs it of one of its essential elements; that the Scriptures represent Him as suffering for us or on our behalf; that one may suffer sympathetically *with* another without suffering *for* Him. True, the Bible does clearly teach that Christ suffered *for* us, yea more, that he suffered vicariously for us. But cannot one at the same time both suffer with and for another? If one suffers with another in distress, does not that fact cheer

and help him who is in distress? Does not suffering *with* another naturally culminate in suffering *for* another?

A few years ago, a man strolling along the shore of Lake Michigan, at Jackson Park, Chicago, went into the lake for a bath. He soon began to struggle in the water and lustily called for help. A crowd hurriedly gathered on the beach, but no one dared to go into those treacherous waters. The man sank, but just as he rose again to the surface, a student of the university came on the run to the rescue. He quickly flung away hat, coat and shoes, and boldly plunging in, swam straight to the drowning stranger. The large company on the shore was as still as a stone. The anxiety was intense lest the man now frantically struggling for his life should instinctively grasp his would-be deliverer and both should go down to death beneath the waves. But the student cautiously kept the half-drowned man at arm's length, and slowly brought him on toward the shore. The moment that the rescuer and the rescued stood upright in shallow water, the crowd that had waited seemingly an age in breathless silence, broke out into glad huzzas that made the welkin ring, and in their joyful excitement threw their caps, hats and coats high up into the air. Why? They had simply witnessed an act of vicarious suffering. One man had sympathized with another, whose life was in imminent peril, and out of sympathy for him had exposed himself to the same peril. His sympathy *with* him expressed itself in an heroic deed *for* him. He voluntarily thrust himself into the jaws of death that he might snatch his fellow man from them.

A man on a certain Board of Trade was downcast and almost in despair because he could not meet his note of \$25,000 in the bank, which must be paid by two o'clock in the afternoon or his credit would be utterly destroyed. A member of the Board, whose business standing was flawless, deeply sympathizing with his brother trader,

lifted the burden off from him by putting his name upon the despairing man's paper. He took his place, suffered in his stead, paid his debt, and saved him from financial ruin. Here again sympathizing with led to doing for.

It is always so, where sympathy is genuine. Jesus in His peerless parable says, that the Samaritan, when he came to the unfortunate Jew, who had been robbed, stripped and beaten into insensibility, had compassion on him, sympathized with him, and that sympathy at once expressed itself in outward and helpful act on behalf of the sufferer. So the Chief of good Samaritans sympathized, suffered with us, who had been robbed and deeply wounded by sin, and His divine sympathy so identified Him with us that He felt within Himself in all its dread reality the penalty justly due to our sin. He sympathized *with* us and hence died *for* us.

But the notion that God ever suffers, some scholarly thinkers reject with apparent horror. In their view suffering is an attribute of imperfection, is either an accompaniment of immaturity, like the growing pains of children, or the direct effect of personal sin, and so cannot be predicated of God.

Of course God is neither immature nor sinful, nor does He suffer from such causes. But the suffering that we attribute to Him, flows from His absolute perfection; suffering that is the inevitable concomitant of His unspeakable love for, and boundless sympathy with, those that are in distress. That God must thus suffer we infer from the universal experience and observation of men. One who can look without pity and pain on the sufferings of others, is always unhesitatingly pronounced heartless. Is God as unfeeling as the worst of our race? Those who feel most acutely the manifold miseries of men and hasten to alleviate them, are universally regarded as the very noblest of the earth. Suffering that arises from our sympathy with those in distress is not a proof of imperfection of character, but rather of char-

acter reaching up toward that of God Himself. In Christ, in whom was the Godhead bodily, we have the highest known example of sympathetic suffering, and His suffering instead of proving Him imperfect, exalted Him to the throne of the universe. Having, through sympathy with lost men, suffered, on their behalf, the pangs of spiritual death, "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:9)

But some, who emphatically affirm that suffering is utterly incompatible with any true conception of God, still hold to the deity of Christ, and admit of course, as every intelligent Christian man must, that He suffered and suffered for us. But to steer clear of the notion of a suffering God, they fall back on the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human. To Christ's human nature they ascribe His suffering, while the divine nature, without the slightest touch of pain or compassion, holds up the human so that it can drink the cup of woe to the dregs and perfect the work of atonement for the sinner. All this is well and devoutly meant, and should be so considered. But in all that Christ said and did, as it is reported in the New Testament, we have no hint that the human and divine natures in Him acted thus separately and independently. There is no evidence that He had two consciousnesses, the human and the divine. According to the evangelists the one indivisible Christ acted, said this and that, did this and that. Moreover, the apostles, who, guided by the Spirit, still further unfolded and interpreted the gospel for us, do not sever the personality of Christ so that the human and divine in Him stand over against each other. That both the Gospels and Epistles teach the undivided personality of Jesus is sustained by the ripest modern scholarship.

That God, through sympathy with His people, suffers, is strongly re-enforced by many declarations of the Old Testament, scattered from Genesis to Zechariah.

When, before the flood, the race became very corrupt, it "grieved" Jehovah "at his heart." (Gen. 6:6) He saw the affliction of His people in Egypt, heard their cry, knew their sorrows and came down to deliver them. (Ex. 3:7-8). In the time of the Judges, Jehovah's "soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." (Judgs. 10:16). In Isaiah (63:9) it is declared that Jehovah "was afflicted in all his people's affliction." Jehovah's cry over Ephraim, through the lips of Hosea (11:8), ending in the words, "My heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together," shows how deeply His soul was pained on account of Israel's incorrigible rebellion against Him. And we learn from Zechariah that the Lord was identified with His ancient people, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his," Jehovah's "eye." (Zech. 2:8). No wonder that George Adam Smith in his exposition of Isaiah devotes an entire chapter to "The Passion of God."

But some say these are merely anthropomorphisms. Most of the representations of God in the Bible are. "Our Father, who art in heaven" is one; "The Lord is my shepherd" is another; but the real question is What do these anthropomorphisms mean? What do they tell us about God? Do they misrepresent Him? If Christ does not misrepresent Him then they do not. The same Jehovah that cried over His people in Babylon through the lips of His prophet,

"Like a woman in travail I gasp,
Pant and palpitate together," (Smith's Isaiah, Vol. II, p. 134) wept over Jerusalem, and agonized over a world in Gethsemane.

And the crowning consideration on this point is that no man, during all the ages, ever longed for an unsympathetic, passionless God. From such an unfeeling God, men universally recoil. Being infinite in holiness and power they tremble in His presence, but cannot love Him. With tricky, sinful Jacob they cry, "Jehovah is

in this place.” “How dreadful is this place!” A God who fills men with cowering fear and shuddering dread, who cannot sympathize or suffer with them in their deep distress, even though their woes are but the just retribution for their sins, cannot be the true God. Although some men under the old dispensation caught clear glimpses of Jehovah and of His love and sympathy, not till Christ came did “the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings.” (Mal. 4:2) “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life,” is the sweetest song ever heard on earth. The loving, sympathetic God, the true God, was in Christ. What Christ did, He did. What Christ suffered, He suffered. Christ, God in Christ, took up into His heart of infinite tenderness all our sorrows, and felt them with us even unto death. To Him men, even when half awake to spiritual realities, are irresistibly drawn.

During Christ’s earthly ministry, Luke tells us (15:1) that publicans and sinners kept coming to Him to hear Him. They knew that He abhorred their sins, but in spite of that they were attracted to His person and loved to hear His words. They did not know that He was God in their own flesh, but they felt that they stood in the presence of one who understood them and whose sympathy overflowed to them; so in spite of the protests of the Pharisees, the acknowledged leaders of the people, they kept coming to Jesus. Neither their sins nor their rulers could keep them away from Him. The true, sympathetic God allures and satisfies men. The supreme need of the world is to know Him.

But can a suffering Saviour be happy? men ask. Pain or suffering is not in itself an evil but a beneficent agent for the good of men. It is often a kindly warning against sinful excesses, which, if persisted in, bring men prematurely to death. It is also a moral discipline by which men are unfolded into virtue. In suffering one

learns how to let patience have her perfect work, that he may reach that state of perfection in which he shall lack nothing. Even Christ learned by suffering how to be our "merciful and faithful high priest." It is also an expression of our heavenly Father's love, and when endured with resignation to the divine will brings forth in us "the fruit of righteousness." To begin at the lowest point, physical suffering and happiness are not incompatible. Christian invalids, along whose quivering nerves pain runs with blistering feet, often have deep down in their hearts the peace of God that passes all understanding. The peace and even joy of the martyrs, when enduring the most excruciating physical tortures, have been not only unruffled but enhanced. Moreover, even mental suffering has been unable to drive happiness from the soul that unwaveringly trusts in God. Innumerable times Christian men, smarting under baseless slander,

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile,"

(Cymbeline III, Sc. 4.)

have still been serene and happy. Now the most exquisite of all suffering is that which flows from our sympathy with those in distress, and such sufferers, by common consent, are the happiest of mortals. And if this be true in the case of imperfect men, it is also unquestionably true in the case of God. Our divine Lord who suffers sympathetically with us is at the same time filled with unfathomable peace and happiness unalloyed.

These objections answered, this then is the sum of our contention: Christ, on account of what He is and did, made it possible for every man to be reconciled to God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Through His infinite love, boundless sympathy and incarnation He identified Himself with our race; took up into Himself all our distresses and felt in all its fulness

and sharpness our chief woe, separation from God on account of our voluntary transgression. The sinless Saviour thus endured with us and for us death, the penalty of sin, bore it in His own body on the tree, satisfied in Himself every demand of His own law on the sinner, and exhibited, as He could have done in no other way, the limitless love of God to sinful men, and the awfulness and unspeakable hatefulness of sin. And all this—and here is the emphasis—as the natural, spontaneous outflow of His love for us and His unfathomable, tender sympathy with us.