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THE ATONEMENT AND PRAYER.

THE object of the following paper is to shew that the principle underlying Prayer is identical with the principle embodied in the Atonement, and that accordingly to reject the latter is implicitly to reject the former. Logically considered, both stand and fall together: I say, *logically* considered. At the present time, however, many who have been driven to reject the Atonement still cling with all their might to the reality of Prayer. Whilst the Atonement is a stumbling-block and an offence, Prayer is a strong tower and a refuge. Happy inconsistency! I should be troubled if these pages were to contribute toward rendering this happy inconsistency impossible; I should be greatly rejoiced if they helped to convert the inconsistency into a deep and abiding consistency.

For the sake of clearness, and in order to prevent the suspicion that the argument may be based on ambiguities or consist of tricks of subtlety, I will begin by defining as plainly as I can, in general terms, the senses in which I shall speak of Prayer and of the Atonement.

First, then, *Prayer*. There are two main views of the nature or bearings of Prayer. (*a*) According to the Church or orthodox view, Prayer, to use very general terms, is a mode of human activity by which

God is determined or influenced, as He would not be determined or influenced without it. In more concrete phrase, when we pray we ask God to be towards us, or do for us, what, without our prayer, He would not be or do. As the schools have it, Prayer here is assumed to have an objective effect. (*b*) According to the other view of Prayer—if view of *prayer* it deserve to be designated—words in the form of petition or request are addressed to God, not with the expectation or intent of influencing Him, but partly for the purpose of expressing submission to his will, and partly for the purpose of affecting our own inward state. To this class of thinkers — and it is a class which has long been numerous in Germany, and which is rapidly growing in our own country—Prayer is essentially *une gymnastique spirituelle*, as it has been aptly described. Its philosophy is that the petitioner unconsciously influences himself, and either fits himself for doing without what he thinks he needs and desires, or for assimilating that which comes to him in the regular course of nature, but which, apart from this preparation, might possibly escape him. In the language of the schools, Prayer is here a purely subjective process.

Of the orthodox view there are again two modifications. (*c*) Some hold it to be right and of use to pray to God in relation to external things, such as recovery from sickness, seasonable weather, provision of food and clothing, protection from dangers by land and water, and other similar blessings. (*d*) Others again — and their numbers are rapidly increasing—would restrict prayer to what are termed

spiritual blessings, such as light for the understanding, invigoration for the will, stimulus for the emotions, and comfort and support in suffering and sorrow.

For the sake of not burdening my argument with unnecessary difficulties, I shall speak of Prayer solely in this second sense. I might almost say that I make this restriction, not because prayer for spiritual things is less encompassed with difficulties than prayer for external things, but because to my mind it is either equally or even more perplexing. At any rate, as this aspect of Prayer is still accepted by many, it will serve my present purpose to leave the other aspect out of consideration.

Let us now turn to *the Atonement*. There are two main views of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

(*a*) According to the Church or orthodox view, to use very general terms, the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ were undertaken for the purpose of producing a change in the relation of God to man as well as of man to God. However varied may be the modes of representing the effect produced on God, and of explaining how it was produced, all agree in the one point that something was done apart from which no reconciliation between Him and man could have been brought about. This is the essential element. In the phraseology of the schools, this is the objective view of the Atonement.

(*b*) According to the other view, the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ were undertaken for the purpose of simply producing a change in the relation of man to God. He came to scatter the darkness and correct the errors of the human mind

touching God; his mission was so to exhibit the Divine Character—its holiness, truth, and love—and the evil of sin, that men should be constrained to return in humble penitence and loving trust to their Father in heaven. The Scripture expression of this view is, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." This is the essential element. As worded by the schools, it is the subjective view of the Atonement.

It is in the first mentioned sense that I shall speak of Christ's work, especially of its Godward aspect.

Now what I affirm and wish to shew is that whosoever allows the utility of Prayer, in the modified sense referred to above, has no logical right to object to the orthodox view of the Atonement. One and the same principle underlies both.

Having thus defined our terms, let us proceed to inquire into the significance of Prayer and to ascertain the principle involved in it.

We will restrict our inquiry to prayer for Divine aid in the discharge of our primary or direct duty to God and man; that is, the duty of cherishing certain emotions and avoiding others. All duty may be said, in common phrase, to begin in the region of the heart.

If we have a God and Father in heaven, and if we owe Him anything at all, we surely owe Him reverence, trust, and love; or, to comprehend the whole in one word, we ought to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. This, as Christ taught, is the first and great commandment. In truth, this is all we have it in our power to give to Him whose are the heavens and the earth and the

fulness thereof. Now when we become conscious of falling short of the reverence, trust, and love we owe to God, what course do we take? What is our remedy? Where is our hope? We cannot help ourselves, for it is "we" who need the help; our fellow-men cannot help us, for they are in like case with ourselves. To whom then are we to look? Christian teachers and believers send us to God in prayer. From our indifference and distrust and coldness we ask God to free us. We pray, "Inspire us with reverence, with holy awe; enable us to trust, give us faith; fill our hearts with Divine love." We entreat God by his Holy Spirit to work in us to will and to do his own good pleasure relating to Himself.

I have quoted expressions which are in common use by Christians of all sections of the Church universal—some of them have been used by those who never heard either of Christ or his Church. What do they signify? Remember it is *our* duty to cherish such emotions toward God. This is the law binding on *us*. God being what He is, and we being what we are, this is how we should behave—we namely, we ourselves. And we ask God to help us to fulfil this law; we ask Him to do for us what we cannot do He is to enter into us, and to honour, trust, and love Himself on our behalf, in, with, and through us. God in man is to obey God out of man, and the obedience thus rendered by God to Himself is our obedience. God's relation in us to Himself is counted as, nay, verily is, so far as our consciousness is concerned, our relation to Him. This position should be distinctly apprehended. When we ask God to enable us, to energize in us, that we may honour,

trust, and love Him, we are really asking Him to honour, trust, and love Himself in us, and to make this his loving and honouring of Himself ours—ours in the truest and most real sense, ours as absolutely as though it were in the ordinary sense ours. It is his, and yet ours; it is ours, and yet his.

And now let us turn to man. I suppose I may take for granted that we owe to our fellow-men respect, trust, love, in the various degrees and modifications conditioned by relations and circumstances. I refer here, again, solely to the emotions, not to their manifestations in act: to the inward relation, not to its outward and visible embodiment. This is the law binding on all of us. No man can be what his nature requires him to be unless he renders to his fellow-men and receives from them such respect, trust, and love.

As a matter of fact, however, we find that we fall wofully short of our duty, and therefore of our ideal. Pride, with its correlate contempt, distrust, suspicion, envy, hatred, and uncharitableness, take possession of our hearts. Nor do our own efforts, even when we put them forth, suffice for the cleansing of our hearts. Even if we vanquish an enemy for a moment, it returns; and while we are battling with one form of these inward evils, another instals itself in the high places of our soul. What then are we counselled to do? To pray; to pray to God,—"Cleanse thou the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit." We ask God again to work in us to will and to do his good pleasure, but now relatively to our fellow-men—to enable us to think and feel toward them as we ought. But what

again is this? Surely it is to ask Him to fulfil his own law in us; to honour, trust, and love our fellow-men for, in, with, and through us, and to make his conduct our conduct. If it do not mean this, I am unable to say what it does mean. In thus interpreting our ordinary expressions I use no violence; I do but bring out an aspect of them which is too frequently overlooked.

The principle involved in prayer for spiritual blessings has been already indicated, but it may be generally expressed as follows: *God obeys his own law in our stead;* or, somewhat differently and still more generally expressed, *God fulfils his own law on our behalf, and his fulfilment stands as ours, or rather really becomes our fulfilment.*

How God can do this, or how we can have it done, is a mystery. That it takes place is a matter of personal experience. My purpose is not now to explain the position just described; but, whether understood or not, it is a fact that God does work in us to will and to do; that He thinks and feels and wills in us and for us; and that his thinking, feeling and willing are in the truest sense our own. Nay more, it might almost be said that what is thus wrought in us by God is more truly our own than what we work by and for ourselves.

In a very real sense, indeed, what has been affirmed regarding Divine help is in its measure true of the help rendered by man to man. He who aids me in the solution of a problem, in the unravelling of a perplexity, in the clearing up of a difficulty; he who by his exhortations, or warnings, or example, or stimulus, strengthens me to vanquish evil or to

discharge duty, may be said to have done my work for me. He has wrought what it was my business to have wrought, and his effort, and the results thereof, become mine whilst yet they are his. God's work for us, however, is as much more real, more intimate, and more truly our own, than that of man, as his relation to us is more profound, more inward, more vital. "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

Let us now turn to the consideration of the Atonement. I have already defined in general terms the view of the Atonement to which I here refer.

Both in the New Testament and in the writings of the teachers of the Church various modes of setting forth the two aspects of the work of Christ have been adopted.

In the former we find descriptions such as, God "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;" "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;" "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many;" "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;" "Who his own

self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." In various modifications and combinations the same descriptions have been employed by the teachers and preachers of Christianity.

At the bottom of all these representations lies the idea that Christ took our place and bore what it was just and right that we should bear. His humiliation, sufferings, and bitter death were endured for our sake, in our stead—not merely to shew us his own feelings, or the mind of God, or the nature of sin, or all these, though this was part of his design; but because, unless He had endured them, corruption, misery, and eternal death must have been our portion. In a word, He was our substitute. Christ being, in the belief of the Church, the Son of God, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, what He did for us was done by God.

Now surely we have here the very principle which we found underlying Prayer—God taking our place, enduring our sufferings, and his endurance standing as ours. In the case of Divine help given in answer to prayer, God obeys his own law for us, and his obedience becomes ours: in the case of the Atonement, God endures the penalty of the transgression of his own law for us, and his endurance becomes ours.

But there is a difference—the difference between active obedience and passive endurance—and perhaps this difference may be an essential difference. Let us see.

I have already observed that, God being what He is, and we being what we are, we ought to cherish certain emotions toward Him. This is the law bind-

ing on us in virtue of his nature and of our relation to Him. The reverse side of this position is: The natural relations between God and man being such as they are, if man neglect to cherish certain emotions toward God, such-and-such sufferings must come upon him. From these sufferings no escape is provided either by man's individual constitution, or by the system of which he forms a part—so far as we know. Now, in the last instance, the suffering in question is no less required by God than the obedience. His will is as really and truly expressed in it as in his positive commands. The sufferings are as natural as the claims. In a very true sense man is normally related to God when he endures suffering after or in sinning: if he could sin with impunity his abnormality would be double. Suffering is the normal effect produced by the Divine law on him who is guilty of abnormal conduct. But unfortunately this suffering means to man, misery, ruin. It is *he* who sins and suffers, who suffers in sinning.

So, then, suffering is God's law for man's passivity; obedience, for man's activity. The one as really as the other, therefore, is obedience to the Divine law. Hence, too, Christ is said to have rendered "*obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.*"

When, therefore, Christ takes our place in the Atonement, He does—that is, God does—in principle the same thing that is done when, in answer to prayer, He helps us to render unto Him due obedience. In both cases the righteousness of God becomes our righteousness: it is his, yet ours; it is ours, yet his. For the expression of the principle in this application we may again use the general

terms :—*God fulfils his own law on our behalf; and his fulfilment stands as ours, or rather really becomes our fulfilment.*

So far from the endurance of our penalty involving greater difficulty than the performance of our duties, it might be considered to involve less difficulty. It seems easier to conceive of a substitute bearing our burden than doing our work. In the latter case a more complete incorporation with the will of him who is aided seems to be requisite than in the former. That relatively to which I am and must be passive seems more readily transferable than that relatively to which I am and must be active. Be this, however, as it may, the principle in both cases appears to me one and the same.

I am aware of the objections that are raised against the substitutionary view of Christ's work. We are told that it is an unreality. We are told that it is a monstrous perversion of truth and rectitude that the innocent should be treated as guilty; and the guilty, on that ground, as innocent. We are told that it is impossible for a penalty to be transferred; that, though we commonly enough suffer with and for each other, such suffering is in no strict sense substitutionary; that each back must bear its own burden; that God Himself, the loving Father, cannot require a substitution such as is involved in the orthodox view of the Atonement: and much more of a like character. All I can reply at present is :—If God can be righteous on our behalf in the form of obedience, why not in the form of suffering? If it be untrue and perverse for Him to endure our penalty and *count* it as ours, nay, *make* it our endurance, why is it not untrue and

perverse for Him to render obedience to Himself on our behalf, and make his obedience ours?

But the identity of the principle of Prayer and the Atonement will become still more clear when I call attention to another equally common subject of prayer, not included in those already considered. We do not restrict our petitions for inward blessings to light, invigoration, and stimulus: we also ask for support and comfort in suffering and sorrow. Now what do we mean by "Divine support and comfort"? Surely, that God in some way should, as it were, take our suffering and sorrow on Himself. I do not now refer to prayer for the removal, for the taking away, of suffering and sorrow—that is a totally different thing—but for help in bearing them. We beg not only for Divine sympathy—though that is much, and true sympathy, even in man, aims at far more than mere fellow-feeling, even at veritable participation in, and, were it possible, transference of, the suffering and sorrow—we beg also for real help, assistance. Men are able to assist us really in bearing a load that presses on our shoulders or hands; when we become weary, they can put themselves more or less in our place: but they cannot touch the inward burdens. This is God's privilege; and as really as a brother man can relieve us in carrying a physical burden, so really can God relieve us in carrying a spiritual burden. But not even God can do this, without in his measure feeling our suffering to be suffering to Him, our sorrow, sorrow to Him. In these relations, too, He must be "*touched* with the *feeling* of our infirmities." *There is no such thing in the moral world as bearing a burden without feeling it to be a burden.*

Remembering now that inward suffering and sorrow are, at all events for the most part, the fruit of sin, either directly or indirectly—the fruit of the sin either of the individual sufferer or of the race to which he belongs—is it not clear that, when God in his condescension answers our prayers for support and comfort, He undertakes to bear for us the results of the violation of his own law. Inasmuch, further, as these results are of his own ordering, nay, in the last instance of his own inflicting, are we not compelled to say that, in helping us to bear our sufferings, He is indirectly in its measure inflicting suffering on Himself for our sake, offering a sacrifice to Himself in our stead, and making propitiation to Himself for our sins?

If what has just been advanced hold good, then the so-called "moral" view of the Atonement is open to essentially the same objections as the orthodox view, whatever its protestations to the contrary. Even its advocates will not dream of questioning that the humiliation, suffering, sadness, and death which were endured by Christ in carrying out his mission of enlightenment and love—which were in fact not merely an accidental accompaniment but a necessary feature of that mission—were endured, not on his own account, but on ours; not for his own sake, but for ours. Nor will they question that the sufferings from which He delivers us would have been justly ours—that in our case they would have been a penalty for sin. And, further, they will not deny that the humiliation, sufferings, and death He endured were veritably painful and distressing to Him. But if all this be true, how can they avoid saying of

Christ—He became our substitute, He endured our penalty, and his endurance is constituted our endurance ?

One other point only will I allude to before closing this imperfect discussion. As the Divine Help is given us in answer to prayer, so we participate in Christ's atoning work through faith. How consistent this is, we shall clearly see when we have fully learnt that whilst *faith is the soul of prayer, prayer is the body of faith.* D. W. SIMON.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HAGADA.

FROM my last paper the general reader will, I hope, have gained some insight into the character of that vast homiletic literature which may be generally described under the name of the HAGADA, which, as I have already said, occupies a large part of the Gemara, whereas the Mishna is almost exclusively Halachic. I only purpose in the present sketch to give some specimens of typical Hagadôth under different heads, and in this way to illustrate their origin and their general place in Talmudic literature. The Talmud has often been indiscriminately condemned on the faith of extracts which adduced absurd and exaggerated stories, not only from the Gemara itself, but even from Midrashic writings which are no older than the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, but which are all loosely classed together as being in the Talmud. Now I can hardly express too strongly my own low appreciation of Talmudic literature, as far as regards its mere literary qualities; but it is fair to say that many of these wild stories have been