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Some Thoughts
on
Prayer.

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Introduction.

Introduction

When I stand upon the sea-shore and watch some daring boatman launch his little skiff upon the tossing, heaving waters, I am breathless because of his hardihood. Will he ever return again to land? Will not the sea overwhelm him, ere scarcely he has begun his ride upon its troubled bosom? I see that his only safety lies in remaining close to shore, so that at a moment's notice he may return to terra-firma - his more natural home.

With feelings akin to these, I launch my little craft upon the vast seas before me. Even as with the boatman, on my part also, it is presumptuous that I should dare to hope that my weakly

boat will prove itself seaworthy. As with the boatman too, my only hope of safety lies in remaining close to shore, lest I be overwhelmed by waters all-too-powerful.

With merely an eight year's course of elementary training, the mind can scarcely be equipped with furnishment sufficient to make it capable of coping with questions such as this, which I have chosen as my theme. Yet that little knowledge, which is such a "dangerous thing", emboldens many a little mind to attempt a flight to regions which greater minds would scarcely dare to trust their wings. But youth, with its Hyædalian sinuous, fears not the melting heat of the

swim—until, alas! it is too late. He soars
and soars—until he falls.

Though conscious of all this, still
shall I not attempt to restrain my
venturesome flights—but ask for the
indulgence which is my due.

This theme, so fascinating in
its many branches, leading as it does to
the very origin of mankind, to the world's
beginnings—I can here present only in
its vaguest outlines. When time and
study and experience shall have lent
their maturing influences to my mind,
then shall I dare to launch again my
craft and push out more boldly from the
shore. Where now I must keep in sight of

land - the landmarks erected by preceding writers - at that future time, I hope to be able to leave the land behind me for the open sea. There I must find my inspiration in the sea ^{around} ~~below~~ me and the heavens above. There that closer communion with God and Nature - which shuts out all worldly thought - must guide me to those Truths, which finally do come unto their patient, earnest seekers.

Prayerfully, now, I enter upon my subject - my heart humbly hoping for that strength which trust and faith in God, alone can give.

What is Prayer?

The answers to this question are as many and as diverse as are the characters and beliefs of those who attempt to give an answer. The learned Viscount Amherst defined Prayer as the expression of the religious feeling: a desire to establish some sort of communication with the mysterious Being, Power or Forces which are supposed to control the universe. Its fundamental presupposition being: that the implored can hear, heed and answer the imploer.

That definition, however, would not include the most rationalistic kinds of Prayer. This "fundamental presupposition" is necessary only for the Prayer which is

a petition. That needs a hearing,
 heeding and answering implored One.
 The savage - and he whose mind has
 not risen above the crudeness of the
 savage state - needs an answerer who will
 give immediate reply to his petition.
 But the human mind, in its evolution,
 has nearly outgrown such necessity.
 Prayer to us has gained a higher meaning.
 We still regard it as an instinct peculiar
 to our nature. In the Bible's opening
 chapter we find the key to our definition
 of Prayer: -

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נֵעָשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ

'And God said: Let us create man in
 our own image, according to our own

likeness." (Gen. I) We conceive God as Spirit. We recognize the Divine within us when we realize that all that is worthy of existence in us is that portion which reflects God - viz. the Soul - the Spirit. As a child yearns for communion with its parent, so does the soul long for closer relation with its Source - the World-Soul. The expression of this longing is: Worship, Prayer. Whatever be the form of this expression, be it in abject, submissive terror, or in sublimest, intelligent aspiration, be it in ceremonial, rite, or sacrifice - the expression of this spiritual yearning deserves the name Prayer.

We must not stop here to enumerate the different kinds of Prayer, but merely for a moment to consider the various manifestations of this phenomenon.

Prayer is now inseparably connected with every religion - except, perhaps, that of the Australian negro. Thus it will be seen that Prayer and religion are inseparably connected. The truly pious spirit must be devout and give expression to its devotion, to its thirst for God, and its desire of fellowship with Him.

Hence, every religion takes for granted the existence of this feeling in its devotees and provides special forms of worship, a code of Prayer, certain forms and ceremonies

to be used in the approach to the Deity and, perhaps, ordains certain sacrifices to be offered in the place of, or as an accompaniment to Prayer.

The different forms of worship prevalent, exhibit just so many grades in the mental evolution of the worshippers. Yet, amidst all these differences, the common element can readily be distinguished.

Prayer in its essence, whether expressed in impassioned words or in soulful silence — the spirit of Prayer in all is the same. As the bard, Montgomery, beautifully, yet simply expressed it:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Uttered or unexpressed;

The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high."

In discussing the different kinds of Prayer, we shall find occasion to give some outline of the advanced Jewish view of Prayer, which coincides well with the sentiments expressed in this poem.

Origin of Prayer

On this subject also the opinions are probably as various as are the religious convictions of the persons holding these opinions. And yet, we can easily separate these thinkers into two grand divisions: One set that has not yet been caught by the almost irresistible torrent of Evolution. They are the vast mass of Christians, and the greater part of the Jews, who, guided by a literal interpretation of the first chapters of the Bible, believe that man, "created in the image of God," was therefore necessarily perfect. He lived in perfection and innocence until he disobeyed God, sinned and fell from perfection and grace, handing

down the indelible stigma of his disgrace to all succeeding generations. Those who believe all this literally must, - with this firm conviction in the original perfectness of man and his oneness with God, - have that belief in the origin of Prayer, which is now its highest manifestation, viz., that natural communion with the Deity, which springs from community of nature.

That class, however who - with all due reverence to the past - no longer feel bound to accept literally all its traditions thinks far differently. It needs but little knowledge - how much power it may take of openness to conviction - for the

modern student to realize the impossibility of such a descent of man, from perfection to imperfection. We need not subscribe to the Darwinian Theory in order to have the firm belief that man - mentally at least, if not physically shows unmistakable proofs of evolution and not of devolution. To that large and ever-growing class who take this view of man's beginning, appeals also a more natural explanation of the origin of Prayer. In the minds of these there is not much doubt but that it was Fear, dread Fear - and nothing else - which gave it birth.

Behold man - primitive man - in his primeval forests!

He lies there, basking in the sunshine, gazing in awe and wonder, at his strange surroundings. The clear, deep-blue sky overhead is dazzling in its purity and brightness. The air is soft and balmy and tempered by the blowing of the gentlest zephyrs. No sound is heard save at times the rustling and whispering of trees and shrubs - and the occasional sweet piping of birds in the branches.

But, lo! the birds' sweet song is hushed. There falls on all an ominous silence. Gradually, the skies are overcast with dark, threatening clouds. The gentle zephyrs change to whistling, shrieking winds, which cause the trees to sigh and

moans. Suddenly, the leaden sky seems rent in twain by a blinding, zig-zag flash of lightning. - Now all is dark and silent again. Hark! a low, distant rumble; - nearer and nearer, louder and louder rolls the terrible thunder. Now the very earth is shaken with the deafening roar. A final crash - and all is o'er. -

But where - all this time - is Man? See him in your cave, crouching prostrate upon the ground, terrified, awe-struck, - silent! Such, probably, were the feelings and actions of primitive man on beholding the wonderful manifestations of Nature. This exhibition

of dumb terror was probably the first expression of his recognition of a Superior Power. Thus man first learned to pray. His next step in worship may have been the offering of sacrifices to gain the favor of this awful, this mysterious Being, who could bring storm and calm, famine and plenty, pestilence, disease and death.

Then man probably built altars and special places of worship for this Being and approached Him with special forms and ceremonies.

Continued Development.

Prayer and Sacrifice are merely two different expressions of the same phenomenon in the human mind. With the growth and development of the human family, the God-idea also underwent a process of development. The evolution of Prayer kept steady and equal pace with both. The פחד אלהים, the fear of God gradually gave way to softer feelings. As man began to realize that his blessings were more numerous than his sufferings, his fear of God grew less, his love grew greater.

However, it is not our province here to examine and present the growth and development of the God-idea, further

share to connect inseparably with it the evolution of Prayer and Sacrifice.

As the human mind matured in matters religious and spiritual, there matured with it a revolt against the presumptuous encroachments of the priest-class. These latter had early monopolized all the functions of public worship, dictated the manner and matter of all rites and ceremonials, arrogated to themselves for their support a share of the sacrifices - in short had established themselves as the arbiters in all matters devotional, as the mediators between man and God.

Thus worship had lost its simplicity. It was no longer a direct soul-communion

between child and Father.

But the human mind cannot remain in darkness. It will not thrive in mean and meaningless hypocrisy. Always there arises some leader, who is the first to work out from bondage, to proclaim soul-emanicipation to his fellow. He is the first protestant, but his protesting voice soon is echoed and re-echoed until the multitudes too are free. Thus also was it with Prayer and Sacrifice. When more stress came to be laid upon the multitude of these, rather than upon purity of heart and uprightness, than upon devotion and obedience to the law of God, then the voice of the prophet thundered

forth its protests. Nor was his voice a solitary one, for always it represented a class who were of the same opinion. So Samuel rebuked Saul and the people,

saying: - הִנֵּנִי בָּאֵלֶיךָ וְנִזְכָּרְתִּי בְּלִבְךָ ה' - הִנֵּנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מִנְּחָה לֹא

לֹא הָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ מִנְּחָה אֵלֶיךָ - "Hath the Lord, as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?"

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15. 22)

For a time, the people and the priests gave heed to the lesson, but in time again they forgot. As they grew in greatness and opulence, the "divine service" also gained in splendor; sacrifices were endless in number, their savor rose to heaven in place

of the fervent prayers of the people. Why
 avoid sin, when a sin-offering will
 readily remove the stain? And so,
 with sacrifices, also sin increased. Again
 the service of God had degenerated into
 meaningless rites and observances. Again
 the spiritual element of worship was
 shrouded in gloom. But again the
 prophet's voice was heard, speaking in
 the name of an outraged better class
 and in the name of God. This time the
 majestic Isaiah rebukes the priest and their horde:

אמר לי רב-צדיקים יאמר ה' רבצתי עולות אילים וחלז

אריאים וצבאים פרים ובקרים ולחמדים ואין חסדתי: כי תבטלו ארצות

פני מן בקר צאת מירבכם דגים מירי: ואין תוסיפו הקיאו אמות-לוא, קלרת

תושבה היא ארץ... וקלרתכם כפכם אעלה עני, וקמם עקבי תרכו תעלה אינן. קמם, דכמם צמם, מלאו

"To what purpose, is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me - - - - And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isaiah 1, 11 ff.)

Such fire would not out; it could not be quenched. Though it has taken

many centuries to spread - age, even now it is burning - yet has it devoured steadily the "abominations." Each age adds fuel with the rubbish which it hands over to this flame. Sacrifices i. e. animal sacrifices are offered no more among civilized peoples. But the Psalmist's word is realized:

שְׁמִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ רִחַם לְבָבִי אֵל עֲלֵיךָ יִנְחָדָה אֱלֹהִים אֵל תִּבְצֶה :

"The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 51, 19)

More and more the material element is disappearing in the divine worship, all this being consumed by flames from the fire of a Samuel and

an Isaiah. More and more the spiritual element is asserting itself in worship - which will then truly be called "divine" worship. A contrite spirit, filled with reverence and humility - that is the Sacrifice in which the Lord delights. A heart, vocal with gratitude, appreciation (even in silence) of all its blessings - that is the Prayer most pleasing to God.

Kind of Prayer.

The last chapter, on the Origin of Prayer, naturally leads us to a consideration of the kind of Prayer.

And this, in turn, to what was probably the first kind of Prayer. After the first exhibition of dumb terror - which cannot yet be called worship - came a stage in which man framed his Prayer as a petition.

Man, in his child-stage, was utterly ignorant of the nature of those forces which so over-awed him.

Instinctively, he felt that there must be some Being or Force outside of him, which is the cause of all these wonderful manifestations. Being himself a person,

he ascribed personality also to this Power. He recognizes that he has wants. How will he satisfy them? He reasons from his own imperfections, and defects to similar ones in this Personality - or personalities inside of him. To this Deity - or these deities - also he ascribes his own passions and weaknesses, imagines Him - or them - susceptible to flattery, envious, greedy, and eager for a bargain. With this conception, it was natural for him to make his request purely a personal one, and to give it additional force by offering a sacrifice as a sort of bribe. Of course this form of Prayer is surely selfish -

but not, for this reason, any the less natural. Plainly of this sort was the first prayer recorded of Jacob. His grandfather, Abraham's prayer for the threatened inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah was a noble example of unselfish prayer. But this one of Jacob - it must be conceded is strictly in the nature of a bargain. Whatever his conception of God, it must be granted that his prayer was purely of the primitive type. He vowed a vow, saying:

אם-יהיה אלהים עממי ולא ינו בדרך הנח אלהי אבותי, ונתן לי את
 אלהי וקדש אלהי: וקדשתי באלהי אלהי אבותי ויהיה ה' אלהי אבותי: והוא
 הנצח אלהי אבותי ויהיה בית אלהים ואלה אלהי אבותי: ואלה
 "If God will be with me and will

keep me in this way that I go, and give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I may come again to my father's house in peace; Then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Gen. XXVIII, 20, 22.)

In such language almost we might imagine a vassal pledging himself to his suzerain.

This kind of prayer almost always demands a miracle - some infraction of the laws of God and Nature.

Almost always it is a demand to be

treated as a favorite - the prayer expects a gain at the expense of some one else. Two nations are on the battle-field and, before beginning the fight, the priests of both pray for victory; - why not for peace? The merchant prays for dry weather in order that his business may be uninterrupted. At the same time, the farmer prays for rain to ripen his crops - even though the harvest of another might be ruined by more rain. Such prayers for rain and good harvests were - and are still - most common. We do not wish here to touch on the Efficacy of prayer further than to press the

good advice of Hesiod, who exhorted the husbandman to pray for the harvest but to do so with his hand upon the plough.

From the earliest times, calamity, disaster and disease were looked upon as punishments for sin. Let the earthquake, and man fall to his knees in supplication to pray for the stoppage of the earth's rumblings. Let the country suffer from drought and the whole people is asked to pray for rain. Even Solomon regarded drought as a punishment for sin, for he also says, in his remarkable prayer: —

וְכִשְׁמֵי הָאָרֶץ יִסְּרוּ וְיִשְׁטָפוּ וְיִשְׁחָרְפוּ וְיִשְׁבְּחוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ וְיִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ וְיִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ

"When heaven is shut up, and there is

no rain, because they have sinned against thee." (I Kings VIII, 35.)

In 1853, the premier of England was asked to order a general fasting and penitence to stop the ravages of cholera. He answered the clergy with the apt lesson: that the earth was governed by natural, unchangeable laws and that the greatest welfare of the people would be secured not by fasting and praying, but by observing these laws. It is true the cholera plague was the result of their sinning - sinning against the laws of Nature, laws with which God will not interfere.

Petitions for health, wealth,

prosperity - and posterity are still most common. Nations pray for success in trade and in battle. National calamities and pestilence still call forth common supplication. The sickness of a great man is even now the occasion of special prayers in his behalf. Men do not yet fully recognize the immutability of Nature's laws. Therefore do they make petitions whose purpose is: to effect a change which would not have taken place without them.

We may ask of God - as a child asks of his father - to complement our limited powers. Our petitions must be reasonable. We must not ask

for miracles, nor for anything that would contravene the object of the laws of Nature. Our righteous requests, then, will be merely petitions for the fulfilment of God's own laws and of His own glory. We must do our best under the laws of Nature, and remember that "God helps him who helps himself." We must grant our own petitions. If we would pray for health, we must observe the natural laws of health. If we would pray for wealth, we must further our petition by honorable striving and industry.

We have already touched upon

that kind of prayer which we must call Prayer of Penitence. It remains to say a few further words on the subject. This connects itself closely with the preceding kind - as the prayer of the penitent is also a petition - a petition for forgiveness of sin. Yet this is an immense distance from the ordinary selfish petitions mentioned in the last division. This strikes a note in harmony with the key-note of prayer. The prayer of penitence is the outpouring of the contrite spirit. It is formulated by a consciousness of sinfulness. It is dictated by a sense of weakness.

The Christian believer in the doctrine of Original Sin, and the Transmission of Sin need never cease asking forgiveness. His "Pietà Signore" can well be an eternal prayer. But even the Jew - and others who do not believe in these doctrines - even these are oppressed by an overwhelming sense of guilt and short-coming. We need not be "miserable sinners" in order to be aware of man's terrible tendency to sin. In this world we are so beset by trials and temptations that we would, indeed, be "but little lower than the angels," did we not occasionally fall. Hence

our penitential prayers.

Right aptly, then, could the Jew formulate his *וְיִתְעַבְבּוּ* — confessing sins for every letter of the alphabet. This manifestation of humility is an approach to the true prayer.

But here also the ever-present danger may again present itself. Let prayers be fixed and formulated and they lend themselves readily to a devotion mechanical and meaningless. Rabbi Simeon recognized this danger when he laid down the maxim:

כְּשֶׁתִּתְפַּלֵּל אַל תִּשְׁמַח בְּמִשְׁכַּח הַתְּפִלָּה

"When thou prayest, regard not thy prayer as a fixed mechanical task,

but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the All-present. ("Birkeaboth II.")

Several hundred years before him had Isaiah thundered against the degeneracy of the penitential services. The prayers and sacrifices of Atonement had almost lost their meaning. No longer was it a soul-service, a yearning of man's spirit for the purity and perfectness of God. Prayer and fast and sacrifice were there, but the soul—where was it? Busied with worldly thoughts, interest on gain and wickedness.

The head was bent low as a beebush blown by the wind, but the heart

was high with presumptuous pride. As
the sublime prophet puts it:

והבנות באגודתן ראש, לא תצומו כיום ארמית. בקיום, ואכס: הכנה יהיה צום אזהרה
יום שנות אדם נפשו האבוד באמתו ראש, ואני יציד, האפה תנא צום ויום נצו
אפ: הא צום אזהרה, בנה תרצות ראש חתי אגדות מולד, ואלו נצו צום תעלים
וכאמורה תתקן: הא פוס ארעל אמתק, ועניי מרובים תביא בית, כימנאה עים וכסיתו

ומקרבן אמתק: אי יצד בלח אונק ואנדתק מפרה תצוה והאן אפן צדק כדור ה יאספן: אמתק: ו"ה יצד

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate
and to smite with the fist of wickedness:
ye shall not fast, as ye do this day, to
make your voice to be heard on high.
Is it such a fast that I have chosen?
a day for man to afflict his soul? is
it to bow down his head as a bulrush,
and to spread sack-cloth, and ashes?
wilt thou call this a fast, and an

acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this
the fast that I have chosen? to loose
the bands of wickedness, to undo the
heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed
go free, and that ye break every yoke?
Is it not that thou deal thy bread
to the hungry and to bring the poor
that are cast out, to thy house? when
thou seest the naked that thou cover
him, and that thou hide not thyself
from thine own flesh? Then shall
thy light break forth as the morning,
and thine health shall spring forth
speedily: and thy righteousness shall
go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall
be thy reward."

(Isaiah LVIII, 4-9.)

We have quoted this at length from Isaiah because of the masterly style in which he sums up what in a poorer way have been our thoughts on the subject. Such a fast, such prayers of penitence as he describes - would, indeed, realize the highest objects of prayer: an "aspiration, a yearning for the higher attainments in character and life; the soul striving for that perfection which it sees symbolized in God."*

There are other kinds of prayer upon which we cannot dwell at such length in this necessarily limited treatise. The next one to which we would devote a

* J. T. Sunderland: "Shall We Pray?"

few lines is the prayer of Praise and Adoration.

These in their origin were by no means of the highest kind, for these also were probably originally based on the supposition that the Deity is only a larger person, that He is arbitrary, can be moved by praise and flattery to change His laws. Ambery calls them "Reciprocity Prayers" and calls these words of praise "compliments." He cites the Psalms as examples. It is true these are full of God's praises, they extol his many virtues. But is it their purpose merely to flatter God? Or is it not rather to hold up these virtues to man, that

he may adopt them as his ideals towards which he rises on the wings of Prayer? So also the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple; opens with a detailed acknowledgment how God kept his promises to his servant David and God is asked still further to continue in the keeping of his promises. Yet, after this seemingly petty praise, Solomon launches out upon the sublimest thoughts:

† כִּי הֵאָחֲזָה יְרֵכְךָ אֱלֹהִים עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, הִנֵּה הָאֲמִים וְאֵם הָאֲמִים אִם יִכְבֹּדְךָ אֵל
 כִּי-הִבְדִּיתָ הָעֵדָה אֶתְּךָ דָּנִיתִי: וְכִנֵּיתוּ אֶת-יְרֵכְךָ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאֶת-תַּנְחֻמִּי הֵאָחֲזָה יְרֵכְךָ אֱלֹהִים עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth?
 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of
 heavens cannot contain thee; how

much less this house that I have builded. Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant "-etc (I Kings VIII, 27)

This contrast in his prayer is prompted by a realization of the infinite goodness of God. Although God is so great that the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Him and one would think that earthborn creatures would be beneath His notice, - yet had he already shown such kindness unto David, that Solomon places implicit trust in Him: that He will hear and heed his supplication. Such praise, then, as Solomon bestows on God is not for God's sake, but to teach man

but rather to impress upon the prayer the facts referred to in these praises: that God is merciful to the penitent, even ready to forgive iniquity; that 'He desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should return and live.'

And so we might go on quoting many a prayer of praise and adoration, and there would not be much difficulty in showing that - whatever their origin - these prayers are intended to have subjective (and not objective) effect; that they are to move man, not God, that God's answer to the prayer will be in the aspiration

itself: to be nearer to God and more Godlike.

The prayer of Thanks we have not yet touched upon. The feeling of gratitude is one of the commonest, most natural and, at the same time, one of the finest of human impulses. The feeling of gratitude, if not the expression of it. Even the savage and the brute creation show thankfulness for whatever kindness they experience. Shall not man do at least so much? What less can man do when he looks about him in the universe, and sees the countless

blessings showered upon him on all sides? Look about and see how everything seems to be adapted to our welfare, - so much so that, for ages, man thought himself the supreme object of Creation, and his little home, the Earth, the centre of the Universe. Look within and behold the triad of blessings: Conscience, Reason and Free Will, each of them in itself sufficient to call forth eternal gratitude. Look everywhere and see the wonder and wisdom on all sides displayed: within, without, above, below, and can the heart restrain its thanks for all these proofs of divine, beneficent Providence?

As we find it expressed in the daily prayer of thanks:

אויב'ס אונז' אק לאנד'ס הווא' א' אלהי' אבינו' אלה'ם ואל'ם
 צור' חיינו' חסן' ילדנו'. אתה' הווא' אדור' וצור' נדב' אק ונס' תהלת'ך:
 א' חיינו' התסוד'ים קיד'ק ואל' לעזובנו' הפקידות' אק ואל' נ'לאות'ך
 ואיבוד'ך עתנו' בל-עת' האור' כי א-ל' נחמ'ך והמרחם' כי א-ל' תתן
 וסד'ך מאל'ם חיינו' אק:

'We render thanksgivings unto Thee:
 for Thou art God, our Lord, and the
 Lord of our ancestors for evermore.
 Thou art the Rock of our life, and
 the shield of our salvation. From
 generation to generation we render
 thanksgiving to Thee and declare
 Thy praise, for our lives delivered
 in Thy hands, our souls entrusted

to Thy care, for Thy marvellous works,
Thy wonders and boundless goodness,
which Thou revealest over us at
all times: evening, morning and noon;
to Thee, the All-good, whose mercy
is boundless; our hopes are in
Thee for ever."

There are numberless prayers
of this kind, not only in the Jewish
ritual, but in most rituals. All of
them attempt to express, in words more
or less apt, the gratitude of man for
God's manifold blessings. The words
are the least valuable portion of these
prayers. The spirit which dictates them.
A welling up of the grateful soul to the

All-kind Maker - this it is which gives worth to these prayers of Thanks to Him who is the great source of all life, light, love and blessing.

Another prayer which strikes a chord in harmony with the key-note of prayer is that of Hope and Trust. This, too finds its source in that humility, that feeling of dependence, which stirs the soul to make its yearnings appeal for help. There is innate in man a confidence and trust in Him who is the Ruler of the world. Hence the attributes: All-wise, All-powerful, All-just, All-good, Most-merciful.

and the countless other attributes. These are to express - not praise, but trust. We may question the adaptation of certain means to certain ends, we may doubt the wisdom of this or that creation, yet the humble soul will bow in reverential trust to the Supreme Wisdom. As far as we can see, the innocent often suffer, the guilty often are triumphant, yet our confidence in an All-just One strengthens our firm belief that innocence, justice and truth must finally prevail. We may have sinned consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally. How dark and hopeless

would be this world, could we not lift our despair and bring back the light of hope into our souls by that trust in the Most-merciful, which assures a higher moral plane to the repentant sinner than to the habitually righteous man. Always - on every side to which we may turn - we are being reminded of our limitations. Our weakness would drive us to desperation; would cause many an helpless one to end this life - which gives us so much power, and yet so little - were it not for our hope and confidence in the All-powerful, to whom we turn, to whom we pray to complement our limited

powers. Often physicians reach a point in a disease where they are completely baffled and look for aid to some superhuman Agency.

In those days of trial, when the Constitution of our Country was being framed, disruption was always imminent in the Convention. Benjamin Franklin, the famous skeptic (being then eighty one years of age) was one of the delegates from Pennsylvania. He was so much distressed at the difficulties which arose, and at the prospects of failure that he proposed that, as all human means of obtaining agreement seemed to be useless,

the Convention should open its meetings with Prayer.*

Often in life we feel ourselves thus constrained to look beyond human means for help, and to repeat our:

וְכָל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

"Therefore we turn in trust and hope unto Thee, O Lord, our God."

*

Bryce's American Commonwealth, Part I, Chapter III.

Objective Efficacy of Prayer

On entering upon this subject, there rises from the depths of the heart a prayer of thanks: that the human mind - in its higher stages of development - has attained a level which permits the handling of this subject without the risk of gaining fame - or notoriety - for heresy. It is not so many since it was deemed rankest infidelity to doubt the objective efficacy of prayer. That is to say, an efficacy which would manifest itself in immediate answer to every selfish petition. If perchance, (as was very often the case) the petition remained unanswered, this was overlooked and

only those cases would be cited as proof which happened to confirm the superstitious belief. But now a higher efficacy is looked for in praying. Not an efficacy which looks for a miraculous answer to every petition, a defeating of the very purpose and object of the laws of Nature.

This has already been touched upon in the first part of our remarks on the kinds of Prayer - viz., on Petitions. But further thoughts here suggest themselves. That is a very child-like state of the human mind which expects such answer to prayer. That man only who is ignorant of the

laws which govern natural phenomena, can formulate a petition, directly demanding a defeat of one of these laws, and expect to have his petition answered by the expected miracle. The savage, terror-stricken by the sun's eclipse, may pray to his gods for the light of the sun and may think that the gods have answered his prayers when, after the moon's passage the sun's rays again gladden his heart. But shall we, who know the laws governing eclipses indulge in similar prayers?

Men pray for abundant harvests and spurred to industrious effort by their petitions, are finally rewarded

with the wished-for crop. Does their prayer have objective efficacy? Does God cultivate their field and harvest? No, their prayer has had a subjective effect in making them work with renewed courage to fulfil, unconsciously, their own request of God. In this the prayer not only does not lose, but gains vastly in value.

Probably all examples of the supposed "objective efficacy" of prayer can be explained as the result either of the natural workings of natural laws, or as the accidental coincidence of the event with the effect prayed for. This view of prayer is consis-

tent only with an anthropomorphic conception of God. It presupposes, as we have stated before, that God is human-like: in being capricious, susceptible to flattery, and open to bribery. Such disgusting conception is implied in every prayer which expects objective efficacy - as we understand it. It despiritualizes God - if we may coin that word - and drags Him down to man's low level. It places God on the defensive. It 'questions' God's honor, which - as one pious minister puts it - "is involved in answering the prayer." Such degrading anthropomorphic speech is far

from edifying, but the writings of men more "pious" than we are full of it.

In a time of severe drought Luther himself, the great soul-emancipator, prayed as follows: "We pray so much for rain and we prayed so often, and if Thou dost not grant our prayer,----- the godless would accuse Thee of lying!

I know that we cry unto Thee from the depths of our hearts. Why dost Thou not listen unto us?" * Such "prayer" needs no comment. It speaks for itself and is typical of a period of mental darkness in which many thousands (and with much less excuse than Luther had) are still enthralled.

* Frederick Gerhardt's "The Coming Creed of the World." - p. 315.

The Bible has numerous examples of the supposed objective efficacy of prayer. Eliezer's prayer at Haran is "answered" by the coming of Rebekah to the well. In Egypt, after each of the Plagues, Moses is importuned to pray for its removal. Each time the prayer is "answered", i. e. the plague ceases. After the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt, sinned against God, and showed their stiff-neckedness and the Lord purposed to destroy them — Moses prayed and:

וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' עַל הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְעַמּוּלָּם

"The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." (Exod. 32nd)

After the worship of the golden calf,
again Moses saved his people by prayer.
Also his petition in Miriam's behalf:

וְרַחֵם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

"Heal her, O God, I beseech Thee" was
immediately "answered." How much
more beautiful and valuable the moral
lesson, if - instead of citing this as an
example of the objective efficacy of
prayer - it be held up as an example
of magnanimity towards those who sin
against us - or of praying even for
our enemies.

When a fire was raging in
Israel's camp and burning some of
those who had sinned, again

66
"when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched." (Numb. IX.)

After the defeat at Ai, Joshua was in despair, he fell upon his face and prayed to God, but there the answer was: "Get thee up, wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" That was to say: there is no avail in useless re-
X
fusing; only activity coupled with prayer will answer the petition.

The sun and moon stand still in answer to Joshua's prayer. How easily we can all annihilate night and day! There is no night and day when God's work is being done.

Sun and moon will wait on our pious deeds, and it was a wise saying of our fathers: that no ill can befall one while engaged in, doing some good. Why then shall not sun and moon await the completion of Joshua's fight for God? With such an explanation need this story be taken literally?

Prayers for rain are common enough, but I Kings XVII gives an account of Elijah's prayer which prevented rain during a certain period of Ahab's reign. Other prayers are recorded of Elijah, are recorded as being "answered" but they can all be explained either as natural results of acts accompanying the

prayer - or as coincidences.

The presumptuous king of Assyria, Sennacherib, marches against Israel, blaspheming God and boasting of his prowess. Hezekiah calls on God to avenge his honor - as it were - which has been questioned by this blasphemer.

He prays: ה' אלהי ישראל ואלה פניו ואלה

והוא את דברי סנחריב אשר ראו לעיני אלהים חיים

והוא ה' אלהינו הוסיפו נא עיניו

"Lord, bow down Thy ear, and hear: open Lord, Thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Now therefore, O Lord, our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his

hand" ---- - (II Kings, 19)

This prayer too is "answered" - for on the ^{next} morning the bodies of 185,000 Assyrians lay dead before Jerusalem. If instead of using this, as an example of the "objective efficacy" of prayer - this were cited as a prayer of trust and confidence in God. In spite of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, Hezekiah put his trust in God, confident that God and victory would be with the few who were fighting in a righteous cause, feeling as did the Psalmist:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם
יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם

(פְּסַלְמִים יִצְחָק יִצְחָק)

"The Lord is my light and my salvation;

whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. XXVII, 1)

Thus citations without end could be presented of the supposed objective efficacy of prayer - and each of them easily explicable according to the interpretations already offered.

But the scope of this treatise is necessarily limited, for - as we found occasion to remark in the Introduction, there is danger for a boatman of limited powers, in trusting his craft too far from the shore. Therefore, we would for the time close this subject, though painfully conscious of its incompleteness.

and inadequacy, but hopeful at some future day to bring the force of additional learning, experience and reverence to bear upon this subject worthy of the scholar's best efforts.

And now turn we to a more pleasing - because a more sublime and elevating theme: the Subjective Efficacy of Prayer.

Subjective Efficacy of Prayer.

The place of Worship should not be called: the House of God, but the House of Man - for there Man realizes the possible latent in him: the Divine. Not God needs our prayer, but we ourselves. God knows - for is He not Omniscient? - every prayer before it rises to the lips. Will one then dare to utter a prayer that comes not from the heart? Our Rabbis struck the fundamental idea of prayer when they laid down the maxim:

וְיָדַעְתֶּם מִתְּחִלָּה מִלְּפָנֵי מִי אַתֶּם עוֹבְדִים

"And when ye pray, know before whom ye are standing." If we recognize all the attributes of God, know that He has an "all-seeing Eye, and an all-hearing Ear."

that he is Omniscient, our prayer will find its origin in our hearts, and thence from its pure source, flow undefiled into the lips, where it will take on body and clothe itself in words.

If we praise and extol God, do we thereby hope to enhance his greatness or his glory? Dare we hope that our weak words will tell his glory more strongly than cataracts or ocean's roar? Will our devotion more readily penetrate the skies than the mute, impressing worship of the lofty mountains? Can our thin chants vie in their praise of God with the grand and awful music of the spheres - silent to human ears?

If we are grateful, knows not God our gratitude, even before it is spoken? If we are penitent, knows not God our penitence, even before we have given it voice? Truly, not God needs our prayers, but we need them.

בְּיָמֵינוּ מִתְקַדֵּשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפִי אֲנִי וְאַתָּה

"And when ye pray, know before whom ye are standing." If to us God is perfect, if He represents our highest ideals, if indeed we are formed in the image of God, and our true prayer is an aspiration for spiritual communion with Him, then will not every prayer help to bring out the divine latent within us, bring us nearer to that Perfection which we

worship, make us holy, because the Lord our God is holy?

If we pray for God's mercy, will we not become more merciful? If we give thanks to God, will we not show gratitude also to our fellow-beings for their goodness? If we trust in God, will we not thereby also strengthen our faith in Man? If prayer be practice in humility, will we not always grow in meekness?

If worship is an upreaching towards the spiritual, then every prayer lifts us out of ourselves, above ourselves, gives us a sense of the grandeur beyond us, brings us nearer to ideals above us, puts us in touch with sympathies

extending over the whole world. It will tell us of work to be done, of purposes to be accomplished. It will broaden our souls, thus bringing us nearer to God and nearer to man.

Does God answer our prayers? Indeed, never a sincere prayer is lost, never one dies away unheard and unheeded. Answer them? What stronger answers need we than those already mentioned? God answers our prayers even before we express them. God looks into the heart of man, and reading his intention, He answers, He rewards even before the lips have spoken. God's answer is in the aspiration itself.

"Every inmost aspiration is God's angel
undefiled;
And in every 'O, my Father' slumbers deep
a 'Here, my child.' "*

Does God answer our prayer?
Only one who has prayed can know. Only
he, who has felt the formless prayer
gushing forth in solitude, can tell how

קריב ה' אל-קראיו. אל ארץ יראו דארת

"The Lord is nigh unto all, who call upon
Him, to all that call upon Him in
truth." (Psalm CXLV, 18.) None but they who
call upon Him in truth, in sincerity,
have a right to expect an answer. To
them it is given unmistakably. Let
on whose heart is weighted with cares,

* From Tholuck," by James Freeman Clarke.

bisect by temptations, weak in resolution, not knowing whether to turn, - let such a one turn his prayer to God, and listen for an answer. "We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!" * In England's late, lamented Laureate, Tennyson, so beautifully expresses it:

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And, falling with my weight of cares
(Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,
I stretch lame hands of faith." ----- (DuRoi's version)
and there comes an answer which buoy
the weak spirit, strengthens the fainting
heart and puts new courage into the
despairing soul.

* R. L. Trunch, "Songs of Trust."

Does God answer prayer? Let the captive who, in his lonely cell, during the still hours of the night, repents him of his sins and pours forth his penitence to God, — let him reply and tell: how God heard his prayer, made him forget his prison-bars, and strengthened his resolve to begin life anew. אֶתֶר אִסְרוֹתָי וְלִי Thus does the Lord release the captive, and make him free.

Does God answer prayer? Ask those who, — when the heart was sick with sorrow, stricken by a blow severer than they thought possible to be borne, — in their hours of trouble, voiced winged words of prayer for help. Let them tell:

how out of the depths of despair, they soared on the wings of devotion to loftier heights, whence they could rise above trouble's temporary clouds and see the sunshine beyond; how life to them again acquired new meaning, so that, bowed in affliction and in humble prayer, they arose with courage renewed, conviction strengthened and with the firm resolve to live now for the higher purposes of life.

Thus does God answer our prayers:

אמר אסורין ותקום אתיבתו עזר

He frees the captive and establishes His faith in those who are prostrated in the dust. He soothes the soul laden with sorrow, raises the heart bowed down by

weight of woe. He smoothes out the wrinkled brow of care, and sends strength to those suffering in body - because of sickness, or in mind - because of sin. All this the fervent prayer calls forth. When the scorching winds of this world's troubles have almost withered the weary heart, so that it can find relief only by turning to God in prayer, - then returns that prayer to the suppliant, bringing the balm of consolation, and falling like refreshing dew upon his soul.

What further answer need we ask? When in our weakness and dependence we turn to God for aid, we

rise from our prayer with the resolve to aid our fellow-men as much as in our power lies. The aspiration to goodness begets goodness in us. Thus, prayer addressed to the Perfect One must lead us toward perfection. The earthly child grows thereby more like unto his heavenly Father. This yearning of our little souls for communion with the World Soul is "the carrying of our little cups of heart-need and spirit-need, - the reaching up, when we are weak or sad, and laying hold of the Infinite Source of strength and joy, which is forever above us." *

* J. T. Sunderland. "Shall we Pray?"

The Necessity of Worship

Our Rabbis have said,

The world is founded on three things: on Knowledge, Worship, and Humanity. The fundamentals appeal to us, also, as essential to a stable. But we are here concerned with only one of them, Worship.

Why do men pray?

This is an age of whys, and where-fore. Every phenomenon must give a cause for its existence. So, also the phenomenon we call Worship must show that it has a *raison d'être*.

For a moment let us once more look back to the beginnings of man. What first brought man to his knees? It was his

fear of the inexplicable manifestations about him, followed by an overwhelming sense of his weakness and his dependence. Later, a consciousness of his spiritual and mental wants, and failings, super-added to a realization of his physical needs and limitations, made man to look for a complement to his powers physical, mental, and spiritual. This complement he sought from a Being, whom by degrees he conceived to be All-powerful, All-wise and Most-holy - thus allowing him to turn to this Being to satisfy all his needs. This worship then was a psychological necessity.

The voice of our modern "liberal" (?)

here breaks in, saying: "yes, it was a psychological necessity, but is it now?" Why not now as much as ever? If, in primitive man, worship sprang from a sense of dependence and imperfection, are we perfect or independent. that we need no longer pray? Have we reached the mountain-tops of morality, that we can look down with contempt upon our more modest worshipping ancestors? Are there no higher heights to be attained, no greater moral victories to be won? Even if to these questions could be given affirmative answers, the necessity of worship would still remain.

Unless we try to stifle our natural

instinct we would still pray - for Prayer is a natural yearning. The child must commune with its parent. Man must commune with his Maker. If we are formed in the image of God, and our soul is kin to the World-Soul, we cannot here remain in isolation, and never long to be in touch therewith. We must feel (though we may not express) gratitude to our All-kind Creator. We cannot repress feelings of hope and trust. We cannot restrain desires for and aspirations to the Sublime, longings and yearnings for the Perfect, and the Ideal. We must pray, - for all this gratitude and appreciation, all this hope and trust, all

these desires and aspirations, all these longings and yearnings - all these are truly Prayer.

The soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed, is Prayer. This yearning is unquenchable. We are forced into humility when we contemplate the awful grandeur of the countless worlds around us. We are bowed down when we gaze upon the perfection in the simple flower, and think of our own imperfections. The wisdom everywhere displayed makes us deeply conscious of our own ignorance. The blessings showered upon us on all sides make us painfully aware of our unworthiness. Knowing

all this, none but the brutish soul can withhold that inexpressible, ~~subject~~ ^{yet} is-repressible yearning for things better, higher, nobler: nearer to the Ideal which we worship. Prayer is this feeling and not the words in which we may give it expression. This cannot be repeated too often.

Worship is expressed not only by Prayer in temple and mosque, in church and pagoda, but also in every painting and statue which expresses a longing for the physical ideal. This too represents a perfection to be attained. The sculptor and painter thus call forth our worship. The poet, too, and the

philosopher, and he who, divinely inspired, composes heavenly music - all these demand our adoration, in that they hold up to us the sublimest Ideals. The soul of man must do homage. If all these: the poet, the philosopher, the sculptor, the painter, and the composer, in their creations, show to man what is possible for him and thus compel his homage - how much the more must the All-perfect One, (how terrible and grand in its infinitude is this attribute!) - how much the more must God receive our worship?

Whether it be joy or sorrow, hope or fear, trustfulness or despair that moves the soul to Prayer, the longing,

the yearning is the same: it is always the desire for contact with the Better, the aspiration to communion with the Best.

Humility is the source of Prayer. As long as meekness exists in a man he will, he must pray. With the growth of self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency and other forms of conceit—the desire to worship God decreases and finally gives way to worship of Self. For man must worship. Preserving this humility, mindful of his shortcomings, man will never cease to pray to God, for he will recognize that his true dignity consists in a

continual feeling of his dependence
upon God and an unceasing effort
at conformity to His nature.

Where, when, and in what language shall we pray?

Where shall we pray?

These chapters have left no impression on the reader, if his answer to this question be: In the Temple, Church or whatever building or place is devoted to that purpose. Such a person forgets that these buildings are dedicated mainly to public worship. All these chapters we have devoted more especially to private prayer - the prayer gushing forth in solitude and of the fulness of heart, which moves to devotion. How prayerless would be the lives of most people, could they pray only in the house of worship. As if God dwelt only in his "holy house"!

Is not the entire world holy? Can we manufacture consecrated ground and say that holiness is confined to certain buildings, crowned with steeples, domes, and turrets? God is Omnipresent — will he not hear the prayer wherever it is uttered?

Where shall we pray? Pray everywhere. The Hebrew word ^{Qay} for Temple meant, a holy place, sanctified, set apart for the special purpose of God's worship. So also the word "Temple" is derived from a root meaning "cut off." Both of these words give emphasis to the idea: That worship must be rendered in a place

cut off from daily and profane work and that prayer must be limited to such a place. So far has the idea grown, that a "religious" person is one who goes regularly to the place of worship, while the one who is not so punctual in his attendance (though he may be even more soulful and prayerful) is called irreligious. It is time that religiousness assume a higher meaning.

In Talmud Berachoth 6a, we learn that:

תפלה נשמעת רק בציבור
 " Prayer is heard only if offered in

the house of assembly, in the

synagogue." Also in Sanhedrin 17b, we read:

כא עיר לאין בה בית הכנסת אין ראוי ת"ח לזכר בתוכה

"One should not dwell in a city in which there is no synagogue." While these sayings may sound very narrow, yet do they contain a deep meaning. There is a special significance to the prayer offered in a common house of worship. Our Rabbis said: "a prayer offered in a house of worship is the highest kind of prayer." (Berachoth, 6a.) There the individual rises out of himself. For the nonce he forgets himself. When heart is joined to heart and mind to mind, in prayer - then the individual feels himself a member of the great human family, he feels that while the single

members may occasionally suffer defeat, the race progresses towards those ideals which are the common heritage of man:

By united prayer man is joined into one great brotherhood, the sympathies are widened so that each soul feels the "heart-throb of the universe."

So much for the benefits of Common Prayer. The private prayer of the individual has received attention throughout this Thesis and needs no special treatment here. In brief we would commend the Quaker doctrine: Pray when the spirit moves you.

That brings us to the question: -

When shall we pray?

Every religion and sect has its fixed times for public worship. These are, almost all of them, either connected with some historical event (real or supposed), or else they are established as feasts appropriate to a certain season of the year, or else specially instituted for certain religious purposes. It is, not our ~~purpose~~^{intention} here to investigate the origin and purpose of the established Holidays and Holy days of the different religions. One question is of a more general nature. It is to suggest that our prayers should not be (nor are they, in reality) restricted to certain seasons of the year. The Jews

had the right idea when they said the
 Shema ^{שְׁמָע יִשְׂרָאֵל} evening, morning
 and noon. Every season of the year, every
 time of the day should be suggestive of
 prayerful thoughts and feelings.

In the morning, the mystery of
 sleep and of awaking should be enough
 to move us to prayer. Then, in looking
 out and seeing the awakening of all
 Nature, a short time before silent in
 sleep, now quick with activity - this
 too should move us to devotion. The sun
 has again given color to all objects, just
 now black in the general darkness.

Again reigns the Spirit that first said
 "let there be light." We meet

once more friends from whom during those uncertain hours, akin to death, we were separated. The eye has regained its keenness, the mind its brightness, the body its strength. How fit then at this hour, that our first thoughts should naturally be turned in thanks to God, upon whom we depended through the night, who "thought of us when we could not think, and watched over us while we could not defend ourselves."

At noon, also, when the sun has reached its zenith, we too should attain the loftiest altitude of our moral outlook. For half a day now we have been in touch with our fellow-men. Have

our dealings been honest and upright, our deeds guided by the purest motives. Have we so shaped our actions that the day's close will find us better than its beginning? Perplexed, bewildered, we look in both directions! Then upward we turn our eyes to God and there again find the strength we seek.

The evening brings its restful hour. Shall we eat our meal, and like the brute creation, sleep through the darkness? No, the evening hour is for review of the day's deeds. What have we accomplished? Are we nearer to the goal we set before us in the morning? Has the morning's devotion

guided us all day as a pillar of cloud and will it be as a pillar of fire throughout the evening? Alas! we recognize that, though prayerfully and with good intentions we began the day, the evening finds us conscious of wrong committed there, of good omitted here. In the morning we were strong with hope and good purpose; during the day we forgot and were weak; in the evening we were stricken with sorrow and repentance. Uneasy rests the head that makes not such confession to itself and to the Lord before again it resigns its body to sleep, and its soul to God.

And when the weary head
seeks rest on the pillow, what more
appropriate close to the day than to
repeat the simple prayer:

"Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

Thus, should our days and
our years begin and end with that
humble dependence on God and with
that unceasing communion with Him
which is our only hope for the real-
ization of the Good, the Beautiful
and the True.

As for the Language of Prayer - on
that subject also we hope we need not

lay much stress in a Thesis which has endeavored to emphasize the feeling of prayer. If the prayer is to be expressed at all let it be as our Rabbis said: "in the language thou understandest best." Even the Orach Chayim said: *כִּי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲרָם אִם לְשׁוֹן כְּנַעֲנִי אִם לְשׁוֹן יוֹנִי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲרָבִי אִם לְשׁוֹן חֵם אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲשֵׁרִי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲרָבִי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲשֵׁרִי אִם לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי* "we may pray in whatever language we choose." Nor did they believe in especially long prayers, but also laid stress on the spirit in which the prayer is uttered, for we find again in Orach Chayim:

אֵלֶּם מֵעַל תְּתַחַלֵּץ דְּבִירָה אֲמִרָתָא דְּרַבִּי כֹהֵן

"Better a little prayer with devotion than a longer one without it."

The Language of Prayer? In

what better language can prayer be uttered than in the universal language: the language of the heart. Let the heart be the fountain of our prayers. The heart knoweth; let the heart also speak, for God waits not on the language of the lip. He reads the heart.

Do men still pray? Is it, not a false rationalism which doubts this, — which feels or imagines itself above prayer?

As long as man remains a "little lower than the angels" so long will he have left something to aspire to, something to yearn and strive for. As long as man falls short of perfection, the Ideal will still draw forth his homage and devotion.

So long will he daily send up his Prayer: that Jacob's ladder, on which always ascend unto God those spiritual messengers which lift man into communion with the

All-perfect Father, and there
will descend unto him messengers
of grace and consolation, of hope
and strength and joy.

On this Jacob's ladder:
Prayer he will rise even higher
and higher, striving towards that
perfection which is a part of God.