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*THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.*

(1) *THE Kenosis* or humiliation of the Son of God embraced His whole personality ; it was shown in His mind by the limitation of His knowledge (*Study XII.*) ; in His will by His liability to temptation (*Study V.*) ; in His heart by His subjection to varying emotions. Again and again during the course of His ministry He experienced struggles of soul. A few instances may be given. In working the miracles He was inwardly distracted by on the one hand His anxiety not to encourage an idle curiosity (John iv. 48), and on the other His impulse to relieve need and suffering (Matt. xiv. 14, xv. 32, xx. 34 ; Mark i. 41 ; Luke vii. 13). His compassion for the multitude was in conflict with His desire to prepare His disciples for their work (Matt. ix. 30 ; Mark i. 44, vi. 31). The unbelief which hindered Him in the works of healing to which His pity moved Him deeply distressed Him (Matt. xiii. 58). The case of the man who "was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech," presents several interesting features. The sufferer is taken away from the crowd ; the deaf ears are touched by the fingers of Jesus ; the impeded tongue is anointed with His spittle. Only after the prayer of the heavenward look and the *sigh* revealing inward strain, is the word of cure, *Ephphatha*, spoken (Mark vii. 34). Was this unbelief of the sufferer so resistant that Jesus feared that the miracle would be hindered ; or did He dread a revival of the popularity from which He was anxious to escape ? The unbelief which tormented Him with the demand for a *sign* drew from Him a deep sigh (*ἀναστενάξας τῷ πνεύματι*, Mark viii. 12). At the grave of Lazarus His feelings seem to have been still more deeply

stirred. Both the dead brother and the sorrowing sisters were very dear to Him ; He felt very keen sympathy with their grief. The helplessness of their sorrow made Him still more sorrowful. The distrust of His power that even the sisters showed, and the unbelief of the mourners who were with them, caused Him intense distress. "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (John xi. 33), "He wept" (v. 35), and He, "groaning in Himself, cometh to the tomb" (v. 38). His vain striving to save Jerusalem from its doom so grieved His heart that He wept over it (Luke xix. 41). According to the *Fourth Gospel* (xii. 27) the request of the Greeks to see Him drew from Him the confession, "now is My soul troubled." (The connexion of this passage with the Synoptic record of Gethsemane was mentioned in the last *Study*, and will be again referred to in this.) The controversies in which He was engaged, the temptations to which He was exposed, the disappointments He experienced both from His relatives and His disciples, all affected Him with many varying emotions.

(2) It is in the record of the Agony in the Garden, however, that His complete humanity in its full participation in human emotions is revealed. It was after *His Last Supper* with His disciples that He withdrew to the garden to prepare Himself for the arrest, the trial, and the death which in a few hours awaited Him. In the Upper Room He was troubled by the presence of the traitor ; the warning of treachery given to the other disciples was a last appeal to the traitor himself from the loving heart of Jesus, torn with grief and dread of the doom awaiting him (Matt. xxvi. 24), and was enforced by the token of affection in the sop offered to him (John xiii. 26) ; the striving of love having proved vain, the strain of the soul of Jesus could be relieved only by the dismissal of Judas. (The fuller account of the *Fourth*

*Gospel*, xiii. 21-30, is not at all improbable.) As His affection for His disciples had made Jesus eager for this farewell meal with them, so it reinforced His hope of a reunion with them (Luke xxii. 15; Matt. xxvi. 29). Even in full view of death He was confident of the fulfilment of His purpose in the kingdom of God (Luke xxii. 16). Whether the words in Luke xxii. 19, this "do in remembrance of Me," are borrowed from Paul's account of the institution of the Supper in I Corinthians xi. 24 or not, it seems most fitting that in the hour of parting Jesus should have desired to be remembered by His disciples, probably not in an occasional ordinance divorced from their daily life, as the Lord's Supper has unhappily come to be, but in all their common meals, so that whenever they sat together the meaning that He gave to His death would be remembered by them. What He most of all wanted His disciples to remember about Himself was His sacrifice. The significance He gave to it was expressed in the symbolism of the ancient ritual, as interpreted by prophetic teaching. As the old covenant at Sinai had been sealed by sacrifice (Exod. xxiv. 8), so the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (xxxi 33, 34) and now fulfilled, was being sealed by the sacrifice of His death. The blessings of the New Covenant—the law put in the inward parts and written on the heart, the union of God and man, the universal knowledge of God, the forgiveness of sin—were to be secured—especially the last—by His sacrifice. (The clause in Matthew xxvi. 28, "unto remission of sins," even if not authentic, is a correct interpretation.) We must always remind ourselves of the truth so emphasized by the writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* that the sacrifices of the old covenant could not, "as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation" (ix. 9, 10); that these were but "a shadow of the good things to come,

not the very image of the things " (x. 1) ; and must not, therefore, expect the old covenant ritual to furnish us with the clue to the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus. While the words at the Supper make clear the aim of His sacrifice—man's redemption from sin and restoration to God—what the sacrifice itself was we can learn only in so far as His own consciousness is revealed to us.

(3) Some light on the mystery of the Cross we may expect from the study of the agony in Gethsemane. From the Upper Room He brought to the garden pity and pain for the traitor, a deep horror for the doom that awaited him, the sorrow of separation from His disciples, relieved by an assurance of reunion, the certainty of establishing by His death the new covenant of God with man, but also the anticipation of all that His death as the sacrifice of the covenant might involve for Himself. He was beginning to realize on His way to Gethsemane what the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood might cost Him, not in bodily pain, but in soul-anguish. On the way another element in His suffering is confessed. As He looks forward to the Cross, He foresees that even His disciples, overcome by coward fears, will forsake Him. Peter's rash boast makes the warning in his case only the more explicit ; he will deny as well as abandon (Matt. xxvi. 31-35).

(4) Thus overwhelmed with griefs and fears He sought to be alone with God, as was His wont in the great *crises of His ministry*. To mention a few instances, the success of the first day of His public ministry in Capernaum seems to have brought Him some uncertainty in regard to His future course, and He withdrew Himself from His disciples to seek divine guidance in prayer (Mark i. 35). As a result of that guidance He entered on a preaching tour in the synagogues of Galilee (v. 38). Moved by His compassion for the leper He touched him (Luke v. 13), but, having thus

exposed Himself to a charge of ceremonial uncleanness, in order that His work might not be on that ground interfered with, He first enjoined secrecy (v. 14); but when His command was disregarded He sought to avoid giving any offence by withdrawal from the multitudes to the desert (v. 16). In this solitude He prayed (v. 16), doubtless for directions as to His next step. After the feeding of the Five Thousand a great danger faced Him: the mistaken enthusiasm of the multitudes, which was probably fully shared by the disciples, sought to force on Him a course contrary to His own consciousness of His vocation (John vi. 15). After constraining the disciples, who would gladly have taken the lead in such a movement, to cross the lake in the boat, and after dismissing the reluctant multitude, He departed into the mountain to pray (Mark vi. 46). May we venture to assume that He prayed not only for strength to resist this temptation, but also for such wisdom in His dealing with the disciples and the multitude that His disappointment of their hopes by His refusal might not hinder His work? So important an event as His choice of the twelve was preceded by prayer "continued all night" (Luke vi. 12). As was shown in the *Last Study*, He sought light on the mystery of His death in prayer, and received an answer in the *Transfiguration* (Luke ix. 28). It was in accord with His constant habit that He sought *solitude with God*. The place to which He withdrew was not unfamiliar to Him, but already hallowed by such intercourse with God. The explanation in the *Fourth Gospel* (xviii. 2, "Now Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples") is altogether credible. This circumstance, it may be noted in passing, shows that Jesus was more at home in Jerusalem than the Synoptic records would lead us to believe; and that He had unnamed, yet

devoted, friends who were ready to put at His disposal their property. (Compare the use of the ass, Matthew xxi. 3, and the use of the Upper Room, xxvi. 18.) Although He took all His disciples, save the traitor, with Him, yet this impulse to solitude compelled Him to leave all but three, probably at the entrance. Even these three, after confiding His sorrow to them, He must leave behind. Feeling the need of human sympathy as He did, yet He was compelled in His prayer to be alone with God (Matt. xxvi. 36-39).

(5) This impulse toward solitude claims closer scrutiny. Does it not reveal to us the truth that loneliness must have been the price paid for His greatness? Not only literally, but figuratively, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. His own family were so estranged from Him that they sought to hinder His ministry, and He was compelled to disown their right (Matt. xii. 46-50); His disciples, who for a time took the place of mother and brethren, in desire and expectation drifted ever farther from Him; for they would not submit to His choice of the Cross, and were cherishing their ambitions and rivalries (Matt. xviii. 1, xx. 21). The multitudes never understood Him, and thus their abandonment of His cause was not so tragic as the growing estrangement of the disciples. His warm welcome of any word that showed any understanding of His mind and heart (as from the Roman centurion, Matthew viii. 10, and the Syrophenician mother, Matthew xv. 28), and His generous praise of the token of Mary's affection (Matt. xxvi. 10-12), prove what pain this loneliness was to Him. That one of His disciples had just turned traitor, that another was about to deny Him, that all would forsake Him, intensified His sense of solitude. In Gethsemane He knew Himself to be alone with God in His knowledge of the character and purpose of God, in His judgment on the heinousness

and the hatefulness of human sin, in His apprehension of the dark and drear doom that must follow sin, in His recognition of the ignorance and indifference of men in regard to the most serious issues and the most sacred claims of their life, in His realization of the greatness of the sacrifice which He must Himself offer in order that from all this evil salvation might be secured. This winepress of the mystery and the terror of the sin of man in conflict with the love of God He trod alone, and there was with Him no human helper or comforter. Thus forsaken of man He fled to God. He was alone, yet not alone, for the Father was still with Him (John xvi. 32).

(6) Driven by this *impulse to solitude* Jesus is still held by the *desire for sympathy*. He takes His chosen three companions with Him when He leaves the other disciples behind (Matt. xxvi. 36); when He is withdrawing from them He asks them to watch with Him (v. 38); after His first prayer He comes back to them, and in grieved tones rebukes them for sleeping (v. 40); after the second prayer He again seeks the support of their presence (v. 43); when in His third prayer divine strength is granted Him, He returns to them again, but to tell them that He had sought their help and comfort in vain, and that now He has no need of human succour (v. 45). It is sometimes said that the best love is the love so selfless that it seeks no return, that is content with giving and desires no getting. But is not this a mistake? Love is fellowship of life, and is not completed until the heart loving is also loved. The love of Jesus sought as well as gave. He wanted others to give their life to Him as He gave His to them. Especially in the burden and shadow of His life, when He was going on to His sacrifice, did He seek the response of others to His appeal in sympathy with His sorrow. The welcome which He gave to the tribute of affection from Mary in Bethany



reveals the intensity of His craving. The sympathy she thus showed was her participation in His sacrifice, and gave her deed a place in His Gospel (Matt. xxvi. 12-13). As has already been noted, the disciples had withheld their response to the appeal Jesus had made for sympathy each time He spoke to them of His approaching passion. In Gethsemane Jesus makes His last appeal, and as hitherto in vain. There seem to be two reasons why at this time the desire for sympathy was intensified. On the one hand the will of God was shrouded in mystery for Jesus ; the divine hand was leading Him by a way which He did not understand to a goal from which He shrank ; as will afterwards be shown, He dreaded an interruption of His fellowship with God. On the other hand the sacrifice He anticipated was a vicarious sacrifice ; He was about to taste death for every man, in the pity and grace of His love He was so identifying Himself with mankind, so loving men unto oneness, that the curse on account of sin was to fall on Him in the darkness and desolation of death. Need we wonder that dreading that the Father's face might be hidden from Him, that the burden of man's iniquity would fall upon Him, He yearned deeply that some of the race for the salvation of which He was offering this sacrifice might feel with Him ? Does it not intensify the tragedy of the Cross that mankind left the Saviour alone in the hour when He was most fully and freely giving Himself ?

(7) What was the *sorrow* that drove Jesus into *solitude*, yet made Him crave *sympathy* ? The Gospels describe the Agony in the Garden in these words : " He began to be sorrowful and sore troubled " (Matt. xxvi. 37) ; " He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled " (Mark xiv. 33) ; " And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly : and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground " (Luke xxii. 44). It must be added

that Westcott and Hort give this and the preceding verse in double brackets "and regard them as no part of Luke's text, though a true element of the Christian tradition." Jesus confessed His own emotion in the saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38, Mark xiv. 34).

(i.) This agony some have explained as due to the fear of death as physical dissolution. But this is to ascribe to Jesus a weakness from which many men and women have been entirely free, and which has in many other cases been thoroughly overcome by faith in Him. Is it likely that the first of the martyr band would bear Himself less bravely and calmly in the face of death than those who, following in His footsteps, and upheld by His companionship, faced death in many forms of torment with a smile or a song upon their lips? To the writer this explanation seems intolerable.

(ii.) Less obvious, but not on that account more probable, is the suggestion that Jesus feared that death might come upon Him before the appointed hour, that He would yield to bodily weakness and weariness before He could consummate His sacrifice on the Cross. To this suggestion three objections can be advanced. There is no evidence that Christ's physical exhaustion was such as to afford any ground for such a fear. How prosaic is the view of the death of Christ which assumes that its significance and value was wholly dependent on its outward mode! It is true that the death on the Cross has a tragic impressiveness that death through failure of vitality in the Garden would not have had; but it was in the soul of Jesus that the great sacrifice was offered, and the great salvation secured. It is incredible that Jesus' constant confident trust in His Heavenly Father's providence failed Him. Could He believe that God who had chosen, called, fitted, and kept Him for

this task would suffer Him to perish leaving it unfulfilled ?

(iii.) With very much deeper respect the writer must express his dissent from a third view. It was from the human crime of the Cross that Jesus shrank—the sin of man which was involved in His betrayal, abandonment, condemnation, and execution. The pain caused Him by Judas' treachery, and the estrangement and weakness of the other disciples, has already been noted, and doubtless this was a contributory element in His agony. As He looked forward to the means that would be used to bring about His death, He was doubtless filled with horror and shame. The craft and cruelty of the priesthood, the feebleness and fickleness of the populace, the cowardice of the Roman governor—these it is not at all improbable that Jesus with prophetic foresight anticipated, although the details of His trial, condemnation, and execution would not be known to Him. That human unbelief should reject, and human sin should resist, and human hate should pursue unto death, the Son of God, in word and deed revealing the love and communicating the grace of the Heavenly Father—that was to Jesus an apocalypse of the abysmal depths of man's fall from God. The deeds of treachery and denial, of cunning and malice, of vengeance and contempt that Jesus foresaw threw into bolder relief that dark background of moral iniquity that was ever present to His sinless consciousness. But what if the crime of the Cross involved a moral problem for Jesus Himself ? Might not this conflict of God and goodness in Him with the sin and hate in man be avoided ? Must He push this opposition to the uttermost ? Was He not involving in still deeper guilt His enemies by compelling them to do their worst ? Could He not spare them their greatest condemnation while escaping the sacrifice Himself ? He foresaw that the doom of the nation was bound up with its

dealings with Him. Could He not save both Himself and it by escape? Even if such thoughts never came to Him, of this at least we may be sure, that He did intensely realize the sin, guilt, and doom of all involved in the curse of His death, and that the realization was to Him anguish unspeakable. But this view does not seem to the writer adequate. Jesus' sense of the crime to be committed was surely the occasion for a wider and deeper consciousness of the sin of the race, of which this was one of the manifestations, the culmination of a world-wide, age-long process of rebellion against God.

(iv.) The agony in Gethsemane must be interpreted as an anticipation of the desolation on Calvary. What Jesus dreaded, and prayed to be delivered from, was the interruption of His filial communion with God, the obscuration of the gracious and glorious vision of God's Fatherhood. That He did experience this on the Cross, if only for a moment, the words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Matt. xxvii. 46) show. We must ask whether we can make out a psychological probability that He anticipated this experience in Gethsemane. First of all, let us remind ourselves that Jesus regarded sin as a separation from God. Secondly, it has already been argued in the *previous Study* that He recognized in death the possibility of an interruption of even the saint's fellowship with God. Thirdly, He cherished the hope that, like some of the saints, He might escape this experience in death. But fourthly, in order to give His life a ransom for many, to offer the sacrifice of the new covenant, was it not probable that He would be brought to think that it might be necessary that He should be numbered with the transgressors, deprived of the comfort in death that the saints of God might look for? Thus, lastly, it is likely that in His saving love for man He felt Himself drawn, nay, driven into man's place.

He realized that sin necessarily involved darkness and desolation of soul in separation from God; He realized that as the Saviour of man from sin He must share this experience of man: Himself sinless, the curse of sin must fall on Him. As in His identification through love with man His consciousness came to be more and more filled with the shame and sorrow and shadow of the sin of mankind, realized in His sinless perfect nature more intensely than in the human soul, the consciousness of God as Father became more and more difficult to maintain. Even in Gethsemane had begun the process, finished on Calvary, in which the invasion of the consciousness of Jesus by the sin of mankind involved the expulsion from His consciousness of the clear and firm assurance of God's Fatherhood.

(8) What Jesus shrank from and *struggled against*, what He prayed to be delivered from in Gethsemane, was not death as physical dissolution, or any of its pains or pangs, not death as a sacrifice voluntarily offered for the salvation of mankind; but this possible element in His death as a sacrifice, the hiding of the Father's face, and the withdrawing of His Father's hand from Him. He regarded this experience as a temptation, for His words to His disciples, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41) were spoken out of the depths of His own soul. Yet the temptation was accordant with His nature as the Son of God. It was fitting that the Son of God should recoil with terror and horror from the possibility of an interruption of His fellowship with His Father. The necessity of such an experience was gradually forcing itself upon His consciousness; He could not but struggle against acknowledging it; yet even in this He submits to the Father. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). That

His death as a sacrifice for man's sin was necessary, we have no proof that Jesus ever doubted. What seemed possible to Him was death without this extreme of darkness and desolation. This possibility, He learnt in His communion with His Father, was excluded. His second prayer, as given by Matthew (v. 42), "O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done," marks a fresh stage in His thought of His death. Even the worst conceivable must be endured. His struggle against this crown to all His sorrow ended in *surrender* to the will of God. He remained united to God by obedience, even when that obedience involved the interruption of His sustaining and satisfying filial communion with the Father. So resolved was He in love to God and man to obey God and to save man that He consented to give up the highest good of His life—the gladness of His Father's Presence. It may be that the necessity of this darkness and desolation in the death of Jesus is not apparent to us. Even after His recognition of its necessity, we may feel uncertain. To the writer, however, it seems that if we try to realize what God is, as revealed in Christ, and what sin is, as it was revealed in the rejection of Christ, if we try to hate sin as Christ hated it, and yet to love mankind as He loved it, if we try to recognize fully what must be the final issue of sin's opposition to God, and of God's condemnation of sin, if, in short, our consciousness becomes, in any degree, as was the consciousness of Jesus, the scene of the conflict between sin's worst and God's best, then the impossibility of this cup passing from Christ without His drinking it will become to us the content not of an intellectual demonstration, but of a moral intuition. It was upon His knees, wrestling with God in prayer, that this conviction came to Jesus. Can we expect to get it, or to keep it, in any other way ?

(9) Through this surrender to God strength came to Jesus. It is probable that the statement in Luke xxii. 43, "And there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him," is not authentic. Yet the words of Jesus to the disciples when He returned to them after praying a third time—"Sleep on now, and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going ; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth Me " (Matt. xxvi. 45, 46)—indicate a change of mood, a calmness, confidence, and courage that are in striking contrast to the sorrow and sore trouble with which He entered into the Garden. His dignity and mastery of spirit during His arrest, and trial, and on the way to the Cross, as well as on the Cross itself, showed how abundantly by waiting upon God He had renewed His strength. He had brought to God the earthly vessel of an obedient will, and it was filled with the heavenly treasure of triumphant strength.

(10) The passage in John xii. 27, 28—" Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name "—if it is, as has been suggested, a reminiscence of Gethsemane, does not throw any fresh light on the Synoptic narrative ; but in no way contradicts the interpretation of the agony which has been given. That interpretation is confirmed by the reference to Gethsemane in Hebrews v. 7, 8, " Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear ; though He was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Does not the phrase, " prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," describe the struggle in the Garden ? Could the result of the struggle be better ex-

pressed than in the words, "though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered"; that is, in His passion He discovered all that obedience involved, even this loss of the joy of the Father's presence? Was not His shrinking from this experience a "godly fear," and for its sake was He not heard, as the record of the Cross testifies? for the dereliction was but for a moment, and He was saved from death's deeper death, as with words of filial confidence He fell asleep in God (Luke xxiii. 46, "Jesus said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit, and having said this, He gave up the ghost"). The Father's will was obeyed, and the Son's desire fulfilled.

(11) Although it is not intended in these *Studies* to discuss questions of Christian doctrine, yet the writer cannot close this discussion without calling attention to its bearing on the central position of evangelicalism. To him it seems that the objectivity of the Atonement is confirmed by this experience of Jesus in Gethsemane. It is the paternal authority of God that presents, and it is the filial obedience of Christ that accepts, the cup of sacrifice unto death in its uttermost darkness and desolation. The necessity of the Cross is rooted in the relation of the Father to the Son, of the Father as absolute moral perfection, to the Son as incarnate, and identifying Himself with humanity even in its sin, guilt, and doom. Whether the interpretation of Gethsemane given by the writer in this *Study* is correct or not, it is for the readers to judge; but he must add his own deep and growing conviction that no doctrine of the Atonement can be accepted as adequate which does not give its full significance and value to the experience of Jesus, of *Desolation on the Cross* (the subject of the next Study), as of *Agony in the Garden*.

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