

THE GREAT PRAYER.

SHORT CHAPTERS ON JOHN XVII.

BY THE BISHOP OF DURHAM.

IV.

IN the two chapters previous we have considered the Theism of the Great Prayer. With humblest reverence, but drawing very near, we have looked up, as it were, through the eyes of the Intercessor, and so have won some sure sight of Him with whom He intercedes. We have seen Him, in His supreme infinity, personal, holy, righteous. We have heard Him called by the Intercessor, again and again, "Father." We have understood, as we have listened to the wonderful utterance, that He is the Father of the Intercessor not only as to origin, but as to affection. He who speaks recognizes the filial relation not only as between being in its stream and being in its fountain. He speaks, out of an inmost consciousness, about the love which the Fountain pours, eternally into the Stream. "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

This is indeed a Theism not only uplifting, beyond all clouds, to the disciple's mind. It is satisfying to his hungry heart. Upon the throne of existence reigns personal affection. The Supreme loves; nay, "GOD IS LOVE." And that love means not a something so transcendental that it ranges above any intelligible kinship to the tender beatings of a human heart. It is seen here, in words as simple, as homely, in themselves as they are sacred in their matter—as the affection of a Father for a Son.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, almost without a break of thought, we will go on to a reverently simple view of the CHRISTOLOGY of the Great Prayer. What has it to tell us about the Intercessor Himself?

Its first testimony, beginning with its opening word and carried through to the very close, bears on what we have just been recalling from the other side, His filial being. "FATHER": so the Prayer opens. "O righteous Father, I know Thee, and I have made known Thy name": so the Prayer comes to its end. "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee"; "O Father, glorify

Thou Me at Thine own side ” ; “ All things, whatsoever Thou hast given Me, are from Thee ” ; “ I came forth from Thee ” ; “ Thou didst send Me ” ; “ Holy Father, keep them in Thy name ” ; “ Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee ” ; “ Thou lovedst Me before the universe was founded.” Such are the chief explicit utterances in which the Intercessor’s spirit goes out and up with what we can only call, as we worship the utterer, a supreme filial devotion. Whatever is the mighty dignity of His own being, He thus speaks to His FATHER as its eternal origin, as the sublime Giver of the possessions of the Son. And to uplift the glory of the Father, to work out the manifestation of His “ name,” that is to say of what He is as this is revealed to man, to disclose to the disciples and to the world what the Father is, and does, and gives—this is the intense, the dominant, will and work of the Son who intercedes. Once more, whatever is His own greatness, His joy is to see it all as the Stream from that paternal Fountain, and to reveal the Fountain for the wonder and worship of the soul of man.

And our study leads us to see this unutterably filial regard as belonging to the Intercessor not only as He stands amidst us as human, sharing our nature and its natural burthens, acquainted with tears, and now soon to taste death to its depths. It belongs to Him also as He is immeasurably more than human. He is the Beloved of the Father, He is the Lover of the Father, in an existence before, or let us say above, time. “ Thou lovedst Me before the universe was founded ” ; “ I had glory at Thy side (*παρά σοι*) before the universe was.” When the first basal element of material existence as yet was not (we can only speak humanly as to succession and time), when as yet, outside Deity, there was no mental life, no moral life, then, outside and above all successions, in the sphere of the unbeginning, this Son was the Son.

“ When He dwelt on earth abased,” and from our low estate “ lifted up His eyes to heaven,” He was indeed filial, with a sonship which bore a true human aspect ; I mean, a relation to the Supreme in which He could *as man* say, “ My Father and your Father, My God and your God ” ; “ we know what *we* worship.” But that human aspect was only in a deep and holy harmony with the Sonship of the everlasting heaven, the filial love burning eternally upon the throne, “ at Thy side, before the universe was.”

It is well both for mind and heart, often, in deliberate reverence,

to recall this aspect of our Master's glory. The disciple will see in it only new occasion for ever humbler and tenderer adoration of the blessed Son. As he thinks upon it, he will ponder with loving worship the divine moral beauty of what I venture again to call His filial devotion. And all the while the Son's own profound desire will get a growing fulfilment. We shall read in the glory of the Son the glory of the Father. We shall believe with a deep and ultimate rest of faith in that *fontal* holiness, light, and love, from which for ever flows *such a Stream* as Christ the Son, Christ the Lord. "The express Image of the Father's Person" will for ever assure us that that Person is not only infinite and absolute, but Love. The Father is wholly and for ever *as* the Son, in truth, grace, compassion, sympathy, affection. "Blessed, for ever blessed, be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"My Father is greater than I," just as He is Father. As Chrysostom says on that text (John xiv. 28), "He is greater, not in scale, nor in duration," οὐ μεγέθει, οὐδὲ χρόνῳ, "but because the Son is (eternally) born of Him," διὰ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γέννησιν. So our souls' devotion to the Son shall ever be such as to go, in Him, to the Father, and so to fulfil His own divine filial devotion.

But now, upon the other side of the radiant truths before us, let us think a little of *the glory* of the Son, as His own words unfold it.

"*It sets Him weel to commend Himself*," so said an aged Scottish believer very long ago, to her pastor, Thomas Chalmers. They had been talking, the peasant woman and the illustrious thinker and teacher, about the theme dearest to them both, Christ and His glory. Chalmers, if I remember aright, had spoken of the paradox (not using *that word*, we may be sure!) of the Lord's unwavering testimony to Himself: the mystery presented by the habit of the Meek and Lowly One to set Himself before His disciples, before His enemies, before all, as great, as sinless, as regal, as supremely necessary, as Way, Truth, Life, Master, Lord. The simple colloquist met her minister's words, which no doubt burned with natural and spiritual power, with just that comment: "*It sets Him weel*"; it becomes Him, it is fit, it is *convenable*, when it is He Who does it.

To my own mind it is among the deepest and most intimate testimonies to the proper Deity of the Saviour of man that He, while He loves and welcomes the penitent soul, embracing it with an ineffable sympathy, yet never blames Himself, never for a moment

confesses sin, continually holds Himself up as the perfect answer to man's whole need, the absolute claimant of his whole devotion.

That He should do this and yet never, by the human spirit which has in the least degree got near Him, be felt to strike a moral discord as He does it, points to nothing less than a Person of the absolute order. This is God the Son of God, "over all, blessed for ever"; none the less God because He has stooped in a wonderful love to be also Man.

So indeed and in truth it is in the Great Prayer. "Father, glorify Thy Son"; "This is the life eternal, to know Thee, *and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent*"; "Glorify Thou Me at Thine own side, with the glory I had at Thy side before the universe was"; "I am glorified in them," in the men whom Thou hast given Me; "All Thy things are Mine"; "We are one," Thou and I; "I will that where I am, there they may be with Me, that they may behold My glory which Thou gavest Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the universe was founded"; "I have made known to them Thy name, that . . . I may be in them."

As we saw when we gathered up the words which speak of the Intercessor's filial relation and devotion, so with these, which speak so directly of His filial glory—the quotations are only a part of the evidence borne to it in the Prayer. As it were around them, beneath them, there lies everywhere implied the infinite significance of the Intercessor, in virtue of His sublime intimacy with the Father, His being manifestly like Him, the Inhabitant of Eternity. The accent of filial devotion, if I may venture again upon that phrase, is never other than that also of filial glory. Even the perpetual assertion of the Father's glory as the Sender of the Son, the Giver to the Son, carries that with it. The words would be worse than pointless, they would be presumptuous, if spoken by one of a lower grade of being; a grade infinitely lower, if lower at all.

So we feel anew, with love and wonder, as we humbly listen at the Apostles' side, the "sober certainty" of the foundation of all our hopes, the supreme fact of salvation, namely, that man's Brother and Friend, man's Fellow and Head, his dying Lamb, his risen Companion, is filial God Incarnate.

That this was the primeval, the original, faith of the Church we are sure, quite apart from the Great Prayer. Half a century before John wrote his record, Paul, to Thessalonica, to Galatia,

takes it as uncontested truth and uses it as the long-proved secret not only of the sinner's hope of heaven, but of his power for a walk of holy virtue upon earth. And facts of that highest order are above all time. This wonderful Intercessor is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages of the endless life.

HANDLEY DUNELM.

(To be continued.)

The Nation's Pledge,

ON THE CONCLUSION OF PEACE AFTER VICTORY.

O URS are the Islands that rise from the waters
 Where the strong winds of the Northern Seas blow,
 Isles that have nurtured brave sons and fair daughters
 Who, when the war-cloud burst, feared not the foe :
 Ours is the Empire whose sons were united,
 E'en as one man, when her flag was unfurled,
 Patriots who, when the war-torch was lighted,
 Bore themselves nobly throughout the whole world.

Many there were who, with selfless devotion,
 Battled for Britain in deadliest strife,
 Who, on the land, in the air, on the ocean,
 Won for us Peace that shall give us new life :
 Yes, in the radiance of beauty appearing,
 Breaking through clouds that were dark as a pall,
 Calming the fury that all hearts was searing,
 Peace, gentle Peace, lays a spell upon all.

Now that our God hath the Victory given
 Unto the champions of Right against Might,
 Pledge we ourselves, who for Freedom have striven,
 Onward to move in the pathway of Light :
 Cherishing ever the noble ambition
 Heralds to be of the Truth, far and wide,
 Ne'er will we fail in our Heaven-sent Mission,
 Facing the future with God as our Guide.

ROBEY F. ELDRIDGE.

MELROSE,
 NEWPORT,
 ISLE OF WIGHT.