
Christ's own tender voice speaks the promise, "I will repay, albeit I say not unto thee how thou owest to Me even thine own self besides."

Men do not really possess themselves unless they yield themselves to Jesus Christ. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth himself, in glad surrender of himself to his Saviour; he and only he is truly lord and owner of his own soul. And to such an one shall be given rewards beyond hope and beyond measure—and, as the crown of all, the blessed possession of Christ, and in it the full, true, eternal possession of himself, glorified and changed into the image of the Lord who loved him and gave Himself for him.

ALEXANDER MACLAREN.

ASKING IN CHRIST'S NAME.

It is sometimes instructive to make an effort of the imagination, and ask how certain words, so familiar to us that we pass them lightly by, must, in their novel grandeur, strike upon unaccustomed ears. Let us suppose the case of a heathen who has learned the story of Jesus and become a convert. He has been taught that the universal Father listens, considerately and lovingly, to the prayers of His weakest child, so that if any trustful supplication remains ungranted, it must have been asked amiss. And now the Gospel of St. John is put into his hands, and there he finds a new promise, and words unheard before, "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in My name, that will I do"; "If ye shall ask *anything* in My name, I will do it."

Would our convert be content, or ought he to be content, to regard these words as a mere repetition of previous

promises, such as, "Ask, and ye shall receive"? Would not the manner in which Christ announces a new privilege,— "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My Name," convince him that some new and mighty endowment is being conferred on him, some vast addition to his spiritual powers? Surely he must be deeply impressed by the unlimited phrases, "Whatsoever ye shall ask," "If ye shall ask anything," and by the equally unqualified pledges, "That will I do," "I will do it." These cannot but speak to him of a kind of omnipotence conferred upon the Church of Christ. .

And now he tries the experiment. He asks for something large—something religious too, because it is not in a selfish or worldly mood that such thoughts are most impressive.

With trembling but genuine faith he prays for the immediate conversion of all his tribe; for the stopping of persecution; perhaps for the instant subjection of the whole world to Christ. And he is very careful to add the talismanic words, "This I ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Rising from his knees, it occurs to him to wonder that so astonishing, so all-conquering a force has been left to him (as it appears) first to set in motion. To-morrow he will be very painfully impressed and startled, for he will find the world going on as it did yesterday, the fires of persecution blazing still, and his fellow countrymen still prostrate before their hideous idols. We know how he will feel, because we too have felt exactly the same ardour followed by the same chill; we too have marvelled that so great a promise should lead to such small results.

If now the convert goes to his missionary and tells him of his failure, what will happen? Most likely he will be informed that such promises are conditional, the issue depending on the nature of what we ask. But all the nerve and energy of the passage are drawn from those two bold and absolute words, Anything and Whatsoever. Explain

them away, and you cut its very sinews and leave it powerless to add anything to promises given already.

Or he may be told that his prayer failed because it would be worse for himself that it should succeed. God was too kind to grant it. Yet he asked only for the glory of God and the well-being of souls. Or again he may be reminded that all things are subject to the wiser but inscrutable will of God. Whereas the very essence of the promise is that this Divine will, to which all things are obedient, will move parallel with his prayer.

Who has not felt, painfully and perilously, how crude and poor such explanations really are, when applied to this particular passage? Who has not reflected that leave to offer the tentative and submissive prayers of docile children to a wise and loving Father was not now in question? That boon was granted in the Sermon on the Mount, with a promise that the Father would reward His secret petitioner openly.

But here is some distinctly new promise, some fresh grace, some unprecedented endowment. Hitherto they had asked nothing in Christ's Name: now they were to ask and receive. In vain would we file down such a promise until it contains no more than the disciples enjoyed already! It actually says what our young convert would assuredly feel outraged if we told him that it does not say: it asserts that anything, great or small, which we ask of God, shall certainly be done, upon this condition and no other, that we can ask it really and indeed in the Name of Christ, and that we do so.

If only we fulfil this condition, Omnipotence itself is pledged to move with the prayer of its feeble creature. So long as we are truly subject to this one restraint, no other curb or trammel exists to restrain the perfect liberty of our successful prayers. "If ye ask anything in My Name, I will do it." If then we honestly believe Christ's word, it

follows that the very order of the world and the sovereignty of Christ are really dependent on these three words, since He would have subjected Himself to our caprices, had He pledged Himself to grant our prayers without adding the simple words "in My Name."

And therefore it is a vast condition. Nothing which satisfies it can be unwise, presumptuous, self-seeking, dishonouring to God, no such thing can be so one-sided, or hasty, or impetuous, that to grant it would be evil. For it was not rashly or unworthily that Christ hung upon this condition the perfect success of His people's most ardent prayers. And thus we see how great a delusion was this of our young convert, in being quite sure that he asked in Christ's name, because his desire was for a good thing, and he joined the name of Jesus with his prayer.

And yet we are all apt to fall into the same error, if we pray at all. When any want oppresses, or spiritual desire burns in us, and we pray earnestly and trustfully, we perceive but little difference between saying, at the close, This we ask for Christ's sake, and saying, We ask this in the name of Jesus. We confidently assume that we have satisfied this great condition; and if we do not obtain our request, perhaps we resolve not again to be so highflown, so enthusiastic: our worldly wisdom gains, no doubt; but our faith is crippled.

Yet common sense might teach us that we do not act in the name of another by either saying or believing that we do so, but only in so far as we really stand in his place, bear his commission, and represent him.

We should be more surprised than gratified if, without our expressed or implied authorization, even a familiar friend should announce that he was acting in our name. The resources of the Rothschilds would not last long, if every trader could do business in their name by simply announcing that he did so. And we should soon have to

fight the world, if every aggrieved or angry Briton in foreign parts could declare war in the name of England. This is only in the power of her ambassadors and ministers, and only in their power so far as their credentials reach. If they exceed these, we repudiate their action and disgrace them.

Now the Twelve had already been acting "in Christ's Name" among men. This did not mean that that they had healed diseases and cast out devils for Christ's sake, but that they did so as His envoys, His spokesmen, His ambassadors and apostles. Thus they were prepared to understand the new truth, that in the Name of Christ they might also pray.

When, as a grand addition to all former invitations and encouragements to pray, they received this special promise to their prayers of a special kind, that these, like charity, should never fail, the phrase was familiar, and it did not speak to them of any expression of their own human longings, making known their requests to God. These also were lawful, and had vast endowments, but this was a new thing and more sublime. It was the identification of the servant with his Lord, not only as heretofore in works of mercy, but now also in communion with God.

The name of Jesus was no mere spell by which a wizard might enforce his wishes, as their rabbis deemed that Solomon, by some secret name of God, compelled all the spirits to obey his will. The seven sons of Scæva learned the difference when they employed it as an incantation against an evil spirit, only to meet the fierce rejoinder, "Who are ye?" That was the question. Jesus he knew, and the connexion between Him and Paul. But these obtained no power by the use of the sacred formula; for who were they themselves?

Again, when St. Peter said to the impotent man, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," he

certainly did not mean to adjure him for Christ's sake. No; the words declared that he spoke not on his own behalf, but as invested with the authority of a deputy and ambassador, and in his Master's stead. And a careful study of what this implies will perhaps enable us to receive in their obvious sense the words of St. Paul, "If I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the person of Christ," rising above all individuality of resentment or of placability, and conscious that I speak in the fulness of the spirit of the Lord of Pardons.

In this sense the Apostles had asked nothing in Christ's Name until now, when a mighty change was coming over their mutual relations, when He was calling them no more servants but friends, when He was showing them all things that Himself did. Now they are taught that this highest attainment of humanity might hold good in prayer to God as well as in the evangelization of the world. And this was new.

Doubtless they had often been encouraged in their prayers, by reflecting that they were dear to Him who was so dear to God: consciously or unconsciously they had prayed "for the sake of Jesus." But He takes care to show that He is now busy with some other thought than that of His intercession for them, by the words, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you." This also was true, but it was not the matter in hand: not His condescension to man, but man's elevation towards Him and in Him. His people are to act for Him on earth, and in such action He will Himself dwell with them and be in them. And as far as their prayers are genuine expressions of that mysterious but most real oneness with their Lord, how can they be rejected?

As far as any looks out upon the world with Christ's eyes, feels with Christ's heart, yearns and strives with Christ's deep and unselfish and patient desires, so far will

that man be recognised as Christ's representative, and be entitled, because he will be qualified, to speak in Christ's Name. He will not cease to be an individual, a man whose flesh and blood find natural and blameless utterance, and who beseeches the Lord thrice that his "thorn" may be taken away. Nor shall such a prayer be lightly rejected. Rejected nevertheless it will surely be, if the strength of Christ may thereby rest upon the sufferer, if the refusal of what is asked, and asked doubtless for Christ's sake, may qualify him, uplifted, chastened, and released from self, to ask other gifts more truly in Christ's Name.

Thus we come to distinguish the prayers here spoken of, not only from those which are soiled by weakness, love of the world or love of ease, but from all those prayers (lawful and indeed imperatively required of us, but yet individual and local) which tell of our private sorrows, and make our own requests known to God, as the way to escape from our anxieties.

Our haste for immediate results, our desire that the good seed should bear much fruit without falling into the ground and dying, our spiritual egoism,—these cannot speak with this victorious and royal voice.

And yet, since there is a union between Christ and His people, real as between the human body and the bread which feeds it, enduring and tender as between the Bridegroom and the bride, intimate and organic as between the Head and its members, therefore there are prayers in which speaks neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; prayers in which Christ is all, and in all who utter them; prayers that share His patience who has sat down expecting till His enemies be made His footstool, His lowliness, who is still, in the midst of the throne, a Lamb; prayers which arise above self, above the fall and the infirmities of our nature, and above its haste; prayers which share with Him the burden of the world, its sins, its

sorrows, and its heathenisms; prayers which are the utterance of our awful and royal priesthood unto God, not as ordained ministers, but as Christian souls; prayers which know that they ask according to His will, and therefore that He heareth them, and therefore that they have the petitions which they desire of Him.

GEO. A. CHADWICK.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

IN the Epistles of St. Ignatius we have a perfectly clear picture of the organization of the Churches of Asia in the first quarter of the second century; every city has its bishop, who is surrounded by a spiritual crown of presbyters, and they have deacons to minister to them. Apparently any believer, at least with the sanction of the bishop, is still competent to celebrate the Eucharist; but the hierarchy, though it has not yet finally reserved the exclusive function of acting in the name of the community, is already completely organized on the lines that are to persist for centuries. After the investigations of the Bishop of Durham, it cannot be doubted that the letters which have come down to us in the name of the saint are, to say the least, full of his phrases and full of his spirit; so the picture is trustworthy as well as clear.

When we turn to St. Clement's letter to the Corinthians everything seems obscure; the one point clear is, that a strong party was eager to do something which the writer regarded as a grievous wrong to the whole body of presbyters; and this wrong is to be inflicted in the interests of one or two. It seems to be commonly supposed that the Church of Corinth, if not the Church of Rome, was then under a board or college of coequal presbyters; it is no objection to this that the "presbyters" or "seniors" are