



“THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”

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THESSE words, which form the third petition in our Lord's Prayer as recorded by St. Matthew, are, according to the Revised Version, entirely absent in the Prayer as recorded by St. Luke. It is not necessary for us at this time to explain this and other interesting differences in the versions of the Prayer as given by the two Evangelists. In the present case, however, it will be granted by all who, from childhood, have repeated the Prayer, that there would be a felt want and a sense of incompleteness if this clause, “Thy will be done,” were omitted from the familiar form of words. It has been said that in the first petition, “Hallowed be Thy Name,” we have the *root* of all true religion, and in the second, “Thy kingdom come,” the uprising *stem*. If this illustration be based on truth, then in the third petition, “Thy will be done,” we must look for *the abundant fruit*.

With the first petition it has been usual to associate the first Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, “Our Father—hallowed be Thy Name.” With the second, to associate the second Person, who came to establish a dominion which shall have no end, “Thy kingdom come.” And therefore, with the third petition, to associate the third Person, whose special work it is to enlighten our minds and to sanctify our hearts so that in all things we may obey His blessed will, “Thy will be done as in Heaven, so on earth.” The structure and the associations of the Prayer alike forbid the omission of the clause, “Thy will be done,” from our consideration of the Perfect Prayer.

I. Let us inquire what is meant by “Thy will.” When we speak of a man's “will,” we imply that he has a power of choice, and that this “will” is the main-spring which influences and controls his thoughts, his words, and deeds. A man's final “will” is the authoritative expression of his choice as to the disposition

of his property when he himself has left the world. If we would intelligently recognise our Father in Heaven we must be assured that He has a will in reference to all those events and circumstances which constitute the daily life of His children. True religion, it ought never to be forgotten, does not consist in more or less vague ideas as to what is right and wrong in the abstract—it is not a question as to the expediency of adopting certain courses of conduct; it is not the mere habit of following certain customs, or conforming to traditional forms; but it is the realisation of a Personal Supreme Power, possessing a distinct will. Such knowledge will lead us to say with one in old time, “Thou, O God, seest me,” and with another to inquire, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

II. Let us proceed to inquire what is meant by this will of God being done on earth. Too often this petition is restricted to a prayer for resignation to “accept the inevitable” trials which must befall all God's children. It was an example of such resignation to His Father's will that our Lord left us, when thrice in the garden He prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” The prayer, however, is not one for dark days only but for daily use, not a request so much for passive resignation as for active obedience. How little do we recognise that all the blessings of life, the joys which we experience, the duties which it is our privilege to discharge, come from Him, who is the Author and Giver of all good gifts—that they are God's doings on our behalf, the expressions of His will concerning us! That the petition is primarily to be understood in the widest and not in the narrow sense of resignation to God's will in times of sorrow, we may be assured when we realise what is involved in the accompanying clause, “in earth as in heaven.” It is the blessed condition of