**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**JOHN-100**. **THE FOLDED FLOCK by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory."*

*John 17:24*

This wonderful prayer is (i) for Jesus Himself, (ii) for the Apostles, (iii) for the whole Church on earth and in heaven.

**I. The prayer.**

I willhas a strange ring of authority. It is the expression of His love to men, and of His longing for their presence with Him in His glory. Not till they are with Him there, shall He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

We have here a glimpse of the blessed state of the dead in Christ.

**(a)** Local presence with Christ. His glorified body is somewhere. The value of this thought is that it gives solidity to our ideas of a future life. There they are. We need not dwell on the metaphysical difficulties about locality for disembodied spirits.

If a spirit can be localised in a body, I suppose it can be localised without a body; but passing by all that, we have the hope held out here of a real local presence with the glorified humanity of our Lord. We speak of the dead as gone from us, and we have that idea far more vividly in our minds than that of their having gone to Him. We speak of the departed, but we do not think of them as arrived. We look down to the narrow grave, but we forget He is not here, He is risen. Why seek ye the living among the dead?Ah! if we could only bring home to our hearts the solid prose of the conviction that where Christ is there His servants are, and that not in the diffused ubiquity of His Divine Omnipresence, it would go far to remove the darkness and vague mist which wrap the future, and to set it as it really is before us, as a solid definite reality. We see the sails glide away out into the west as the sun goes down, and we think of them as tossing on a midnight sea, an unfathomable waste. Try to think of them more truly. As in that old miracle, He comes to them walking on the water in the night watch, and if at first they are terrified, His voice brings back hope to the heart that is beginning to stand still, and immediately they are at the land whither they go. Now, as they sink from our sight, they are in port, sails furled and anchor dropped, and green fields round them, even while we watch the sinking masts, and cannot yet rightly tell whether the fading sail has faded wholly.

**(b)** Communion with Christ.

Our Lord says not only that where I am, they also may be, but adds with Me. That is not a superfluous addition, but emphasises the thought of a communion which is more intimate and blessed than local presence alone would be.

The communion here is real but imperfect. It is perfected there on our part by the dropping away of flesh and sin, by change of circumstances, by emancipation from cares and toils necessary here, by the development of new powers and surroundings, and on His side by new manifestations.

**(c)** Vision of His glory.

The crown of this utterance of Christ's will is that they may behold My glory. In an earlier part of this prayer our Lord had spoken of the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. But probably the glory givenis not that of essential Divinity, but that of His mediatorial work. To His people with Him where He is, are imparted fuller views of Christ as Saviour, deeper notions of His work, clearer perception of His rule in providence and nature. This is the loftiest employment of the spirits who are perfected and lapped in pleasures for evermoreby their union with the glorified Jesus.

Surely this is grander than all metaphorical pictures of heaven.

**II. The incipient fulfilment now going on.**

The prayer has been in process of fulfilment ever since. The dead in Christ have entered on its answer now.

We need not discuss difficulties about the intermediate state, for this at all events is true, that to be absent from the bodyis to be present with the Lord.

A Christian death is an answer to this prayer. True, for Christians as for all, the physical necessity is an imperative law. True, the punitive aspect of death is retained for them. But yet the law is wielded by Christ, and while death remains, its whole aspect is changed. So we may think of those who have departed in His faith and fear as gone in answer to this prayer.

How beautiful that is! Slowly, one by one, they are gathered in, as the stars one by one light up. Place after place is filled.

Thus through the ages the prayer works on, and our dear ones have gone from us, but they have gone to Him. We weep, but they rejoice. To us their departure is the result of an iron law, of a penal necessity, of some secondary cause; but to them it is seen to be the answer to His mighty prayer. They hear His voice and follow Him when He says, Come up hither.

**III. The final fulfilment still future.**

The prayer looks forward to a perfect fulfilment. His prayer cannot be vain.

**(a)** Perfect in degree.

**(b)** Perfect in extent, when all shall be gathered together and the whole familyshall be in heaven, and Christ's own word receives its crowning realisation, that of all whom the Father hath given Him He has lost nothing.

And these are not some handful picked out by a decree which we can neither fathom nor alter, but Christ is given to us all, and if we choose to take Him, then for us He has ascended; and as we watch Him going up the voice comes to us: I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.