

CHAPTER VII

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES

It is clear that the general view of the miracles of the Gospels taken in this volume, as being Divine answers to the prayers of Jesus, and as being conditioned not upon His metaphysical Deity, but upon the faith, hope, and love that were in Him, carries with it certain far-reaching consequences as to the range and power of ideal prayer which must gravely affect not only our conceptions of God and the world, but which must influence deeply the practice of our devotional life. Many, I believe, will feel that the most serious difficulties lie in this region.

For one thing, it is plain that the view implies that our prayers should not be confined to purely "spiritual" matters, but should range over the whole field both of our inward and our outward lives and the lives, also, of others.

Heiler, in his remarkable book on prayer, has distinguished three types of spiritual life, the mystical, the philosophical, and the prophetic. "Mysticism must, if it remain true to itself, reject the naive asking for external good things, and everything not directed towards (communion with) God Himself, as unworthy. The earthly is, indeed, a deceptive show without true being, something

which ought not to be, a thing without value and therefore a peril for salvation and a hindrance to union with God. The affections and wishes which assert themselves must not be freely spoken out in prayer, but must be subdued, chained, and slain. The asceticism, which gradually brings to death the sensuality which feeds the emotional life of the soul, is the foundation of pure mysticism." Heiler points out, further, that philosophic and rationalist thought is also hostile to petition for earthly good and tends to reduce prayer to simple meditation. Over against these types he sets the prophetic conception of prayer which demands, not the ascetic annihilation or natural human desires and necessities, but the free opening of the whole world of human need to the Father and the simple and honest expression of these in our prayers to Him in the faith and expectation that they will be answered, not only in the spiritual, but in the whole life of man. He gives many citations from the great personalities of the Reformation and of the Evangelical faith, Luther, Calvin, Rothe, Herrmann, and others to illustrate this conception of the range and power of prayer; and sums up his review by saying, "Mysticism and the ethical philosophy found prayer for temporal good things to be irreligious and sinful. Prophetic religion, it is true, puts moral and religious values at the heart of prayer, but it has room also for the childlike and primitive prayer for life and food, for rain and sunshine."¹

¹ *Das Gebet*, 5. Auflage, pp. 369-372. He quotes Ménégoz as saying that Kant and Hegel, Strauss and Robertson, Schleier-

The view of the Gospel teaching which has been taken in this volume emphasises this "prophetic" conception in the strongest way. The "mystical" view of prayer, indeed, can only maintain its ground either by defending the portent theory of the miracles of Jesus, or by allying itself with the modernist conception of Nature, both of which views we have seen reason to consider unsound. Neither the mystical nor the philosophical exclusion of petitionary prayer for objective good has any root in Scripture, and indeed is subtly out of harmony with the Christian idea of God. Its open or tacit acceptance by many to-day is in no way due to a mystical aloofness from the temporal needs of man. There is nothing ascetic about it. It is due, on the intellectual side, simply to our modern intimidation by the "closed system" idea of nature, and, on the practical, by the disappointment of prayer for such blessings and deliverances. This capitulation disguises itself too often under the appearance of religious submission to what is assumed to be a Divinely ordered "course of events," which is supposed to be identical with the direct appointment of the Divine Providence. In reality that "course of events" is only the "closed system" under another name. It is, as a matter of fact, often due mainly to man's indolence, removable ignorance, lust or pride, and is against the pure and loving will of God.

Prayer of the New Testament type, if it sees anything happening, or about to happen, that *macher* and *Ritschl* have all yielded in theory to the old rationalistic metaphysics, and cramped the true liberty of prayer.

is contrary to the Divine Nature as revealed in Jesus Christ, will have no hesitation in asking God to intervene, and, subject to His greater knowledge, in expecting an answer. It will range over the whole sphere of human life, and in all simplicity will ask the Father for all that it needs, in the belief that its petitions make a profound difference to the course of events and to the lives of others. Praying and working are really meant to go together and to supplement each other and assist each other. We have no right to work for anything for which we cannot pray, and we have no right to pray for anything for which we may not work, if our work can do anything to secure its attainment. It may be that our prayers are not heard because God wishes us also to work. It may be that our mere work fails because God wishes us also to pray. In most cases He wills both praying and working.

For what is petitionary prayer but asking God to come to our aid when we are at His work? Countless outward events either help or hinder us in that work. What can be more fatal than to wall off the world of outward events, to forbid prayer within that region, and to confine its influence to the realm of the soul? It is utterly illogical to make this distinction now that we know that psychology has its laws as well as physical nature. Moreover, it, at one sweep, secularises the whole world of outward events for us, when we are really meant to spiritualise every natural and human need, every fact that concerns us, by taking it into the pure atmosphere of prayer, and having it thus associated with the Father in our most inward life.

Petitionary prayer in the fullest sense of the term is every whit as necessary to the full spiritual life as confession and thanksgiving. They are all true and necessary parts of real communion with God.

It is utterly futile, moreover, to expect any sincere man to ask God for any greatly desired good for the sake of praying himself into peace of mind and willingness to do without it. If he cannot rationally expect an answer, he should not go through the farce of praying for it! The assurance may often come to such a man in such prayers that he is in error in asking for some definite good thing, but that, as it were, is a by-product of the prayer. If he come to believe that such by-products are the only results of prayer, a sincere man will stop praying and so he will get neither direct nor indirect results.

I have already pointed out how extraordinarily strong is Christ's language about the power of petitionary prayer. This remains undeniable whether we accept the historicity of His miracles or not. Why do so many modern commentators show themselves nervous and embarrassed when dealing with them? For precisely the same reasons as those for which men reject the historicity of the miracles. There is something in the very intellectual climate of our time that is inimical to such sayings and deeds. I have endeavoured to show what these intellectual hindrances are, but we are concerned here mainly with practical difficulties, and that these are very real I should never think of denying. The truth is that most men and women in our day know little of obvious and strik-

ing answers to prayer, any more than they know of miracles.

I think not a few would state their difficulty here in some such terms as these—"Granted that all you have said is true, that the intellectual difficulties to-day are no longer very substantial, and that Jesus Christ had incomparably more faith in the power of prayer than we moderns have,—what do you make of the broad fact that we, all of us, or most of us, have repeatedly had our most earnest prayers apparently refused? We have prayed for the preservation of our young friends from death in battle, and we have lost them; for the recovery of others from illness, and they have died; for success in honest toil for lawful ends, and we have failed; for the opening of the iron doors of circumstance which kept us from attaining our fullest usefulness, and we have been disappointed. What do you make of unanswered prayer?" It is because of this practical difficulty that many have grasped at the idea of a region in which, by its very nature, prayer has, by the appointment of God, no right of way. This is a vain anodyne. Let us test the method. The sharpest trials of faith are those prayers for the spiritual good of ourselves and others that seem unanswered. What are we to make of the apparent failures of intercessory prayer? Why is the spiritual awakening of a community so long delayed, why are there so few conversions of a striking kind? Are we to fall back here again on psychological laws and necessities, indicating that this is another region into which the power of prayer must not intrude? So the scope of prayer

is allowed to contract until nothing is left but the narrow sphere of individual, spiritual need. But, one asks, How long will that road remain open? We may rest assured that here, too, the shadow of necessity and law will speedily enter, and that all petitionary prayer will be reduced to auto-suggestion. This whole way of reasoning seems to me radically wrong, and is bound in the end to lead to the disintegration of living, personal religion.

But the practical difficulty remains. What are we to make of it? I would say, first of all, that the difficulty is gravely overstated. There are very many who will bear witness that in their own experience prayer has been answered, and that that answer has by no means been confined to the inner region of the soul, but has been plain and clear in the outward world of events as well. Outward difficulties of circumstances have been surprisingly and inexplicably removed, and deliverances from danger have been experienced, of which the only reasonable explanation that can be given is that they were in answer to prayer. Now be it remembered that if so much as one such answer has ever been actually given, the whole theory of a closed course of events, within which prayer is of no avail, must be abandoned. If the theory gives comfort to some, it is at the expense of declaring that the whole immensely wide and varied story of Divine answers to human prayers, from New Testament days right down through all the Christian ages to our own time, has been one prolonged and persistent hallucination. And this, for any one who knows the literature and history,

and has any sympathy with it, is unbelievable. What the history does unmistakably show is that striking answers to prayer in the outward world of events, as well as in the question of spiritual influence upon others, are usually associated with individual men and women of a certain spiritual type characterised by a vivid experience of the Divine presence, and a simple trust in the goodness, the power, and the liberty of God; in other words, by a very strong and simple faith. Outwardly they are often at opposite poles. Imagine St Francis, St Catherine of Sienna, Luther, Fox, Wesley, and George Müller gathered in one room together, and the antagonisms and the shocks that they would impart to each other until they began to confer on the power of prayer, and the unanimity with which on that point they would confront the doubter! There are very many obscure and humble men and women who could bear a like testimony, many of them living among us to-day. With all respect to Modernism of the type we are here thinking of, its theory is too devastatingly simple to account for the complexity of the facts.

But supposing we feel this, and grant that some prayers for outward good, and that some prayers of intercession have been answered, why have so many been apparently unanswered? The ordinary answer to this is simply to confess that we do not know, but that for all that we trust God and believe in the power of prayer. That is a sound and true temper of spirit, and at no stage of knowledge of Divine things can we dispense with it. "God is great and knoweth all things." We know

but "the outskirts of His ways." "Clouds and darkness are about Him. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne." That is also our assurance. Nor, as it seems to me, is that simple faith in the moral reason behind all things any whit less rational than that elemental faith in the fundamental rationality and order of the physical universe, which to-day is sustaining thousands of scientific investigators of the unknown in all the laboratories of the civilised world. How often, as these words are being written, are baffled men of science all over the earth strengthening their hearts for new theories, new experiments, new ventures of the tameless reason of man, sustained by simple faith that the difficulties must yield and disclose the hidden order. When that impulse dies, the human intelligence and the human race will die too. Religious men and women should understand it, for they have the key to it in their own quest for moral reason in the great ways of God. But while we hold that faith, we must, like our brothers of science, press on into the unknown, and ask if we can tell why so many prayers remain apparently unanswered. One answer that must rise at once to the lips of all honest men and women must be: "Our prayers were apparently unanswered because it was not good for us that they should be answered. We have proved that in our own experience, since those days when the heavens seemed like brass over our despairing heads. We have learned something by that experience that we could not have done without. Life, it may be, has been barer and darker than it would have been had

our prayer been answered, but something has been given instead that we would not give up for all the world, and that bears in it the promise of indefinite retrieval of all that has been lost. The evil has been overruled in part already for good, and will, we believe, in future be completely so overruled."

Such is the answer of faith, and I believe that it is a sound answer. But let us look into it more closely. The prayer, it is said, was unanswered because it was not good for us, and for all, that it should be answered. This is something quite different from mere physical impossibility; it is a personal and a contingent moral necessity, which is not to be toned down to the mere generality that the maintenance of physical law is essential for man's general well-being. The argument is that we were not *morally* ready for such an answer to our prayer as we desired. Why? Now, I submit that on the view of the teaching of the Gospels, which has been taken above, there is a clear answer. There must have been some lack of faith, and of hope, and of love which made us morally immature. "We were not ready for it." Is there not a great unconscious admission here which goes to the very roots of the whole problem of apparently unanswered prayer? Does not the whole attempt to solve that problem, by putting the responsibility for unanswered prayer on the nature of the physical universe and God, assume that we were ready for it, and that our readiness for it was thwarted by something alien and niggardly in our environment? Surely that is making a very great and quite un-

proved assumption. Do we not instinctively feel in many of our prayers some doubt as to whether this or that particular thing that we greatly desire may really be best? About many particular "good things," though not about all, we surely must be uncertain, unless we claim omniscience, and so we say, in our praying, "if it be Thy Will." What do we really mean by that? Surely we mean "if we," or "if others are ready for it." We have here, in a word, a tacit admission of the whole point at issue that the great promises in prayer are to a large extent conditional upon our being able to make a good spiritual use of them—in other words, that we have a measure of faith, and hope, and love. Conversely, it is not surprising that He who showed these things in supreme measure should have received supreme answers from the Father.

But, coherent and attractive and in line with the whole New Testament teaching about prayer as in many respects this view may seem to be, is there not in it something dangerous and repellent? Do we not purchase the relief to faith in God, which comes from throwing the responsibility of the tragedy of human life on man, too dear? Does it not tend to make prayer a kind of dictation to God? Does not making faith a condition of prevailing prayer introduce the conception of merit into what ought to be a free filial utterance of the human soul, and an implicit submission to Divine wisdom and sovereign power? Does it not add a new and wellnigh intolerable burden to the trial of unanswered prayer to know that it was unanswered because of our own fault? Finally, does

not the whole theory tend to weaken our faith in the all-controlling power of God?

First, it is necessary to point out that if these difficulties follow, then they must all have been acutely felt by the first disciples and the first Christian generation. I do not see that there can be any real doubt as to what Christ said about prayer to His disciples and contemporaries. The only question is as to whether we are under the same order as they.

But, in truth, the difficulties seem to rest on some misunderstanding. To begin with, when we say that faith, hope, and love are conditions of prevailing prayer, we do not say that God answers only the prayers of those who have the "faith that moves mountains." He is sovereign love, and in His wisdom and freedom can hear the feeblest prayer from the most sinful soul. It does not impair the promise to the greater faith that God should hear, also, him whose faith is only "as a grain of mustard seed." All generalisations about God's ways must necessarily be incomplete. All that we are here asserting is the positive principle that true faith will always win its answer. But the sovereign Father may of His pure grace and wisdom go beyond this general principle and give great answers even to small faith. Again, to think of faith as meritorious is wholly beside the mark. When a man comes into true filial relations with God, he gets beyond merit altogether. Everything in the new life is of Grace. But Grace has its own laws. If we never think about it or realise it, it will in general have no power over us. If we take

time to realise it, it will remould us. But that is not to ascribe merit to thought and realisation, and think of our progress in the spiritual life as reward for our merit. The true relation here is not one of merit and reward, but of cause and consequence, condition and fulfilment, and so is it with faith and prayer.

Further, even though we may choose to set aside the plain teaching of our Lord on this want of faith as one of the great causes of our comparative impotence in prayer, one of the great reasons therefore for the sway of tragedy in human life, is it possible to deny the plain truth that it is our want of love rather than God's will that works countless sorrows in human destiny? We might just as well ascribe these sorrows, also, to the unconditional will of our Father in heaven, as impute to Him the tragedies of unanswered prayer. So, also, is it with hope. How much of the actual "martyrdom of man" is ascribed to the tyranny of nature and circumstance, when in truth its real cause is men's nervelessness, cowardice, and want of that courage of hope which has been the spring of all scientific progress. One must confess that the resolute optimism which keeps science at its countless unsolved problems is a standing rebuke to our religion, and is one of the great reasons why much of the virile intelligence of our day is being withdrawn from religious to scientific thought. Practical optimistic minds instinctively turn to that quarter of the horizon which is fullest of enterprise, energy, and hope. But if these things are true of love and of hope, is it not precisely what we should expect

to find that the sovereign powers of prayer should depend upon the faith with which we pray? Can we expect God to verify weak and false conceptions of Himself by striking answers to prayers, which start from cramped conceptions of His power and love and liberty to help men? If it is true that we are to blame for unanswered prayer, by all means let us face the truth. It is the only safe way and the only way worthy of sincere men and women.

It is further very important in understanding the whole matter that we should realise the great influence which the life of the whole community has upon the faith or unbelief of the individual. This, I think, answers the protest that it must add a new burden to life to ascribe unanswered prayer to our own unbelief, but that if we can ascribe it to the natural order or the inscrutable will of God the burden is easier to bear. It is necessary to say here first of all that this last ascription is a dangerous argument to use. Many things of old, many things even in the days of our forefathers, used unquestioningly to be ascribed to God's unconditional will which we now know were due simply to man's own ignorance and indolence. We shall see presently how often, under this fatal obsession, the Christian Church has set itself against "the increasing purpose" of God, and obstructed the path of science, and of political and social progress, and lost for generations the moral leadership that it should have exercised in the great life of the world.

The whole argument is, in truth, too narrowly conceived when we think of it as implying that if a

man prays for a thing which he is sure is good and fails to get it, the fault lies solely in himself. We are all, as has been repeatedly urged in this volume, members of society. We are bound to it by countless ties of kinship and sympathy. We partake in its heroisms and share in its apostasies. We experience contagions of faith and unbelief. Thus we have each our own personal life and freedom, and we can, up to a certain point, break clear for good or for evil. When Abraham began the story of faith by going out of Ur of the Chaldees, he at one and the same time acknowledged the fatal power of the unbelieving community to suppress dawning faith, and asserted the power of the individual to break clear of it. The other and the happier side of this power of the community over the individual is that it prevents the latter from falling below a certain level. When a community is inspired by any great emotion to a certain elevation of spirit, all its citizens for the time become heroic. But when it sinks it is, indeed, hard for any individual to rise above it. In general all heroic action in any community has its roots in the common mind. Such actions and the lives which find expression in them are like those islands which are peaks in a submerged ridge of mountains. They seem isolated wonders in the ocean, but in truth they are borne up by a common foundation of rock.

Now if we apply this well-known and generally admitted truth to the matter in hand we may say first of all that the roots of the faith of the Jesus of history lay deep in the historic faith of Israel. How He rose so far above it is His secret. He

lifted His disciples and the first Christian age towards His own level, though compared with His their faith was "as a grain of mustard seed." But they were a believing community, and the faith of that community even in "that hard pagan world" enabled its humblest members, as history shows, to live a heroic life, and its greater spirits to expect and to achieve great things by prayer. To-day the common level has fallen, and the whole influence of the society around us, which comes to us along a hundred channels, depresses the spiritual imagination, and contracts the horizon of what is believed possible.

The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.

To the temptations of worldliness there is added in our day an intellectual fascination by the order of nature, caused by the marvellous progress of science. It is not an age which easily believes in the Divine Transcendence and the expectancy, which a vivid realisation of that Transcendence inspires, that God will do anything beyond the ordinary "course of nature" and events. Therefore, the individual to-day often finds it very hard to maintain his faith in prayer and in the Living God. The contagion of the unbelief of his time paralyses him. Ancestral and subconscious influences are swathed about him and add their restraining might to the suggestions which pour in upon him from the literature, the art, and the thought of his time. In other words, the unbelief whose spell has to be broken is not simply his per-

sonal responsibility, but the corporate unbelief of his time, from which he is the vicarious sufferer. It is this spiritual solidarity of mankind which makes the existence of the Christian Church so vital a necessity for the life of the Christian man or woman. It may, indeed, be argued that our Lord's promises to faith and the Charismata to the early Church which were their fulfilment, were given to the Church as a whole rather than to individuals, and that in the present broken and depressed condition of the Church they are meantime in abeyance. I should not question this so long as we remember that it is the Church as a society of believing men and women that is meant, and not merely a Church orthodox in doctrine or order, or both. The promises of the Gospels are always to faith, whether it be "corporate" or individual. The awakening of the Church can only begin with the individual, but the individual can only reach his true stature through the society. Certainly, if the Church were nearly all that it ought to be, we should see the result of the life of prayer in the life of the individual in a way and on a scale that we rarely witness. So, in the first Christian ages the vitality of the corporate faith of the Church lifted its members above the torpor of the pagan world. So, to-day individuals, as has always been the way, break clear from the carnal level, and when they appear, strange and wonderful things happen. The dull world echoes and rings as it did of old, and the roll of heroes of faith begun in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is continued.

Such pioneers of faith, going right back to the

Jesus of history, one and all start from a richer conception of God than their contemporaries, and He still verifies that conception. May we not say that He only awaits to-day richer and freer conceptions of Himself, of His sovereign reality, power and love and liberty to help men? Such, at least, seems to me to be the plain meaning of our Lord's own teaching about faith.

But, finally, does not the view set forth in this volume exclude acceptance and resignation, such as our Lord showed in His prayer in the Garden, when, after repeated prayer that the cup might pass from Him, He said, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done"? How are we to combine resignation to evil with revolt against evil, submissive with rebellious faith? To-day when men think of faith, they instinctively, I believe, think mainly of submissive, acquiescent faith. I fear that the great majority of people, when they pray the Lord's Prayer, interpret the clause "Thy will be done" as expressing a believing acceptance of the inevitable. Yet in the context it can hardly mean that. It comes after petitions for the fuller revelation of the name that expresses the nature of God as Father, and for the coming of the Kingdom. "We have turned,"^{*} it has been truly said, "what was meant to be a battle-cry into a wailing litany." That is symptomatic of the religious temper of our time. What seems empirically inevitable is regarded without more ado as "the will of God."

I fear that that springs not so much from a deepening of faith as from a weakening of the idea of God.

^{*} By Archbishop Temple.

Yet we have here undoubtedly, in the moment of the agony at the very climax of a life of heroic, rebellious faith, the note of acceptance and submission, and it reminds us that at any moment the Christian must be prepared to carry the cross after his Master and "fill up that which remaineth of the sufferings of Christ."

The story, as we have it in St Matthew, is of a threefold prayer in the Garden for the passing of the cup, with submission to the Sovereign Will of the Father. Then comes the announcement to the disciples and the coming of the hour, the kiss of Judas, and the apprehension. A disciple draws his sword and Christ bids him sheathe it, and tells him that, if He chose, He could have more than twelve legions of angels coming to His support. This last remarkable saying is peculiar to St Matthew's narrative, but all the three narratives make Christ warn His disciples against "temptation,"³ which seems to imply that He has Himself just passed through and overcome it. Then He gives Himself up, and with the faith of acceptance passes on to a freely chosen death.

I think that the plain meaning of the whole Gospel story is that the faith of Jesus was in the main a creative faith by virtue of which He was continually militant against the whole dark realm of sin and suffering and tragedy, "the Kingdom of the evil one" of contemporary belief, and continually seeking to bring in a better world in its place. This was

³ Possibly a reference back to the first temptation in the wilderness, when Satan tempted Him to use the heavenly power amiss.

His normal attitude of mind, and is meant to be the normal temper of His disciples, who are sustained in this by their confidence in the power and love of the Father. But there came to Him an assurance that the end for which He laboured, the complete overthrow of sin and tragedy, men being what they were, could be better secured under the vicarious law by His going through the way of the Cross, and He deliberately ceased to pray for deliverance, and though He might have had it, trusted the overruling Will of the Father and went on to His death, as a freely chosen lot. His prayer was not, according to the text of the Gospels, refused. How could it have been refused, when immediately afterwards He says that supernatural powers would have delivered Him, if He had so chosen. We have, therefore, no record that any prayer of Jesus was ever refused. Indeed, in a singular passage which can only be explained as a reference to the prayer in the Garden, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to say explicitly that it was answered. But He ceased to ask it. He asked, instead, that the Father's will should be done. That does not mean that the Cross in itself was that Will. The Cross was an abomination, hateful then and always to God. But the Cross being historically there, it was God's Will that He should face and triumph over it, and, when He saw the real issues, this became His will too, and He prayed for the power to consummate them, and so by enduring the Cross destroy the cross, and all that world of inhumanity of which it was the symbol.

Now, how are we to translate all this into Christian practice? We are to go into the age-long war

against all sin and all tragedy of circumstance as well in firm faith that our Father wills to make an end of them all. That, alone, is the full Christian idea of God, which sets the standard for all Christian living and prayer. We are, therefore, to wage a truceless war against everything which corrupts the soul, and ruins the body and mind, and kills the liberty of man. We are to carry on this war by creative and rebellious faith, rebellious not against the Supreme Will but against the intruding and transient evils of human life.

But if by our own failure of faith, of love, and of hope, or by the vicarious law, we fall in the battle, we are to carry that battle as far into the ranks of the enemy as we can, to win the last inch of ground, and, in falling, to commit the unfinished battle to the Captain, who in the end will bring it to complete victory.

Let the victors when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

It may be that He will tell us that the cause needs our apparent defeat. But until He reveals that to us we have no right to abandon the struggle, and succumb to the powers of darkness, however overwhelming they may seem to be.

But, finally, does not the whole theory of the contingent character of the tragic element in human experience, which ascribes it in so great a measure to the shortcomings and sins of men, fatally weaken that faith in the sovereign power of God, which lies at the very foundations of every true Christian life? This is the most fundamental of all the difficulties.

It is stated with great force by Mr Donald Baillie in his recently published volume on *Faith in God*.⁴ He is in general sympathy with the view of the power of faith and the nature of outward evil taken by Miss Dougall, and in a greater or less degree by the "Cumnor group" of theologians, and recognises the importance of its contribution to a better understanding of the Gospel narratives. But he feels acutely the danger of taking this as a complete account of the Divine government in relation to the outward evil of the world. The religious nature, he believes, demands that we should believe that everything that concerns us is under Divine control. The believing man must believe that all things that touch him are in God's hands. But then if they are real evils, how can they be Divine appointments? He finds here a real paradox, and believes that we shall only be able to do justice to the still dimly understood reality by holding fast to both its terms.

We have here, obviously, an old difficulty coming up under new forms, the difficulty which divided Augustinianism and Pelagianism in the early centuries, and Calvinism and Arminianism after the Reformation, and which appears to-day in philosophical regions between the Absolutist philosophy and those who believe in a limited God. I think that Mr Baillie's criticisms are in the main directed against an extremer view of the outward evils in

⁴ This notable book only came into my hands when the whole of the earlier part of this volume was already in print, or I should gladly have availed myself of its aid to a much fuller degree than has been possible. It is a contribution of uncommon value to the present state of the question.

human life than I should hold, or than I think is necessary for the position maintained in this volume. I agree with him not only that God has ordained the world-order, by ignorance and misuse of which sickness, calamity, and death befall the children of men, and discipline them out of wrong ways of thinking and living, but I believe that over and above this He can so overrule evil that it works out supreme good. The Cross is there in history as the final proof of that.

In itself it is the sum of all human infamies. It originated in the very slums of the human heart, for it is the expression of cruelty, and of contempt for human nature. There ought never to have been a cross, as there ought never to have been stakes and racks and thumb-screws. The story of the Crucifixion, also, is a shame to Israel and Rome alike. Even the disciples of Jesus make a poor show in history at this point beside the disciples of Socrates. Yet God has so overruled it that it is the sublimest manifestation of Himself in human history, the living heart of all its higher progress. The Cross of Calvary has, in fact, destroyed crucifixion in all civilised lands.

It is thus, further, the supreme fact in human history which demonstrates that all sin and all tragedy are retrievable. It proves that Love is mightier than hatred, as the Resurrection proves that Life is greater than Death. Taken together, they are the Divine assurance to mankind of the final triumph of good over evil, of the goodness and the omnipotence of God, for what God has done with this Cross He can do with all the crosses of all His children.