

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE are few men who 'seek truth and ensue it' with more sincerity than Professor H. B. SWETE of Cambridge. His books take the place of first authority on their subject as soon as they are published. It is not that Professor SWETE is a scholar. There are other scholars. It is not that he is a Christian scholar. There are other Christian scholars, not a few. It is that he examines every item of evidence and refuses to go where the evidence does not direct him. There are very few indeed of whom that can be said so unreservedly. When, therefore, Professor SWETE gives us a lead on so obscure a subject as prayer for the dead, while we are not bound to follow him, we are bound to consider very carefully what he has to say.

Dr. SWETE has published a book with the title of *The Holy Catholic Church* (Macmillan; 3s. 6d. net). It contains a discussion of two of the articles of the Creed, the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints. It is in seeking to interpret the meaning of the Communion of Saints, and give it all its comprehensiveness, that he tells us what is 'of faith' regarding prayer for the dead.

The subject has two sides. The one side is prayer of the dead for us. The other is prayer by us for the dead. He begins with prayer of the dead for us.

There is no reference to it in the Old Testament. And in the New there is only one indirect reference. It occurs in the Apocalypse (6th). 'The prophet of the Apocalypse sees the souls of the martyrs interceding with God for the speedy punishment of the persecutors of the Church.' Its absence from the New Testament is the more significant that prayer by the departed for their brethren on earth was believed to be a reality by the Jews of the Maccabæan age. 'In 2 Maccabees, Onias is seen with outstretched hands invoking blessings on the Jewish nation; and the prophet Jeremiah is represented as a "lover of the brethren, who prayeth much for the people of the Holy City."'

If, then, Scripture is to be the measure of our belief, we have no encouragement to count upon the prayers of our friends who have departed this life. Now the Early Church did not reject the authority of Scripture, but its interpretation was often elastic. It is no surprise, therefore, to find Origen saying without hesitation, 'Not only does the Great High Priest pray for those who pray sincerely, but they have also the prayers of the Angels, who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth . . . and of the souls of the Saints who have fallen asleep.' And again, 'It will not be wrong to say that all departed saints, retaining their love for those who are still alive, care for their salvation,

and help them by their prayers and intercessions.' After Origen, Dr. SWETE names Cyprian and Jerome, and then says: 'No belief which was not actually an article of the faith was more general or more deeply cherished in ancient Christendom.'

Does Professor SWETE believe that the dead pray for the living? Apparently he does. He has given us the evidence. It may not be enough for us. It seems to be enough for him. He begins the next paragraph with the words: 'But if departed saints pray for the living, can the living reciprocate their prayers? Are we at liberty to remember the dead before God, as the dead, we believe, remember the living? Can there be between us the fellowship of reciprocal prayer?'

This brings us to the other side of the subject. Are we encouraged to pray for the dead? The Biblical evidence is slight. In the Old Testament there is nothing. In the Apocrypha there is one passage. 'According to 2 Maccabees, Judas Maccabaeus provided for the offering of sacrifices for the good estate of the souls of certain Jews who had fallen in battle fighting for their country, but in life had been guilty of idolatrous practices. "Therein," the writer contends, "Judas did right well and honourably, in that he took thought for a resurrection; for if he had not expected that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and idle to pray for the dead."'

What about the New Testament? 'The New Testament,' says Professor SWETE, 'contains but one petition for a departed saint, but it is a prayer for his acceptance in the day of Christ, and not for his well-being in the intermediate life.' The reference is to 2 Ti 1¹⁸. This is to take it for granted that Onesiphorus, who is there spoken of, was dead when the Epistle was written. That is not certain. But to Dr. SWETE both the passages in which Onesiphorus is mentioned in this Epistle (1¹⁸ 4¹⁹) 'seem to presuppose his death.'

In the sub-apostolic writings there is absolute silence on prayer for the dead. Right on to the end of the second century there is not even an ambiguous reference. It is in the Catacombs at Rome that we begin to find what Dr. SWETE calls 'simple, unproved outpourings of Christian hearts.' 'One epitaph entreats any of the brethren who read it to ask God to "take to Himself this pure and innocent soul." "Remember dear Agatha," another begs, "that Almighty God may keep her for ever." Others run: "Jesus, Lord, remember our child." "God refresh thy spirit"; "in peace be thy spirit."' After that, both in the West and in the East, the evidence is ample.

Once more, then, we have no encouragement from Scripture to pray for the dead. But if the voice of the Church is to be heard, we have encouragement enough. Between the two we have to make our choice. The present conflict is carrying our thoughts to the subject every day. Nourished on the tradition of the Church, we are easily able to pray for our dead and find comfort for ourselves as we pray. If without some Scripture leading we feel that we dare not, the comfort will come in other ways. When a young man was called suddenly home, as so many young men are being called, Dr. Alexander WHYTE, Principal of the New College in Edinburgh, sent a telegram to his father and mother: 'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.' It was a quotation from the Shorter Catechism, familiar to Dr. WHYTE and to the parents. It was enough.

The most acute controversy of our time is the eschatological. It has to do with the Second Advent and the End of the World. Jesus said to Caiaphas and the Council, 'Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven' (Mk 14⁶²). To His disciples He said—and He used the emphatic 'Verily I say unto you' to introduce it—'There be some here of them that stand by,

which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power' (Mk 9¹).

What did He mean when He said these things? There have been those who, pressed with the difficulty of them, have denied that He said them. But the evidence for them is just as good as it is for the most undisturbing things He ever said. It is at least as good as is the evidence for 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

What did He mean, then, when He said, 'There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power'? Did He mean that the world would come to an end within a generation? What did He mean when He said, 'Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven'? Did He mean that, whenever the end came, it would come in a catastrophe?

These are the two elements of difficulty. Jesus seems to say that the end of the world is to be soon, and He seems to say that it is to be sudden. We know that it did not come soon. We believe that it will not come suddenly. To use the words of Mr. A. E. J. RAWLINSON, formerly Tutor of Keble College, and now Student of Christ Church, Oxford, we now believe that the Kingdom of God is 'a spiritual and moral condition of mankind, to be gradually brought about by human effort.'

No graver question has ever confronted the Christian Church. When the controversy about the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament was at its height, that which had most influence with those who stood by tradition was the belief that Christ had committed Himself to definite conclusions, such as the Davidic authorship of the 110th Psalm. That argument is here in tenfold force. It is here in such force that even a responsible scholar like Mr. RAWLINSON is compelled to ask: 'Was our Lord a true prophet? Did He

mislead His Church? Or was He even Himself so far misled as to entertain an expectation about the future which was not to be literally fulfilled?'

Mr. RAWLINSON has published a volume of essays and given it the title of *Dogma, Fact and Experience* (Macmillan; 2s. 6d. net). In one of these essays he asks these questions. Has he an answer? Yes, he has an answer. He is diffident enough about it. He says it is rather an attempt to think out the lines of a possible answer. But there is some prospect of relief in it.

Mr. RAWLINSON has no hesitation in saying that we have moved away from the eschatological outlook. 'The apocalyptic picture of the End,' he says, 'has lost for us its literalness, and it is only by a liberal use of the principle of mental reserve that we can bring ourselves to sing such hymns as, "Lo, he comes with clouds descending," or "Great God, what do I see and hear?"' What we feel is that in singing these hymns we are not in the region of fact but of symbol. But then, when we ask ourselves what the symbols stand for, we have extreme difficulty in answering.

Is it possible that they stand for something which is beyond our power to conceive? Is it possible that some pictorial representation is the best that can be done for us? We have no power to conceive the beginning of things, so we have to be content with what is called a 'Creation myth.' Is it possible that we have just as little ability to understand the End? Must we be satisfied with an 'Eschatological myth'? Certainly the Myth is not without its value. The presentation of truth under mythological forms, as STEWART says in his *Myths of Plato*, is analogous to 'some great Ritual at which thinkers may assist, and feel that there are mysteries which the scientific understanding cannot fathom.'

What, then, would a myth tell us as to the manner of the End? Mr. RAWLINSON says it would tell us two things.

First, it would tell us 'that this world's story is not a meaningless *progressus ad infinitum*; that it is destined to have its culmination in some great justifying Divine Event, which will involve the final triumph of the Christ: that the clue to its mystery is not to be discovered in any merely immanent process of natural evolution, but in a salvation coming down out of heaven from God: that God is in truth the supreme Actor in history, and that the deepest truth of religion is to be found in the conception of an Advent wherein He comes to man: that He is the Eternal Judge of man and of his doings, before whose dread Tribunal all things lie naked and open without possibility of evasion or concealment.'

Besides that, it would remind us of the transitoriness of the existing order of things. It would prevent us from presuming on security and permanence, a presumption which 'a calm world and a long peace' is wont to beget in us. For our generation at least that particular dream has been in dramatic and terrible fashion dispelled. 'We have witnessed as it were the opening of an apocalyptic seal and the letting loose of War, Famine, and Pestilence upon the world. We have been confronted by the spectacle of "dying men, flowing blood, and burning cities." We have seen God's judgments in the earth, and we have learnt to realize what is meant by "standing in jeopardy every hour." The lesson has been written in blood across the battlefields of Europe. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek after that which is to come."

The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.'

But it is not in what Christ said about the manner of the End that the real difficulty lies, it is in what He said about the time of it. He said

that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. His words carry that meaning. The disciples understood them in that way. But who, Mr. RAWLINSON asks, 'looking upon the world as it is to-day after nineteen centuries of Christendom, will venture to assert that the Kingdom of God has come?'

It has not come even yet. What did Christ mean when He said that it would come within a generation? Mr. RAWLINSON refers first to the answer which Professor A. G. HOGG has given in his little book on *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*. 'Christ, says Professor HOGG, dared to entertain the magnificent hope that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the consummation of the Kingdom might really be brought to pass in His own lifetime, and He hoped this in virtue of His unexampled faith in the limitless power of God. That hope, in the sequel, was unrealized. But it need not have been so. God willed then, and God wills still, to bring in the Kingdom; but the realization of His purpose is made to depend upon the attitude of man, whose co-operation He seeks. Had men had faith as a grain of mustard seed, then truly mountains should have removed, and the Kingdom would even then have come. But just as it is said in the Gospel that our Lord at Nazareth "could do no mighty work" by reason of the "unbelief" of the people there, so, it is suggested, the Kingdom of God waits for its consummation upon the faith of men, and is delayed by man's faithlessness even until now.'

Mr. RAWLINSON accepts the suggestion, 'so far as it goes.' But it does not carry all the way. It means, clearly enough, that the coming of the Kingdom depends upon man as well as upon God. And that is true. But it appears to mean more than that. It means that Christ expected more of man than man has been able or willing to give. God gave all that was expected of Him. Man gave less, so much less that the end which ought to have come in one generation has not come in all these centuries.

Well, there is no doubt that man has been a disappointment to Christ. He has been a disappointment to himself. But Mr. RAWLINSON doubts if Christ was so entirely mistaken in him. 'When the Son of man is come,' He said, 'shall he find faith on the earth?' The words imply that He shall not. And yet He is to come. He is to come even though iniquity should abound and the love of many should wax cold. Clearly man has been a disappointment, but just as clearly the disappointment in man is not the only reason for the delay in the coming of the Kingdom.

What is Mr. RAWLINSON'S own solution? Mr. RAWLINSON finds the difficulty softened, if not solved, in the fact that 'Christ executeth the office of a Prophet.'

What is a prophet? We no longer need to labour the point that he was not simply a sooth-sayer. We know now that essentially the prophet in Israel was a forth-teller rather than a fore-teller. He expressed the mind of God, and he very often spoke of the future; but when he spoke of the future and of things that were to happen in it, he was not disturbed if those things did not come to pass as he expected. For in all true prophecy the important thing is not when the event spoken of will come to pass, the important thing is that it shall come to pass and shall not fail.

Jeremiah prophesied that the judgment against Jerusalem would come out of the North. He referred to the Scythians, who were then on their way. But the Scythians never came. They passed down to Egypt by the coast road through the land of the Philistines, and were bought off by the Egyptians. It is likely enough that this failure on the part of Jeremiah to predict the time of the judgment which was to befall the city did him much discredit in the eyes of the unthinking. But it did not induce himself or his editor to suppress the prophecy.

Ezekiel uttered a group of prophecies against

Tyre. He announced its immediate downfall and annihilation; he sang a dirge over its former splendour; and he proclaimed the punishment of its king for his arrogance. Yet Tyre did not fall. After besieging it for thirteen years Nebuchadnezzar failed to take it and was obliged to raise the siege. But Ezekiel did not suppress his prophecies. He was probably undisturbed by their failure. He knew the fact, he left the time and manner of fulfilment to God.

Now this indifference to time is especially evident when the subject of prophecy is the coming of the Kingdom of God. Isaiah looked for the manifestation, in a more or less immediate future, of an ideal Prince of David's line, endued with attributes bordering on the Divine. 'No such anticipation was literally fulfilled. So also the glorious forecasts of an ideal redeemed community which the victorious career of Cyrus called forth from the so-called "Deutero"-Isaiah found no adequate fulfilment in the "day of small things" which ensued. Zechariah and Haggai regarded the disturbed state of the Persian Empire at the time of the accession of Darius as heralding the advent of the New Age. The author of the Book of Daniel looked for the inauguration of the Kingdom of the saints of the Most High to take place within "half a week" or "a time, times and an half" (*i.e.* three and a half years) of the date at which the book was written. There is reason to think that many of the religious party of the "Hasidim" or "pious ones" were disposed to identify Simon Maccabaeus, or a little later—for a time at least—John Hyrcanus, with the long-expected Messiah. Each successive generation in Israel appears, in short, to have held that the era of fulfilment was at hand; and it is probable that in each succeeding generation the prophetically-minded would have echoed the words of Ezekiel, who declared, in opposition to those who asserted that "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of times that are far off," "Thus saith the Lord God. . . . The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision."

Jesus is a Prophet. His great interest is the coming of the Kingdom. He knows that it will come. The day and the hour He does not know. Times and seasons the Father has set in His own power. Like the prophets before Him, His certainty assumes the form of immediacy. He announces its coming, just as the prophets did, within that generation. That is Mr. RAWLINSON'S solution.

He has a modern instance. He says: 'Probably what is in some ways the most powerful religious influence in recent years upon the younger generation of the educated classes of both sexes has been that of the World's Student Christian Federation, an organization which originally came into existence in connexion with a recruiting campaign on behalf of Christian Missions. The movement adopted as a kind of watchword the phrase, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation." That mankind as a whole will actually be evangelized within a generation is extremely improbable. Regarded as a prediction the words would be calculated to mislead. Regarded, however, as a prophetic or apocalyptic vision, they embody a deeper truth than the most accurate of forecasts could have conveyed; for they bring the goal within the horizon. They exhibit the ideal, not as something dim and remote and shadowy, but as something vivid and close at hand, full of present inspiration and power.'

Is there a passage in all the Bible more difficult to interpret than Mk 14³⁶? There are passages that seem to be more difficult. On the surface this passage is easy enough. But when we try to enter into it? And yet that passage contains the whole theory of prayer. The words are: 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.' It is the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane.

Mr. Ronald KNOX, Fellow and Chaplain of

Trinity College, Oxford, has tried to interpret the passage. His interpretation will be found in a small volume, published by the Society of SS. Peter and Paul, with the title of *Bread or Stone*. The interpretation was given in four Conferences. Each Conference was occupied with one part of the prayer: the first with 'Abba, Father'; the second with 'all things are possible unto thee'; the third with 'remove this cup from me'; and the fourth with 'howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.' The Conferences, says Mr. KNOX, were on Imperative Prayer. It is his word for prayer that is direct petition. It is a clumsy word, but we are in need of it.

'Abba, Father.' Who speaks? It is the Son of God. In a few sharp sentences Mr. KNOX expresses his understanding of that title. 'It is the Son of God who speaks: the express image of His Person, the heir to all the worlds, existing in His own right, yet drawing His existence from that Fount of Godhead which belongs to the Father alone.'

But He speaks also as Man, as one of ourselves. What do we mean when *we* call God 'Father'? 'First, doubtless, that He called us into being. Now, don't let us go off throwing our hats up into the air over that. He called us into being, for His own good pleasure, without consulting us, without giving us the option of not being. Our ancestors used to be grateful to their fathers for the gift of life: not so the degenerate of the modern drama: "What right had you," he says to his father, "to bring me into existence, to make me heir to all the frailties of the flesh, to expose me to all the buffets of circumstance, without asking my leave?" And it is a terrible responsibility:—that a man and a woman should conjure up between them a third human personality, into which God will breathe a living soul, a soul that will struggle, will sin, will love, will suffer, will, perhaps, go to Hell. Now, God is your Father in the sense that He is responsible both for your body and for your soul; He is the source of all life; He

created the damned souls. He is our Father in that sense.'

He created the damned souls. Why are they damned, then? Is it because He is not good? He did it all for a whim, perhaps? Or perhaps He created us and took no more interest in us? Created us and left us with Nature, the unkindly nurse? Or perhaps we are only parts of some mighty machine, necessary to its working but without any end for ourselves? What if God, willing to show His power—just His power . . . ?

Mr. KNOX will have none of these answers. If God exists at all He is good. We cannot think of Him otherwise. If He made us, He accepts the responsibility of having done so. If He has given us the need of something for our own sakes, and not merely for the perfection of some huge machine, He is sure to meet our need. 'He could not have been so cruel as to make us want eternal life, if He were not prepared to give us eternal life. He could not have made a Heaven to reward us and a Hell to punish us, if He did not give sufficient grace to every one of us to attain the one, if we will, and escape the other. All that there is in the world which is evil must be either the result of human sin, or the means of human perfection.'

'When ye pray, say, Father.' For He is a Father. At least He has the goodness of a Father. That is the first demand that is made upon us—to believe in the goodness of God. We meet that demand when we pray, and say, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' We do not say, 'Our-Father-which-art-in-heaven.' We take the first two words by themselves. They are the acknowledgment we make of the goodness of God.

The second part of the prayer is: 'All things are possible unto thee.' It is the most unreserved expression of the omnipotence of God? Do we believe in the omnipotence of God? This is the next demand that is made upon us. We say, 'Abba, Father,' and express our belief in God's

goodness. Can we also say 'all things are possible unto thee' and express our belief in His omnipotence?

If it is difficult, in face of the ills of life, to believe in the goodness of God,—and Mr. KNOX admits it is 'a really staggering demand' that is made upon us when we are told to say 'Father,'—more difficult is it at the present time to believe in His omnipotence. Yet we might believe in either if the other were away. The real difficulty is to believe in both. We could believe in God's power if we had not to believe in His goodness; still more easily could we believe in His goodness if we had not to believe in His power. The test of our faith is that when we pray we have to say not only 'Father,' but 'all things are possible unto thee.'

'All things are possible unto thee.' Then God could have killed the germs that gave birth to that pestilence. God could have arranged, so that the earthquake should not happen. God could have so ordered the course of nature, that the wind which spread the fire should have come from such a quarter as to quench it. For omnipotence means, not merely that everything which is done in the world is done by God, but that it is done of His free choice, without any external compulsion whatever.

But He does not interfere with the free will of man? If He does not, it is not because He cannot, but because He wills not to interfere. And when He wills not to interfere with the freedom of our will, except by the use of His grace, even then He controls the results of our actions. He approached Judas with His prevenient grace. Judas would not have it. Then He could have smitten him with a sudden madness. That would not have saved Judas' soul, but it would have prevented the Crucifixion. Why did He not do so? Because He did not will the prevention of the Crucifixion. It is true that nothing could be more alien from the will of

God than that the Jews should crucify Jesus. But nothing could be more completely in harmony with God's will than that Jesus should be crucified by the Jews.

'And therefore,' says Mr. KNOX, 'when people object to our saying that the European war was a judgement of God upon our sins, on the ground that it arose from the sinful will of, say, the German Emperor, and God, who wills no evil, therefore had nothing to do with it, we know what to answer. We know that however much the human responsibility for the war be responsibility for a foul crime, God could have prevented, if He had willed to prevent, that crime being carried into execution: He could have struck the German Emperor dead, as He struck Arius the heretic dead, at the moment when his plans seemed to be prospering; He could have annihilated the army before Liège, as he annihilated the army of Sennacherib; He did not, therefore He willed it—willed that the crime should be allowed to reap its own bitter fruits.'

Has the individual, then, to suffer merely to save the mass? Not so. 'He did not allow Barabbas to go free *merely* because the salvation of the world depended on it: He foresaw that, if he would but use his opportunity, the reprieve would be the best thing for Barabbas. He did not allow St. Thomas of Canterbury to be martyred *merely* because He saw it would lead to the exaltation of His Church: He allowed the martyrdom because that was the way in which He saw fit that St. Thomas should glorify God. And when He allowed a European War to break out, He did not do it for one single purpose, regardless of the consequences: He foresaw every corollary it would involve; He foresaw how each soldier would fall, what effect that loss would have, or ought to have, upon those who loved Him, how every single human soul living in the world would be affected by the upheaval; He foresaw all that, and, as at the Creation of the world, He pronounced it very good.'

The third part of the prayer is: 'Remove this cup from me.' It is a very difficult part. 'Is Jesus praying that the Redemption of the world should happen in some other way? But He must know that that cannot be. Can it be, then, that He is praying the Redemption of the world may not happen at all—Jesus Christ praying that you and I and the whole human race may go to Hell? Or, if He did not mean that, why did He pray for it? And, if He did pray for it, how was it that God did not grant it? God, who has promised to grant the petitions of those who ask in His Son's Name? Did Jesus ask without sufficient faith? Or was He asking for something which was not good for Him? How could Incarnate God do either? And what does it mean, in any case, when Jesus Christ speaks of praying to the Father? Since He is, all the time, the Eternal Son, dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and without Him nothing is done that is done by the power of God, why cannot He confer the blessing Himself, instead of asking His Father to confer it? And how can God pray? And so your brain goes on ringing with echo after echo of intellectual debate, and there's the clock striking, and it's time your meditation finished—and what fruit have you, what worship from you has found its way behind the curtains of the Tabernacle?'

Go back to the beginning. The perfection of Jesus was the perfection of His will. Now when the will is in perfect accord with the mind of God, every wish that is formed in the heart is instantaneously translated into an aspiration towards God. 'Jesus in His agony saw, and foresaw, all the sins and all the ingratitude of the whole world. He saw the heart of Judas black with treachery, He saw His chosen disciples already sleeping at the hour of crisis, and ready to desert Him at the hour of peril: He saw the fanatical hatred of the Jews, the cynical hardness of Pilate, the frivolous injustice of Herod: He saw down the long avenues of the unborn future, wars and crimes and foul passions, hypocrisy, oppression, and wrong: He saw the schisms that would tear the

body of His Church, the heresies that would lead wanderers away from His fold: He saw Tyburn, and Louvain, and the streets of London at midnight—all mirrored in the prophetic Chalice of Gethsemane. He saw it, and all His desires, thwarted by human wills, for human salvation and perfection, turned to prayer in the crucible of His burning Heart, and went up in agony to God.'

But the prayer was never granted. Mr. KNOX denies that. 'Never' is no word to use of the goodness and the power of God. It was granted in one way at once. 'As the desires turned into prayer, so the prayer turned into grace—a flowing tide of grace that surged up, eddy after eddy, into the hearts of a Judas, a Caiaphas, a Pilate, broke itself against the hard rock of their stony wills, and fell back, but with force undiminished: with force undiminished entered the coward soul of Peter, forced him to his knees, and converted him into the stablisher of his brethren, washed away the sins of the penitent thief, and bore him into Paradise.'

The last part of the prayer is: 'Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.'

Now there is no conflict here between the will of Jesus and the will of the Father. Jesus did not will the Crucifixion. He did not will that Judas should betray, Caiaphas conspire against, and Pilate misjudge Him—nor did the Father. God never wills what is evil. The Father did will the Passion, did will that Jesus should receive the kiss, stand before the tribunal, tread the way of the Cross, without complaining—so did Jesus. Jesus always willed what was good. It is not a conflict between the will of Jesus and the will of God, from which the latter emerges successful; it is the will of Jesus passing beyond itself, being universalized into the will of God.

Jesus speaks in His humanity. He addresses the Father as a servant. For His human will, though perfect as our will is not, was particular as ours is. It embraced one object at a time. 'The will of God is like a great chord of music; the human will is an instrument which can only play one note at a time; our business is to see that the note it plays is the right note, the note which will contribute its proper share to that symphony of aspiration which would rise, if we were perfect, from the orchestra of humanity into the ears of God.'

The School of Prayer.

BY THE REV. R. H. COATS, M.A., B.D., BIRMINGHAM.

AFFLICTION, of one kind or another, is the principal school of prayer. When we read the familiar 107th Psalm, we are struck by the words of a four times recurring phrase, '*Then* cried they unto the Lord.' What were the occasions of this resort to God? Always, an experience of trouble or distress. The traveller in the desert who has lost his way, the prisoner in the dungeon sighing for relief, the sick man stretched upon a bed of pain, the sailor staggering amid the terrors of the storm—these are the persons who betake themselves to prayer. According to the experience and observation of the Psalmist, when men are hard pressed and at their wits' end, when their souls draw nigh to

the gates of death, being bound in affliction and in iron, *then* they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses.

Strangely enough, the immediately preceding Psalm, the 106th, finds the same truth illustrated in the experience, not of individuals but of nations. The history of Israel shows an invariable round of ever-recurring changes. The mercy of God bestows prosperity upon His people; that prosperity leads to false confidence, security, and neglect of God; swift on the heels of security comes pride; pride and rebellion beget disaster; and *then*, in the hour of calamity and need, the contrite nation calls