Notes on the Book of Job

William Kelly

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Notes on the Book of Job

With a new version.

Preface.

Many and able as are the extant writings on the Book of Job, there still seemed to the writer room and need both for careful translation and for fresh help towards the better understanding of this most interesting and instructive portion of the Holy Scriptures. Nor does he doubt that to a closer and deeper research, under the guidance of Him who alone can lead into all the truth, it will yield more and more: such is the wealth of that inexhaustible mine, and such the gracious power of the Holy Spirit. Few are likely to feel the defects of the present little work more than the writer; yet he counts on the Lord to use it, such as it is, to the comfort and edification of many a soul, and, it may be, to stimulate other labourers to a still more abundant harvest.

Blackheath, London. January, 1879.

Introduction.

The book before us is as isolated in form as underneath it is bound up by the closest ties with all scripture. In it we breathe the fresh and free air of desert life, in the strongest antithesis to the settled polity of Israel in Canaan; yet is it quite distinct from the pilgrim character of the fathers, rather approaching the place of Lot, though with a sensible difference as suits the wealthiest chief of Uz, but an independent and honoured visitor of the city, not its denizen. No foreign land is so well known as Egypt; yet Job’s own habits lie outside it.

Revolutions were known, science and art making progress; godly men discussed the deepest moral questions. The marks of hoar antiquity are graven on it, yet it falls in admirably with the latest outflow of grace to the Gentile. Contemporaneous with, if not before, the five books of Moses, it is of all parts of the Old Testament the most free from the trammels of the law or even from allusions to it; yet none the less does it shadow the ways of God with Israel, blessed of old, losing all meanwhile, but about to be blessed once more and far more in the end than in the beginning.

The problem handled in the book is the moral government of God: how to conciliate His righteousness with the sufferings, and even extreme sufferings, of a just and godly man? how to understand the permission of evil, in its worst form of malignant persecution, with His own good, and this before and apart from His revelation in Christ and by redemption? The books of Moses prepare the way for His government of a people, His own elect Israel, where all was to be manifest and a testimony before the world. Here it is His dealings with a soul before the true light shone, and the veil was rent, and sin condemned in the cross, along with the expression of exercises of heart and conscience under God’s dealings. Now that we are reconciled to God by Christ’s death and know ourselves to be in Christ before God, there is or ought to be a wholly new experience. But it is of the deepest interest and profit to see how the believer was enabled, not merely to walk uprightly when things were prosperous in an evil world but to confide in God spite of adversity and crushing affliction, and not only to submit to His will as chastening but to measure and abhor himself in dust and ashes before God. The

beginning teaches that not Satan but God is the source of the action, the middle that He only and effectually carries forward the true lesson for the soul, the end that He is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy. A whole long book devoted to the exercises of a soul in suffering, and he a Gentile, and this in the canon of the Jewish scriptures from the first! But it is not yet what some call the “mystery of the cross:” this was reserved for Christ.

The plan or structure is very distinct. There is a prologue in Job 1, 2 with a corresponding conclusion or epilogue in the last chapter (Job 42:7-17). The question is raised in heaven between God and Satan, the man on earth most concerned being wholly ignorant of it till grace prevailed and the word revealed all. Job, the object of divine interest, becomes therefore the butt of the malice of Satan, who is allowed to inflict his heaviest blows on his possessions and his family, then on his person short of his life, and utterly failing to ensnare the saint into sin disappears from the scene. But God, who had taken the initiative, carries on the trial, which, if it had stopped here, had failed to deal with that which needed to be reached in Job’s heart and judged by himself in order to his deeper blessing. Hence the three friends are introduced, whose presence in silence, as they looked on his overwhelming misery and grief, at length opens his mouth in curses on his day, not on God. (Job 3)

Then follows a threefold series of colloquies between Job and his friends, rich in moral suggestion and full of feeling, especially on the part of the sufferer, whose language may seem often in words to approach that of Christ in the Psalms, but is really in contrast with His perfection. For He ever abode in the love of His Father,

and never failed to justify His God, even when on the cross abandoned by Him, which Job never was more than any other servant of His that ever lived. (Job 4 - 31) Hence Job stands as the instructive foil, and this not as a man merely, but as a man of God, to the second Man and last Adam. So little are the ancients and moderns to be relied on who agree in declaring that Job prefigured Christ as the Victim or undeserving Sufferer. Inconsistency most grave we see not in Christ but in Job, though real integrity and disinterestedness, whatever said his friends or Satan. The converse of Christ, in absolute submission and justifying God under suffering (and what suffering!) instead of bitter complaint, is thus lost.

In this profound discussion, after the passionate outburst of the long patient sufferer, each of the three friends first insinuates these charges home on Job — that grave secret sin alone could account for such calamities, that therefore his could be only a show of piety, that in short he must be a hypocrite. To each Job replies, with less or more indignation insisting on his integrity; but while he yearns after God, if he could only get near Him, he complains of His dealings as severe and unpitying. On the third occasion (Job 22 - 31), the assailants are so evidently convicted of a too narrow and judicial estimate of God’s ways, that Eliphaz drops his original mildness, acts unfairly by Job’s reasoning, and plays the sophist himself by converting special instances of divine judgment on the wicked into a sample of His ordinary dealings, ignoring the righteous. Bildad, unable to resist the rejoinder of Job who points out the tangled web of human things, while he admits the occasional intervention in this world of Him who will judge

infallibly in the next, is obliged to admit the to man incomprehensible ways of God now, yet still holds to his suspicions of Job under the application of the sententious wisdom of others. After a withering rejoinder of heavier metal from the same arsenal, Job cleaves to the assertion of his sincerity before God, and magnificently contrasts with the petty and acrimonious short-sightedness of his miserable comforters that wisdom which is beyond the ken of the creature and pertains to God alone, however He of His grace may vouchsafe it to him that fears Himself and departs from evil. Zophar is utterly silenced.

Thereon appears a hitherto unnoticed person, Elihu, who had kept silence as became one considerably younger, but now speaks as interpreting God's ways with man, with the soul, so that Job is reduced to silence no less than his friends. Their assaults Elihu defends no more than he insinuates hidden evil against Job; but he reproves the irreverence of his replies, vindicates the dealings of God, whether in judgment of man or in discipline of the righteous, and proves how perilous his language might be for encouraging men in the path of reckless pursuit of prosperity here below. He urges on Job self-judgment and submission to God, exposing his self-righteousness, and condemning the wish for death to escape suffering as wholly unworthy, as well as vain before Him whose glory and withal interest in creation he describes in forms of great beauty and force. He completely avoids the error of those who see not correction but only judgment in God's ways. (Job 32 - 37)

Jehovah then answers Job out of the whirlwind, asserting the majesty of His power, laying bare Job's

ignorance to himself, and pointedly demanding, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. This brings out from Job the confession of his vileness, which is carried on still farther, we may say fully, by a fresh appeal of Jehovah mainly grounded on but two of His earthly creatures. (Job 38 - 42:6) There could be no more till Christ came not only bringing life and incorruption to light, but clearing up what must then have been left to God as insoluble by man.

The conclusion follows, Elihu the interpreter of good disappearing at the end, as Satan the messenger of evil at the beginning, and Jehovah turning the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, as well as giving him twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:7-17) The friends were merely silenced; Job opens his mouth in full confession and thus wins forgiveness not merely for himself but for them by interceding on their behalf.

The longevity of Job and the priestly action as head of the family (his historic reality being attested by Ezekiel in the Old Testament and by James in the New) point to patriarchal times: after Abraham and before the Exodus would seem the limits, if indeed Moses himself did not write the book. At any rate Dr. S. Lee has given a copious list of striking coincidences with the Pentateuch. The reader will notice how “the Almighty” (the revelation of God to the fathers) appears familiarly in the speeches of Job and his friends, as well as “God” as such. Jehovah is regularly used only when the writer describes or introduces Himself as speaking. The exception is in Job 12:9, Job 28:18 being Adonai and not Jehovah, Genesis proves however that the name of Jehovah was not a secret before God gave it by Moses as

a name of relation to Israel. The idolatry alluded to in Job 31 is the earliest that came in by Satan's craft, and therefore suits well the patriarchal age; but it does prove that the book must have been written after the flood, for we hear of no idolatry before it. The mention of angels as the "sons of God" tallies with the Mosaic phrase in Genesis 6, and Satan's character with the serpent of Genesis 3.

For these and similar reasons of no little weight, some of a linguistic nature, one sees how the book fits in with the days of the earliest revelation from God to man. Nothing can be conceived more opposed to the truthful simplicity of scripture than a late writer (I will not say indulging in a fiction, but) even in a two narrative affecting the archaic style and language of an age long past. Nor is it rational, to take the lowest ground, that the Jewish canon could have admitted such a book unless the prophets had accepted it as inspired no less than authentic, as it is the weightiest and earliest witness against their narrow and exclusive spirit in respect of all outside themselves. The same principle applies to Melchisedek in Genesis and to Jethro in Exodus and Numbers. The book of Job therefore stands properly at the head of the Hagiographa, or poetical books of the Old Testament. Indeed a late Hebrew commentator deserts the general belief of the Rabbins for the scepticism of Samuel Bar Nachman, and a few others, on the express ground of incredulity that the patriarchs of Israel should be so left behind in spiritual power by a Gentile like Job, not to speak of his three friends and Elihu.

Job 1, Job 2 - Job Tried By Satan.

The Spirit of God opens the book with a lovely picture of Job's character, family, and position. We see himself, his sons, and his daughters in all the intimacy of private life, and this in him ruled by the fear of God. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect1 and upright, and fearing God, and eschewing evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; and this man was greater than all the sons of the east."

The earthly circumstances of Job are thus clearly set before us. He was the greatest of all the sons of the East. His sons also had their separate establishments, and the description of their ordinary habits gives occasion for the mention of a vivid trait of Job's piety. "And his sons went and feasted, each in [his] house on his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was [so], when the days of their feasting had gone round, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, Perhaps my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." (Vers. 4, 5.) Such was the habitual life of this godly Gentile, which the Holy Spirit has manifest pleasure in recording. Doubtless it was the fruit of the grace of God; yet Job had to learn better still both the God of grace, and himself in His presence. It is indeed the great moral of the book.

But in order to such a lesson the veil is lifted for us from a higher scene. Earth is the theatre where the godly man is tried, but the spectacle is not later only of apostles and others, but even then of a saint to angels. “Now the day arrived when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also among them. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? And Satan answered Jehovah and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, and fearing God, and eschewing evil? And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, For nought doth Job fear God? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: but put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath — will he not curse Thee to Thy face? And Jehovah said unto Satan, Lo, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.” (Vers. 6-12.)

How perfect the rebuke to man’s dream of God indifferent to all! of a mere theory of earth progressing under natural laws! It was Jehovah who here raised the question: Satan could only avail himself of the prosperity of Job to insinuate self-interest. Were his possessions to be touched, see “if he curse thee not to Thy face!” Jehovah gives the adversary permission to put forth his hand, but not against his person. What a comfort that even the enemy’s hand is under God’s hand! All is measured on the side of evil, infinite on that of good, as

we ought to know well, for all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

The earthly issue soon appears. "And the day arrived when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the she-asses feeding beside them; and [the] Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; and they have smitten the young men with the edge of the sword: and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, and they have smitten the young men with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, lo, there came a great wind from beyond the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead; and I only am escaped along to tell thee." (Vers. 13-19)

Thus we see that not only men's lusts and passions but the elements were in Satan's hand, so far as God allowed. In quick succession perished the herds, the flocks, the camels, and the children: desolation the more keenly felt, because not in one moment, but just time enough to hear of each separately! Outwardly however neither God appeared nor the enemy, but Sabeans, and

Chaldeans, and fire of God from heaven, and a whirlwind from beyond the wilderness. What was the effect of these severe and rapid blows on the righteous sufferer in his possessions and family? “And Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” (Vers. 20-22.) He sorrowed deeply, and it was right; but he bowed thoroughly to God. Satan was thus completely foiled; but God would descend into lower depths, and bless Job yet further, though to the praise of His own grace alone.

Accordingly the scene opens yet once more in heaven. “Again the day arrived when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also among them to present himself before Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered Jehovah and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, and fearing God, and eschewing evil, and still holding fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him to devour him without cause? And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh — if he will not curse thee to thy face? And Jehovah said unto Satan, Lo, he is in thine hand; but save his life. And Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with malignant ulcer from the

sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself with it; and he was sitting among the ashes." (Job 2:1-8)

Henceforward the adversary vanishes; he had failed no less completely in his renewed malice. What a comfort to learn in a scene where to all appearance then as now he seems to triumph! But so it ever is, whatever seems: God has His way, as the end proves unanswerably, and he that does the will of God, whatever his weakness or exposure, abides for ever. Yet at first what confusion of things! what suffering for the righteous! The person of Job was smitten as sorely and unsparingly as before he had been stripped of children and possessions — all clean gone; and the one who was nearest to him, instead of being a help-meet, tempts him in despair, but in vain. "And his wife said unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. Ay! shall we receive the good from God Himself, and shall we not receive the evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (Vers. 9, 10.) It will be noticed, however, that here, not before, it is said, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." This was much, but it was not all. No flesh shall glory before God.

God soon was pleased to bring out what was in his heart in a way which man could not expect. Godly friends were used of Him to bring to the surface what the adversary had failed utterly to reach or to see. Their very presence drew out impatience even from the patient Job. It is precisely where we are strongest that God proves our weakness. In Christ alone we stand. "Now three friends of Job heard of all this evil that was come upon him, and they came each from his own place,

Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And they lifted up their eyes from afar, and knew him not; and they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent each one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that the pain was very great."

Here we pause, and reflect on successive scenes, as genuine in the facts as in their moral depth, which eclipse no less the poor and low and corrupt myths of the ancient heathen, than the equally meagre and even impious efforts of modern philosophy to solve the problem of the world and men as they are with God such as He is. Those who turn away from so holy a revelation, and prefer what is utterly inadequate supposing it true, and what soon proves itself ridiculously false, nauseous even to a right-minded person, and presumptuous against God, prove at least what is the state of their hearts and consciences. We easily believe what we like. How blessed then by grace to love the truth! How awful to apostatize from "the Holy, the True," for unholy fables, old or new! Such alas! is the character of modern infidelity. God's purpose and ways are revealed in His word, and they are as worthy of the only true God as they are of the deepest value for our souls and our walk in fellowship with Him day by day.

The present world is not the manifestation of His government; it does not display His estimate of sinner or of saint. Previously to His judgment of the quick and the dead when Christ appears and reigns, He is in His grace

causing all things to work together for good to them that love Him. He makes us, even in all its sorrows, more than conquerors through Him that loved us. But in order to this there are lessons we must learn about ourselves: what they are we may be taught in measure at least as we go through this wonderful book, however much had necessarily to await His coming and death who gave the Holy Ghost to guide us into all the truth. Here we do not rise above yearning after a daysman: eternal redemption could not yet be known, nor our perfecting by the one offering of Christ. Hence we have distress, anxiety and conflict, at least when the law came in to detect the inward state, sin and not sins merely; for faith as yet took the shape of desire for the coming One though also of dependence and trust in God as well as of integrity in confession, not yet of the calm happy knowledge of a God fully revealed in love and by the work of Christ — our sins borne away, sin judged for ever in the cross, and divine righteousness established and ours by grace.

Job 3 - The Complaint Of Job.

The sympathy of his friends day after day, or their silent presence in face of all his troubles, was too much for the long-enduring saint.

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day,

And Job answered and said,

Perish the day wherein I was born,

And the night that said, A man is conceived.

That day! be it darkness;

Let not God from above ask after it;

And let not light shine upon it;

Let darkness and death-shade reclaim it;
Let clouds tabernacle on it;
Let darkenings of the day affright it.
That night! thick darkness seize on it;
Let it not be joined to the days of the year;
Let it not come into the number of the months.
Lo, that night! let it be barren;
Let no shout of joy come into it;
Let cursers of days curse it,
Who are prepared to rouse leviathan.
The stars of its twilight be dark;
Let it look for light but [have] none,
And let it not gaze on the eyelids of the dawn;
Because it shut not the doors of my [mother's] belly
And hid sorrow from mine eyes.
Why did I not die from the womb —
Come forth from the belly, and expire?
Why did the knees anticipate me,
And why the breasts that I should suck?
For now I had lain and been quiet,
I had slept, and then had there been rest for me,
With kings and counsellors of the earth,
Who built ruins for themselves;
Or with princes that had gold,

Who filled their houses with silver;

Or, as a hidden abortion, I should not be,

As infants [that] never saw light:

There the wicked cease from raging,

And there the weary are at rest;

Together rest the prisoners;

They hear not the taskmaster's voice

Small and great are there the same;

And free the slave from his master.

Wherefore giveth He light to the wretched one,

And life to the bitter [in] soul;

Who long for death, and it [is] not,

And dig for it more than for hid treasures;

Who rejoice to dancing,

Exult when they find the grave?

To a man whose way is hid,

And whom God hath hedged in?

For instead of my bread cometh my sighing,

And like waters are my groans poured forth.

For greatly I feared, and forthwith it overtook me,

And what I dreaded hath come to me;

I was not at ease, I had no quiet

And no rest, and trouble came."

Thus bitterly does he deprecate the day of his birth and all connected with it. Indeed there had never been a

child of Adam or a believer so visited as Job; and as yet he knew not the end, that the Lord is exceeding pitiful, and of tender mercy. He was in the depth of his trial aggravated by the silence of his friends, soon to augment it yet more by the drawn swords of their increasingly expressed suspicion. And so he asks, in the anguish of his soul, why, if such was to be his lot living, did he not die from the womb? Why should he have been so tenderly cared for to encounter at length such agony? Why did he not share the quiet of the grave with earth's grandees, who were spending life in building monuments that decay themselves, or cramming their houses with silver and gold they must leave behind; unless he had been as a still-born babe that never saw light, and thus be where the wicked trouble no more, and the weary are at rest, and the captives repose together, with no taskmaster's voice, small and great alike there, and the slave free from his master?

The last verses (20-26) put the question, first generally, and then with pointed application to himself, why he should live, being thus miserable. There is no need for giving to verse 20 the impersonal turn of the English Bible and of many others, though there is still the avoidance of uttering the name of God. The full answer could only come in a dead and risen Christ: if it were not so, the most miserable of all men would be the Christian. But now is He risen, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep. Fear of evil is gone for ever to him who now walks by faith; for to it evil is gone before God, and nothing but good abides and triumphs in Him whom we know on the throne of God, now appearing in His presence for us. Hence can the Christian glory in tribulations, and die daily; whereas Job can only say

that, if he but conceived a fear, it forthwith overtook him, and that which he dreaded was come upon him; not, I think, referring to past anxieties during his prosperity, but the dismal apprehensions which succeeded each other now that he was passing through the furnace.

Job 4, Job 5. - The First Discourse Of Eliphaz.

The eldest of the three friends proceeds to reprove Job.

“And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

Should one attempt a word to thee, wilt thou be grieved? And yet to hold back from speaking, who is able?

Lo, thou hast corrected many,

And slack hands hast thou strengthened,

The stumbling one thy speech did raise,

And sinking knees thou didst confirm;

But now it cometh to thee, and thou art grieved,

It toucheth thee, and thou art confounded.

[Is] not thy fear thy confidence,

And the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?

Remember, I pray thee, who perished being innocent?

Or where have the upright been blotted out?

So far as I have seen, they that plough iniquity,

And they that sow trouble, reap the same.

By the breath of God they perish,

And by the blast of His nostrils they are consumed.

The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the dark lion,
And the teeth of the young lion are broken;

The strong lion perisheth for lack of prey,

And the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

And to me there stole a word,

And mine ear caught a whisper from it,

In thoughts from visions of the night,

When deep sleep falleth on man;

Shuddering befell me, and trembling,

Which shook the multitude of my bones;

And a spirit glideth before me:

The hairs of my body bristled up.

It stood there — I discerned not its appearance —

An image before mine eyes:

Silence! and a voice I hear,

Is a mortal more just than God?

Is a man purer than his Maker?

Behold, His servants He trusteth not,

And to His angels He ascribeth error;

How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,

The foundation of which [is] in the dust,

Which are crushed as though moths!

From morning to evening they are destroyed;

Before any one marketh it they perish for ever.

Is not their cord in them torn away?

They die, and not in wisdom.
Call now: is there any that will answer thee?
And to which of the holy ones wilt thou turn?
For grief killeth a fool,
And jealousy slayeth the simple.
I have seen a fool taking root,
And suddenly I cursed his habitation.
His sons are far from help,
And are crushed in the gate without deliverance;
Whose harvest the hungry one devoureth,
And taketh it off even out of a thorn-hedge,
And the thirsty swalloweth up their wealth.
For evil goeth not forth of the dust,
And trouble doth not sprout out of the ground;
But man is born to trouble,
As the sparks of flame make high their flight.
For my part, then, I would turn to God (El),
And to God (Elohim) would I commit my cause,
Who doeth great things and unsearchable,
Who giveth rain on the face of the earth,
And sendeth water on the face of the fields,
To set the low on high,
And raise up the mourning to prosperity.
He breaketh to pieces the devices of the crafty,

So that they can do nothing to purpose;

He taketh the wise in their craftiness,

And the counsel of the cunning is overturned.

By day they run against darkness,

And as in the night they grope at noon-day.

And He saveth the poor from the sword out of their mouth, And from the hand of the strong;

So there is hope to the poor,

And iniquity shutteth her mouth.

Lo, happy the man whom God correcteth:

Therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.

For He woundeth, and bindeth up,

He smiteth and His hands make whole.

In six troubles He will deliver thee,

And in seven no evil shall befall thee.

In famine He hath redeemed thee from death,

And in war from the hand of the sword.

In the scourge of the tongue thou art hidden,

And fearest not destruction when it cometh;

At destruction and at famine thou shalt laugh,

And thou shalt not be afraid before beasts of the earth. For with the stones of the field is thy covenant, And the wild beasts of the field are at peace with thee. And thou knowest that thy tabernacle [is] peace, And thou shalt oversee thy place and miss nothing.

And thou shalt know that thy seed [is] great,

And thine offspring as the green herb of the earth.

Thou shalt go to the grave in a full age,

As the heap of sheaves mounteth up in its season.

Lo, this we have searched out; so it [is];

Hear it and mark [it] well for thyself."

Such is the opening speech of the elder of the three interlocutors who henceforth proceed to sit in judgment on Job, and are successively answered by him. Unquestionably the gravest of them is Eliphaz, and this first utterance of his lets us into his character and style. Every word may be true in itself; all is said with the utmost dignity and force; yet it is misapplied and one-sided, and hence, in effect, erroneous as a whole. Eliphaz assumes that God at the present time is displaying His government, and exactly measures prosperity or adversity to men's deserts. This is false ground, and vitiates the application, especially to one like Job given up to be assailed by Satan, and tried to the end (not "the bitter," but the sweet) by God.

Hence, though the pious sage stands revealed in every sentiment, though ripe experience and moral grandeur are everywhere felt, though the spiritual and the natural worlds contribute their full quota to the argument, though the reproach is as yet mild, and the exhortation appears to be that of faithful friendship and earnest piety, there underlies it an assumption of conscious hidden guilt on Job's part, which could not but aggravate his grief, and which did not fail to call forth his too bitter resentment.

Eliphaz begins with a glance at Job's former profession of righteousness, but it is to reprove him for his actual

failure in endurance. Ignorant of himself, and feebly realizing the accumulated and overwhelming pressure on Job, he is honestly astounded at his outburst; and then lays down his law of present retribution, but rather to rouse him from his wild despair to the language of piety than to condemn him as impious. If godly fear was his, as Eliphaz trusted yet, why was it not his confidence? why was not the uprightness of his ways his hope? It is plain that Eliphaz was as ignorant as Job of the source, and character, and aim of the trial then going on. All he sees is the necessary triumph of righteousness, and the irretrievable ruin of the wicked; and this by figures taken not only from men, but the wildest of beasts crushed under God's hand.

Next Eliphaz sets forth in mysterious and awful style an oracle of the night, which impressed his own soul with the folly of earthly, sinful, weak, man's pretension to be more just than God by arraigning His dispensations.

In the beginning of Job 5 Eliphaz proceeds in a strain of deepening severity, and not without a claim of superior moral judgment. On whom could Job call, if not on God, against whom he was rather murmuring? For himself he saw the sudden and inevitable ruin of the prosperous fool and of all pertaining to him. Job should therefore accept his suffering from God, and turn to Him with supplication, who is not merely great beyond creature search, but bountiful, and this morally to the abject, as surely as He confounds the crafty and the strong. Eliphaz finally counsels submission to the chastening hand of God, who would surely deliver from all evil, and bless him with all good; and this in the name, not merely of himself, but of his friends, on whose entire agreement he reckons with assurance.

It is to be noticed that the Holy Ghost is pleased to endorse the language of Eliphaz, and this not merely in the earlier revelations but in the fullest light of the New Testament, as we may see in the apostle's use of it to the Corinthians and to the Hebrews. Indeed the issue in the book itself was the remarkable (and probably by himself unexpected) seal of the truth of his closing words, which no doubt at that time fell coldly on the ear and heart of the sufferer.

How natural it is, especially for those who believe in a present moral government of God, to look for a perfect manifestation of His mind in the maintenance of right and the judgment of wrong in the world as it is! No doubt this was strongest among the Jews, who might have expected it justly under the theocracy Jehovah was pleased to establish in their midst. But in truth it is a truth indigenous to every land, and common to all ages, and found in every circumstance and grade of life. Here the three friends of Job more and more yield to it, and Job, who suffered from his allowance of it, was kept from it mainly by the unswerving consciousness of his own integrity, but none the loss writhing under the inexplicable web of inflicted misery, the more poignantly felt because he never doubted that God somehow had to do with it all, and righteousness pleads that evil should be punished and good dwell in peace and honour. Who ever learns till he is taught of God that His children must wait in faith, and suffer patiently in the exercise and trial of their faith, till God has His rights in the return and reign of His Anointed? Then, and not before, shall we reign with Him.

Job 6, Job 7. - The Reply Of Job,

“And Job answered, and said,

O that my vexation were exactly weighed,

And my calamity raised in the scales together!

For now is it heavier than the sand of the seas,

Therefore do my words rave.

For the arrows of the Almighty are in me,

The poison of which my spirit drinketh up.2

The terrors of God array themselves against me.

Doth the wild ass bray by the fresh grass?

Doth an ox low over his fodder?

Is that which is tasteless eaten without salt?

Is there flavour in the white of an egg?

My soul refuseth to touch:

They are as the disease of my bread.

O that my request might come,

And that God would grant my longing,

That it might please God to destroy me,

That He would let loose His hand, and cut me off!

So would it ever be my comfort,

And I would exult if He in pain should not spare,

For I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

What is my strength that I should wait,

And what mine end that I should be patient?

Is my strength the strength of stones?

Is my flesh copper?

Truly is not the nothingness of help with me,

And substance driven away from me?

To the despairing there is gentleness from his friends,
Even to one forsaking the face of the Almighty.

My brethren have deceived as a torrent,

As the bed of torrents which overflow.

Turbid are they from ice;

The snow hideth itself in them:

What time heat cometh, they are cut off;

When it is hot, they are extinguished from their place.
Caravans,3 turn aside out of their way, They go up into the waste, and vanish.

The caravans of Tema looked,

The companies of Sheba hoped for them;

They were put to shame because one trusted,

They came up to it, and became red with shame.

For truly ye are become nothing,

Ye see a terror, and are dismayed.

Is it that I ever said, Give me,

And bring presents to me from your wealth,

And deliver me out of the enemy’s hand,

And redeem me out of the oppressor’s hand?

Teach me, and I will be silent,

And show me wherein I have erred.

How sweet are right words!
And what doth reproof from you reprove?
Think you to reprove words,
When the speeches of one despairing are but wind?
Ye would even let fall on the orphan,
And would traffic for your friend.
But now be pleased to face me,
And to your faces it will be if I lie.
Return, I pray, let there be no wrong;
Yea, return; I am still right therein.
Is there wrong in my tongue?
Doth not my palate discern calamities?
Hath not man a warfare on earth,
And are not his days as the days of a hireling?
As the slave panting after the shade,
And as the hireling longing for his wages.
So I am made to inherit months of wretchedness,
And nights of distress are appointed to me.
When I lie down, then I say,
When shall I arise, and the evening be gone?
And I am weary of restlessness till the dawn.
My flesh is clothed with worms and crusts of earth,
My skin healeth, and is again melted;
My days pass more swiftly than a shuttle,

And come to an end without hope.
Remember that my days are a breath,
Mine eye will not return to see good.
The eye of him that seeth me shall not see me;
Thine eyes [look] toward me: I am no more.
The cloud consumeth, and is gone;
So he that goeth down to Sheol cometh not up,
He returneth no more to his house;
His place knoweth him not again.
I also will not restrain my mouth,
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
Am I a sea, or a monster,
That Thou settest guard over me?
When I say, My bed shall comfort me,
My couch shall ease my complaint,
Then Thou shakest me with dreams,
And makest me tremble through visions of the night,
So that my soul chooseth strangling,
Death rather than these bones: I would not live on;
I loathe it: let me alone; my days are vanity.
What is man that Thou magnifiest him,
And that Thou settest Thy mind on him,
And that Thou visitest him every morning,

And every moment triest him?

How long dost not Thou look away from me,

Nor lettest me alone till I swallow my spittle?

I have sinned; what could I do to Thee?

Watcher of men, why makest Thou me Thy mark,

So that I am become a burden to myself?

And why dost not Thou pardon my transgression,

And put away my iniquity?

For now shall I lie in the dust,

And, if Thou seekest after me, I am no more."

Thus Job pleads for a fairer appraisal of his sore trial along with his random words. It was easy for others to moralize who were at ease, but as inevitable for him to cry out as for the beast without food. He owned the strokes to be from God, and only desired to be crushed, as his conscience was good. Hope for this life was gone. Such an one should have had pity from his friends, who had, on the contrary, played him false, as the wadys of the desert deceive in summer the caravans that count on them. Nor had he asked help of them, but was willing to learn if they could show his error, instead of cavilling at the wild words of one in despair. He asks an open judgment of his ways, and a lenient estimate of his complaints. When a man has served out as a soldier or slave, may he not retire? It was his grief that he could not, after unutterable days and nights of hopeless misery; yet was he but a wind or cloud, and as he thought of it, he must again speak in his anguish. Was he a sea, or sea-monster, so uncontrollable as to be allowed no respite, not even at night, from horrors enough to

make him prefer strangling, any death, rather than for such bones as his to live on? What was mortal man that God should make so much of him? and try him as he was tried unintermittingly? Grant that he had sinned; but why set him as a butt till he should pass away in sorrow?

How beautifully in contrast with Job's repining are Psalms 8 and 144, where a similar question brings out, in and by the Lord Jesus, wholly different answers. Yet the Lord passed into the glory of Son of man set over all things, through infinitely deeper suffering; as He will at length close man's feeble history by His coming in judgment to take the kingdom in power and glory before the universe. Job gives way to murmurs and complaints that God should take such notice of man in daily government: not so He, who was rejected by all, and tasted death for everything, whom now we see exalted above the heavens, and who will ere long judge all men when God gives the word.

Job 8 - First Discourse Of Bildad.

The second of the three friends takes up Job next. He is inferior to Eliphaz in calm dignity, and less temperate in his insinuations, because more prone to judge by the sight of his eyes and the experience of mankind, and so he rushes in where angels would fear to tread, as they gaze in awe at the wonderful ways of God. It was plain enough to him why Job and his house were punished.

And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said,

How long wilt thou recite these [things],

And the words of thy mouth [be] a strong wind?

Doth God pervert right,

And the Almighty pervert justice?

If thy children have sinned against Him,

And He hath cast them into the hand of their transgression; If thou seekest earnestly unto God, And makest supplication to the Almighty, If thou [wert] pure and upright, He would surely now wake up for thee, And restore the habitation of thy righteousness;

And though thy beginning were small,

Yet thy latter end would flourish greatly.

Inquire now of the former generation,

And give heed to the research of their fathers (For we [are of] yesterday, and know not, For our days on earth are a shadow);

Shall not they teach thee, say to thee,

And bring forth words out of their heart?

Doth the reed shoot up without mire?

Doth the flag4 spread out without water?

While yet in its greenness, it is not cut down,

Before all grass doth it dry up.

So [are] the ways of all that forget God,

And the hope of the polluted5 perisheth,

Whose confidence is cut off,

And his truth a spider’s house;

He leaneth on his house, but it standeth not,

He fasteneth on it, but it abideth not.

Green [is] he before the sun,

And his suckers run over his garden;

His roots are entwined over the stone-heap,

He looketh on a house of stone,

When he is swallowed out of its place,

Then will it deny him: I saw thee not.

Lo, this [is] the joy of his way,

And out of the dust sprout others;

Lo, God will not forsake a perfect [man],

Nor graspeth evil-doers by the hand,

Till He fill thy mouth with laughter,

And thy lips with shouting:

They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame,

And the tent of the wicked shall be no more.

Thus does Bildad more than hint, as his explanation of Job's sufferings, that his children had sinned and so brought down the divine displeasure. It must be so, he thought, for God would surely defend the right and punish iniquity. Instead therefore of bluster and complaint, let Job only turn with earnest supplication to God the Almighty, and he will soon find, provided he himself be pure, that prosperity from Him will crown his homestead, and his latter end flourish beyond the beginning. So it came to pass indeed, but by no means as Bildad conceived, who resorts to the wise saws of the ancients in support of strict retribution now at the hand of God. It is from no strength in itself that the papyrus lifts its head so high, but from the abundant mire in which it thrives its little day; and so with the flag or bulrush of the East, from mere and exceeding moisture,

not solid ground; and this is so true, that they do not decay slowly, like other plants, but are the first to wither without being cut down.

So it is with the wicked, both in their elevation and their ruin: the paths of all that forget God end thus surely and miserably, the hope of the impure is alike fleeting. The object of their confidence is no firmer than a spider's web, though he may cling to it ever so tenaciously. It has no more permanence than the rank weed which extends over a garden, and entwines its suckers in a stone-heap. But in vain. He may look on a house of stone, but is quickly destroyed, as a mere and mischievous cumberer of the ground, which denies him then as if it never saw him: yet though this is the joy of his way and the bitter end of godless prosperity, there is a succession of such men just as of such weeds; one springs up after another out of the dust, to pass away still more rapidly. If Job be really a perfect man, God will not cast him away (but neither does He grasp the hand of evil-doers) till He give him the amplest grounds for thankful praise, confound his enemies, and destroy the wicked for ever. But, as applied to the present case, there was no fellowship with God in Bildad's thoughts, no gracious consideration for the sufferer; and hence his judgment, being according to appearances, was unrighteous.

We need not be surprised that he could not anticipate the lessons which it was the object of God by this very book to teach; but a believer should not make haste, he should wait where he had not the assurance of His mind, least of all should he have put the worst construction possible on what he did not comprehend. This he did to the aggravation of Job's trial and to the provocation of his spirit, which again furnished an appearance of evil to

those who suspected evil; and thus the confusion was worse confounded and the true solution of all veiled in deeper darkness from their eyes. Does it seem ever to have occurred to the three friends that their wisdom would have been to pray rather than to talk, judge, and censure? Desiring to be law-teachers before the law, they like others since it understood neither what they said nor whereof they affirmed.

Job 9, Job 10. - The Answer Of Job.

What Bildad urged, Job admits might be and was true enough; yet he feels that not only his own first appeal to his friends for their pity had failed, but the real point was in no wise reached, while the suggestion of hidden sin was as false as it was uncharitable. He therefore deals unsparingly with their reasonings.

We can see how immense is the difference when the gospel reveals the righteousness of God. It is no longer the question, How shall man be just with God? It has been proved fully by the law, not to speak of the coming of Christ, that man has no righteousness for God; but now is revealed in the gospel God’s righteousness, and hence all on man’s part is excluded but faith, that it might be wholly grace on God’s part, though resting on the foundation of Christ’s suffering for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Therefore does the apostle say that in the gospel is revealed God’s righteousness from faith to faith. It is from faith, not from works of law, so that Jewish boasting is shut out; and it is to faith, so that the blessing of justification is equally open to the Gentile, as to the Jew, who believes. But this wondrous, present revelation of divine righteousness, justifying the believer who, so far from

having works to boast, openly confesses his own guilt and ruin, was still future, in due time predicted by the prophets as it was prefigured in the types of the law, but now preached in the gospel, proclaimed as a present thing to every one who believes, instead of being held out as a promise merely. Hence “we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith,” that is, not for righteousness or justification, but for the hope to which such righteousness entitles, even heavenly glory with Christ. But we must now return to the earlier questions.

And Job answered and said,

Verily I know that [it is] so,

But how shall mortal man be just with God?

If He desire to dispute with him,

He cannot answer Him one of a thousand:

Wise in heart, and mighty in strength!

Who hath held out against Him, and been unhurt?

He removeth mountains, and they know not

That He hath overturned them in His wrath;

He shaketh the earth out of its place,

And the pillars of it rock themselves;

He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not,

And He setteth a seal about the stars,

Spreading out the heavens Himself alone,

And treading on the heights of the sea,

Making Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades,

And the chambers of the south;
Doing great things past finding out,
And unravelling things past reckoning.
Lo, He passeth by me, and I see Him not.
And He glideth before me, and I perceive Him not.
Lo, He snatcheth away: who shall turn Him away?
Who saith to Him, What doest Thou?
God turneth not from His wrath:
The helpers of pride have stooped under Him.
How much less should I answer Him —
Choose out my words with Him?
Whom, though I were just, I would not answer;
For mercy would I plead with my Judge.
Though I had cited Him, and He had answered me,
I would not believe that He would listen to me,
For He bruiseth me with a storm,
And multiplieth my wounds without cause.
He suffereth me not to draw my breath,
But surfeiteth me with bitternesses.
If [I turn] to might, lo, [He is] strong,
If to judicial trial, who will cite me?
If I justify myself, my mouth would condemn me.
I perfect! He would prove me perverse.
I perfect! I should not know my own soul,

I should despise my life.

It [is] all one: therefore I said,

He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.

If the scourge slay suddenly,

He laugheth at the trial of the innocent.

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked,

The face of the judges He veileth:

If not then, who [is] he?

And my days are swifter than a runner,

They flee, they see not good;

They have swept past like6 skiffs of reed,

As an eagle swoopeth on the prey.

If I say, I will forget my plaint,

I will leave off my looks, and brighten up;

I shudder at all my sorrows,

I know that Thou wilt not hold me innocent.

For me, I am to be guilty! why labour I then in vain?

If I wash myself with snow-water,

And cleanse my hands with lye,

Then wouldest Thou plunge me in the ditch,

And mine own clothes would abhor me.

For [He is] not a man as I [that] I should answer Him.

Let us come together in judgment,

There is between us no arbiter,

Who might lay his hand on us both.

Let Him take His rod from off me,

And let not His terror frighten me;

I would speak, and not fear Him,

But not thus I with myself.

Job 10

My soul is weary of my life;

I will give way to my plaint,

I will speak in the bitterness of my soul,

I will say to God, Condemn me not;

Let me know why Thou contendest with me.

[Is it] good to Thee that Thou oppressest,

That Thou despisest the work of Thy hands,

And hast shone on the counsel of the wicked?

Hast Thou eyes of flesh?

Seest Thou as mortal man seeth?

[Are] Thy days as the days of mortal man?

[Are] Thy years as the days of a man,

That thou inquirest for my guilt,

And searchest after my sin,

Upon Thy knowledge that I am not guilty,

And that none can deliver out of Thy hand?

Thy hands have carved me, and fashioned me round about, And yet Thou destroyest me!

O remember now that as clay Thou formedst me,

And yet Thou bringest me back to dust!

Didst Thou not pour me out as milk,

And curdle me like cheese,

Clothe me with skin and flesh,

And fence me with bones and sinews?

Life and favour hast Thou shown me,

And Thy care hath preserved my spirit;

And these things hast Thou hid in Thy heart!

I know that this [was] with Thee.

If I should sin, Thou wouldest mark me,

And not in mine iniquity hold me guiltless.

If I be guilty, woe unto me!

And righteous, I durst not raise my head,

Filled with shame, and seeing my misery;

And should it hold itself up, as a lion Thou wouldest hunt me, And turn again, and act wondrously against me.

Thou wouldest renew Thy witnesses against me

And multiply Thy displeasure against me —

Reinforcements, and a host upon me.

Why then didst Thou bring me forth from the womb?

I might have expired, and no eye had seen me

I might have been as though I had not been;

I might have been borne from the belly to the grave.

[Are] not my days few? Let Him leave me

And put Himself from me, that I may brighten up a little, Before I go, and return not, To a land of darkness and death-shade, A land of gloom, like pitch-darkness itself, Death-shade, without order, And the shining like pitch-darkness itself.

Bildad had talked truisms as to God's dealing with the wicked and the righteous, but he had not faced the question how mortal man can have a standing of righteousness with God. For his own part he owned man's incapacity, and God's title to act according to His power, In fact, it was exactly what Job himself experienced when Jehovah put His questions to him at the close of the book. To dispute it is to court destruction. To impute his sufferings, therefore, to secret wickedness was ignorance of God's sovereign ways. For he turns from God's power in creation and providence to His overwhelming collision with feeble and failing man, who cannot so much as perceive Him as He sweeps by in His irresistible might.

If it be thus in the outer world, equally hopeless is the struggle morally, as Job proceeds next to show. How vain to think of a favourable issue in a suit with God! It would be derogatory to His glory to think that He could stoop to such a contest, or give hearing to a creature plea against His ways. Not only must He crush all opposition, but man's own mouth would condemn him, and himself be proved perverse. So he would not dare to think for himself of such a plea, but of crying out for mercy. For the dealings of God externally do not for the present discriminate among men. It is all one so far whether men are guilty or blameless. Job grows bolder and says it out, though his piety still withholds the name of God, as in verses 22 et seqq., as he shrank from seeming to

arraign His government of the world. But he does speak bitterly of His patience while judgment lingers, as if mocking at the trial of the innocent. This is what no saint should draw from His permission of wrong and sorrow for a little while. But there is no denying that He veils the faces of judges, the wicked being in the highest seats of the world's authority: if not so, who is it? Can Bildad or Eliphaz contradict the fact, or leave God out of it?

But Job felt that he need not go beyond his own case. God does afflict the blameless as well as the wicked. Job's days had slipped away so that he had scarce tasted what good is: no runner on land, no light skiff on the waters, nor eagle in the air, faster than they; and not this merely, but with painful dread that He could if He would hold him as guilty. Efforts at cheerfulness were therefore as vain for him as endeavours to cleanse himself with the most efficacious detergents. It is not that his conscience was bad; but he sees that, if God enters into judgment with His servant, no man living can be justified. His light would detect every fault, so that the clothes would shrink with horror from the wearer. Job therefore yearns after an umpire or mediator between God and man, who might lay his hands on both, instead of being left in his weakness and failings before the awful and inflexible and withering judgment of a Being so infinitely removed from him. If He would only remove His rod, he would not fear to speak; but he could not in his actual state.7 What could Job do then, but complain and deprecate God's condemnation of him, without knowing why He so contended, while He shone on the counsel of the wicked? It was the harder to understand, as God was not blind or fleeting like man,

needed no inquisition for sin, and knew the innocence of the sufferer, who could not escape and yet was His own curiously elaborated creature, preserved from first to last as if for these things, inevitably doomed right or wrong, and afraid to assert the right, lest it should provoke worse. Why, if not removed from birth, was there not some respite before going to the land of darkness? But in this grievous expostulation against God, it will be, as it has been, remarked, that Job addresses and entreats God, even while he is as unjust toward God as he thinks God unjust toward him. He had yet to learn the pitifulness and tender mercy of God, spite of and above Satan's malice, though the day was not yet come for the Only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father to declare the God whom no man has seen, and as the Son of man to glorify God, even as to sin, in the cross, whereon He also bore our sins who believe. How little we appreciate the value of the true light that now shines!

Job 11 - First Discourse Of Zophar.

The third speaker now advances, who manifests the least knowledge of himself or consideration for Job, and therefore yields forthwith to a more violent tone of censure.

And Zophar, the Naamathite, answered and said,

Shall not the multitude of words be answered?

And shall a man of lips be justified?

Thy babbling puts men to silence:

And thou mockest, and no one saith, Shame!

And thou art to say, My doctrine [is] pure,

And I am clean in Thine eyes!
But O that God would indeed speak,
And open His lips against thee,
And make known to thee the secrets of wisdom,
That they are doubled by inspection,
And God remitteth to thee of thine iniquity.
Canst thou, searching, find out God?
Canst thou the Almighty find out to perfection?
Heights of heaven, what canst thou do?
Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?
Longer than the earth [is] its measure,
And broader than the sea.
If He pass by, and arrest,
And gather together, who can hinder Him?
For He knoweth men of vanity,
And seeth wickedness without considering [it].
But empty man would be wise,
Yet is man born a wild ass’s colt.
If thou direct thy heart,
And spread out thy hands to Him;
If iniquity [be] in thy hand, put it far away,
And let not evil dwell in thy tents;
For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot,
And shalt be stedfast without fearing.

For thou shalt forget trouble,

Shalt remember [it] as waters passed away;

And the future shall arise brighter than noonday;

Thou shalt soar — shalt be as the morning.

And thou shalt trust, because there is hope,

And thou shalt search, thou shalt rest securely,

And thou shalt lie down, and none shall cause trembling,
And many shall caress thy face.

But the eyes of the wicked waste,

And refuge vanisheth away from them,

And their hope [is] a breathing out of the soul.

Thus Zophar gives Job credit for nothing beyond a multitude of words and idle talk. The unanswerable grounds against their hypothesis of strict present retribution were to him only babbling, and the bold affirmation that the wicked are allowed of God to prosper in this world seemed but a mockery of those who really could not answer, whatever their replies. He yields to great irritation because of Job’s assertion of his soundness in the faith and in his life, and only desired that God would speak as Job had ventured to ask as little as any expecting that interposition which He was about to vouchsafe, not only for them, but for our sakes. Zophar had not a doubt what the sentence would be. He had not learnt that we should not judge, lest we be judged, and that our judgments do really judge ourselves: if solid and gracious, proving that we dwell in God, as dwelling in love, and walking according to light; if harsh, in the like degree manifesting how far we are governed by thoughts and feelings which have no source

higher than self. Job would find, he was sure, that the secrets of wisdom are doubled by looking in, and that God did not exact of him what his iniquity deserved: he held to the gravest fears of his friend.

Next, Zophar descants grandly on the absolute and infinite perfection of God. The heights of heaven, the depths of hell, the length of the earth, the breadth of the sea, fail to measure His wisdom. How disastrous for man to stand before Him, were He to institute proceedings, as Job had so rashly challenged. How soon he would find out the folly of his wisdom, let his heart vie in obstinacy with that of a wild ass!

Finally, Zophar exhorts to supplication and repentance as the only door of escape for Job, but a sure opening into a bright and prosperous and secure life, if he would avoid the inevitable doom of the wicked.

In all this, it is plain, that as the ground of peace was feebly seen, so the reality and the nature of God's righteous government of His own was not at all understood. Ignorance in a saint is not wonderful; but it is sad when one forgets the need of light from above and dares to judge anything before the time, until the Lord come, who shall also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of hearts, when each shall have his praise from God.

Job 12 - 14. - The Answer Of Job.

And Job answered, and said,

Truly ye [are] the people,

And wisdom shall die with you.

But I have a heart as well as you,

I do not sink beneath you:

And with whom [are] not such things as these?

A mockery to his neighbours am I,

One calling on God, and He heard him:

The just, upright, one a mockery!

For misfortune scorn,8 in the thoughts of the secure,

[Is] ready, for those that slide with the feet.

To the spoilers are the tents at peace,

And those who provoke God have security —

He who causeth God to enter into his hand.

But ask now even the beasts — they can teach thee —

And the fowl of the heavens, and it will declare to thee,
Or think on the earth, and it shall teach thee, And fishes of the sea shall tell out to thee:

Who doth not know by all these

That the hand of Jehovah hath done this?

In whose hand [is] the soul of every living thing,

And the spirit of all flesh of men?

Doth not the ear try words,

As the palate tasteth food for itself?

Among the aged [is] wisdom,

And in length of days understanding.

With Him [are] wisdom and might,

He hath counsel and understanding.

He breaketh down, and it is not built up.

He shutteth up on man, and it is not opened.
Lo, He restraineth the waters, and they dry up;
And He sendeth them forth, and they overturn the land.
With Him [are] strength and wisdom,
His the deceived and the deceiver,
Leading counsellors away spoiled,
And judges He maketh foolish;
The band of kings He looseth,
And bindeth a girdle on their loins.
He leadeth priests away spoiled,
And overthroweth the strong.
He removeth the lips of the trusted,
And taketh away the tact of the aged.
He poureth contempt upon princes,
And looseth the girdle of the mighty.
He discovereth deep things out of darkness,
And bringeth out to light death-shade.
He magnifieth nations, and destroyeth them,
He leadeth out nations, and leadeth them in.
He taketh away the heart
Of the chief of the people of the land,
And He causeth them to wander
In a wilderness — no way.
They grope in the dark without light,

And He maketh them wander as a drunkard.

Job 13

Lo, mine eye hath seen all,

Mine ear hath heard and understood.

What ye know, I know also,

I do not sink beneath you.

But I will speak to the Almighty,

And I desire to plead with God;

But ye [are] forgers of lies,

Physicians of no value [are] ye all.

O that ye would altogether be silent,

And it would become your wisdom.

Hear now my reproof,

And attend to the pleadings of my lips.

For God do ye speak wickedly,

And for Him do ye talk deceit?

Will ye lift up His countenance?

Will ye contend for God?

Is it well that He should search you out?

Or deceive ye Him, as one man deceiveth another?

He will surely reprove you, if ye secretly accept persons.
Doth not His excellency terrify you, And His dread fall upon you?

Your maxims [are] proverbs of ashes,

Your bulwarks, bulwarks of clay!

Be silent from me, and I speak;
And let pass over me what [will].
Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in my hand?
Lo, He will slay me, yet will I trust Him;9
But my ways to His face I will argue.
This also will be my salvation,
That no polluted one shall come before Him.
Hear, O hear, my declaration
And my utterances with your ears.
Lo, now, I have ordered my cause,
I know that I shall be justified.
Who is he [that] will contend with me?
Then indeed I would be silent, and expire.
Only two things do not Thou to me:
Then will I not hide myself from Thee.
Thy hand put far off from me,
And let not Thy terror terrify me.
Then call Thou, and I will answer,
Or let me speak, and answer Thou me.
How many my iniquities and sins!
My transgression and my sin make me know.
Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face,
And regardest me as an enemy to Thee?

Wilt Thou terrify a driven leaf,
And wilt Thou pursue dry stubble?
For Thou writest for me bitter things,
And makest me inherit the iniquities of my youth;
And puttest my feet in the stocks,
And watchest all my paths,
On the soles of my feet Thou cuttest;
And he as a rotten thing consumeth,
As a garment which the moth hath eaten.

Job 14

Man, born of woman,
Is of few days, and full of trouble,
Cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down,
And he fleeth as a shadow, and abideth not,
And on such an one Thou openest Thine eyes!
And me dost Thou bring into judgment with Thee?
Who giveth a clean out of an unclean thing?
Not one!
If his days are determined,
The number of his months with Thee,
Thou hast set his bound which he shall not pass.
Look away from him that he may rest,
That he may enjoy as a hireling his day.
For there is hope for a tree if it be cut down,

That it will shoot again, and its sprout fail not,
Though its root wax old in the earth,
And its stump die in the dust:
Through the scent of water it flourisheth,
And putteth forth like a young plant.
But man dieth, and is prostrate,
And man expireth, and where is he?
Waters roll away from a sea,
And the stream becometh waste and dry,
So man lieth down, and riseth not:
Till the heavens [be] no more, they wake not,
Nor are roused out of their sleep.
O that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol,
Hide me till the turning of Thine anger,
Appoint me a set time, and then remember me!
If a man die, shall he live?
All the days of my warfare would I wait
Till my exchange should come.
Thou wouldest call, and I would answer Thee:
After the work of Thine hands Thou yearnest.
But now Thou numberest my steps:
Watchest Thou not over my sins?
My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And thou sewest up mine iniquity.

And yet a falling mountain decayeth,

And a rock is removed from its place,

Waters wear away stones,

Its floodings sweep away the soil of the earth,

And Thou destroyest the hope of man,

To the last Thou overpowerest him, and he goeth;

Thou changest his face, and sendest him away.

His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not;

And they are abased, and he perceiveth it not;

But his flesh in him hath pain, and his soul in him mourneth.

Thus the sufferer is provoked to treat the language of his friends, especially Zophar's, with sarcasm, and to defend his own ground as sounder than theirs. He feels how empty were their truisms as applied to his peculiar case, and how his rejection of them was driving themselves to the harshest judgment of his trials. It was an upturning of all right that he should be a jeer to his friends — one that called on God, and was heard by Him, just and upright, yet mocked! But it was the world's way, dwelling at ease themselves, to have scorn ready for the unfortunate, a fresh shove for such as have begun to slide; or, if the alternative be right, they may be glad in their hour of trouble of a lantern despised when all seems easy. But Job reiterates with boldness his counter-proposition, that in the world as it is, not the pious but the rapacious have safe tabernacles, and that none enjoy for the time more security than those that provoke God, who nevertheless seems to fling blessings without stint into their hand. They might argue as they pleased, but

facts were opposed everywhere; even in the animal kingdom a similar principle reigns. The beasts, the birds, the fishes, tell the same tale, and Jehovah's hand has done this. (Compare Isa. 41:20)

Yes, the mystery of God's permission of evil remains. The mystery of His will is another thing, revealed now, not then, and only to be manifested at the coming of the Lord, when all things shall be gathered in one under His Headship. (Eph. 1:9,10) It is not yet the time to order all as the expression of His will, though He is the maker and sovereign disposer of all. Undoubtedly experience has its place, as each has his own measure of discrimination which should profit by length of days; but there are no laws discoverable or possible to bind God, in whom alone is perfect wisdom and power in providence. There are laws which He has imprinted on all above our eyes and below our feet, and around us; but the highest, truest law of all, if law it should be called, is that God is free, not bound, to act, free to act as and when He will. So He acts with man as with the elements, with the more and the less wicked, with counsellors, and judges, and kings, with priests, and heroes, and senators, with whole nations, reduced or aggrandized, with their chiefs infatuated to utter ruin. God is sovereign.

Such was the result of Job's observations, and they could not deny its justice. But he preferred having to do with God, as to his sorrows, rather than with such sophists as they had shown themselves to be — worthless physicians, quacks, to whom he would prescribe silence, which might pass for wisdom. They had assumed to speak for God, but was it right to speak dishonestly or presumptuously? God did not want their favour any

more than their fallacies. When their time came to be searched out, they would adopt very different language. Their zeal for God was according to neither knowledge nor conscience; and their confusion and dread must result from His intervention, as the issue proved. Their apothegms were of ashes, their bulwarks (hardly "bodies," as in English Version) of clay: a fresh reason why they should hold their peace, and leave him to have all out with God, desperate as it might seem, and come what would. But His slaying him was not what he dreaded; his conscience was good, and he would defend his ways before Him. That no hypocrite, none polluted, comes into His presence was a pledge of salvation to him, not a source of dismay. He calls attention to his demand earnestly and forcibly, assured of his innocence, and not refusing to die if deserving it; but he deprecates two things before the decision of the cause: first, that God would remove His hand from him; and, secondly, that He crush him not with His majesty. He desired to know what the iniquities were, why God hid His face and dealt so bitterly with him, that his body was perishing under the utmost pain and ignominy.

This leads him to a more general view of man's sad and frail estate, but still expressly with his own case before his eyes. (Job 14:3) If the fountain were corrupt, one need not wonder at the foulness of its stream. Since his brief allotted space is all in God's hands, why not look away, and give him a little respite, that he may enjoy as a hireling his day? And the more, as life on earth closes for man hopelessly, though a tree cut down may sprout again, while, like waters that fail and dry up, man lies down, and rises no more while the heavens abide. He speaks of "man" for this world, and nothing can really

be conceived more exact. It was not the time or place to introduce the special blessedness of the first resurrection, which we shall find has its echo elsewhere in this book. Every scripture is given by inspiration, and consistent with every other.

Job then returns to the expression of his desire that God would secrete him in the grave till His anger was turned away, appoint him a time, and then remember him. If a man die, shall he live? Job was the very reverse of a sceptic. He looks for his time of renovation or exchange, and does not doubt at bottom God's yearning after the work of His hands. Man is surely to live again; spirit, and soul, and body, he will be renewed. But this contrast which he believes throws him back on the, to him, inexplicable trials he was experiencing, and he yields to a fresh torrent of feeling as he dwells on the ruin of man under the eye and hand of God, so completely that, whether his son comes to honour or nothingness, he is none the wiser, the only thing known being his own pain outwardly and inwardly.

Job 15 - Second Discourse Of Eliphaz.

The second series of discussion now opens with the appeal of Eliphaz, who lets out with less reserve the increasing sense his soul had that Job must lack integrity. As before, there is weighty truth in what he urges, and it is urged with great force; but the application to the sufferer was groundless, and therefore unjust in the last degree.

And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

Will a wise man answer with windy knowledge,

And fill his belly with the east wind,

Arguing with speech that availeth not,
And with words in which is no profit?
Yea, thou makest void the fear of God,
And diminishest devotion before God.
For thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,
And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty;
Thy mouth condemneth thee, and not I,
And thine own lips testify against thee.
[Wast] thou born the first man,
And wast thou brought forth before the hills?
Didst thou listen in the councils of God,
And dost thou reserve wisdom to thyself?
What knowest thou that we know not?
[What] understandest thou that [is] not with us?
Also among us [is] the hoary, and the aged,
Richer in days than thy father.
[Are] the consolations of God too small for thee,
And a word in gentleness with thee?
Why doth thine heart carry thee away,
And why do thine eyes wink,
That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest words go out of thy mouth?
What [is] man that he should be clean,
And one born of woman that he should be righteous?

Behold, in His holy ones He trusteth not,

And the heavens are not clean in His eyes;

How much less the abominable and corrupt,

Man, that drinketh iniquity like water!

I will show thee: hear me;

And what I have seen I will relate,

Which wise men have declared

And have not hid, from their fathers,

To whom alone the land was given,

And through the midst of whom no stranger passed.

All the days of the wicked he is in torment,

And the number of years is laid up for the oppressor.

The voice of terrors [is] in his ears;

In peace the destroyer falleth on him.

He despaireth of returning from the darkness,

And he is marked out for the sword.

He wandereth for bread: where [is it]?

He knoweth that ready at his hand is a day of darkness. Trouble and anguish make him afraid, They overpower him, as a king ready for the onset.

For against God he stretched out his hand,

And against the Almighty played the hero,

Ran against Him with neck (proudly),

With the thick bosses of his shields.

For he covereth his face with his fatness,

And gathereth fat on [his] loins:

And he inhabiteth desolate cities,

Houses that no man dwelleth in,

Which are destined for heaps.

He becometh not rich, and his wealth endureth not,

Nor doth his substance extend in the earth.

He escapeth not from darkness:

A flame withereth his shoots,

And he passeth away by the breath of his mouth.

Let him not trust in vanity; he is deceived;

For vanity shall be his recompense;

Before his day10 it is fulfilled,

And his branch is not green;

He shaketh off like a vine his grapes,

And casteth down like an olive his blossoms.

For the company of the polluted [is] barrenness,

And fire devoureth the tents of bribery;

They conceive misery, and bring forth vanity,

And their womb prepareth deceit.

Thus we see that Eliphaz arraigns Job of that moral folly which forgets the presence and light of God, by haughty words blinding others to what God was judging, underneath the fair appearance of his life. He charges his language with worse than bluster, for he sees in it that which was calculated to turn souls aside from the fear of God; and thus Job, in his opinion, was self-

condemned. To deny God's present retribution, Eliphaz thought, was to undermine confidence in His ways, and to encourage men to all lawlessness. It was not only conscious guilt talking with the air of offended innocence, but in this venturing to shake the foundations of God's government. (Vers. 1-6.)

Then he proceeds to tax Job with the grossest assumption of superiority in wisdom, without the least ground for it. To allow himself in such contempt of others, Job ought to be the first man, yea, born before the hills, and an assessor in the council of Eloah, conscious of secrets which were confined to his own heart. This Eliphaz gravely doubts, and challenges Job to prove the reality of his claim, putting in a plea for himself and his friends as unworthily set at nought, instead of having the honour due to age and experience. Indeed it was not of this merely that he complained; for if it was wrong to despise elders, how much more to speak of God as they had just heard! and this from a man who should remember his own corrupt nature and ways, and the holy majesty of God, before whom the heavens are not clean, and the holy ones beneath His confidence.

Finally Eliphaz proceeds to set before Job what mature and incorrupt wisdom had found true from the beginning, before the voice of strangers had imported those sophistications of which they had heard too much. The wicked man has an internal tormenter in his own conscience even now, which does not fail to embitter his brief allotted time. He is ever foreboding death in life, want in abundance. The voice of alarm never deserts his ears. In peace the destroyer is invading him; and, if darkness encompass him, he has no hope of emerging,

he knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand, full of anguish and distress, even though he plays the hero against God, and rushes on Him as if he could fight it out. But God is not mocked, and the end, if it tarry, comes; so he who thus braved God inhabits places given over to desolation, and his possessions vanish away, and darkness envelopes him, and flame devours his suckers, and himself departs by a blast from God's mouth.

Thus awfully does Eliphaz describe the hollow prosperity, the actual wretchedness, and the inevitable destruction of the godless. As God was not feared, vanity is the impress stamped on all. A man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions, and they that set their mind on them must learn their vanity in the day of trial. They may promise like the palm, or the vine, or the olive; but all is vain. Barrenness shall be the portion of him and his, and judgment consumes the tabernacles greedy after evil gain. It is but to conceive misery, and bring forth vanity, and frame deception.

Job 16, Job 17. - The Answer Of Job.

And Job answered and said,

I have heard many such things,

And comforters of distress [are] ye all.

Are windy words at an end?

Or what vexeth11 thee that thou answerest?

I also could speak like you,

If your soul were instead of my soul,

I could weave words against you,

And shake my head at you;

With my mouth I could strengthen you,
And the commiseration of my life could assuage.
If I speak my pain is not assuaged,
And if I forbear, what departeth from me?
Surely now He hath exhausted me,
Thou hast desolated all my company, and bound me;
It became a witness, and rose up against me,
My leanness accuseth me to the face;
His wrath hath torn and warred on me;
He hath gnashed on me with his teeth;
Mine enemy whetteth his eyes on me.
They gaped at me with their mouth,
With reproach they smote my cheeks.
They strengthen themselves together against me.
God hath shut me up to the unrighteous,
And thrown me over into the hand of the wicked.
I sat at ease, and He smashed me,
And seized me by the neck, and dashed me,
And set me as a mark for Himself;
His arrows12 compassed me about;
He cleaveth my reins, and spareth not.
He poureth out my gall on the ground.
He breaketh me breach upon breach,
He runneth upon me like a warrior.

I have sewed sackcloth on my skin,
And stuck my horn into the dust.
My face is red with weeping,
And on mine eyelids [is] death-shade,
Though no violence [is] in my hands,
And my prayer [is] pure.
O earth, cover thou not my blood,
And let my cry have no place.
Even now, behold, my witness [is] in the heavens,
And my testifier in the heights.
My mockers [are] my friends;
Mine eye poureth out to God,
That He would decide for the man with God,
As a son of man for his friend;
My years of number come,13
And I go the way I shall not return.

Job 17

My spirit is broken, my days are extinct,
For me the graves!
Truly14 mockeries [are] with me,
And mine eye dwelleth on their contention.
Deposit, I pray Thee, be surety for me with Thyself:
Who else would strike hands with me?
For their heart Thou hast hid to understanding,

Therefore Thou wilt not exalt [them].
He that delivereth friends for a spoil,
The eyes of his children shall waste away.
And He hath set me as a bye-word of people,
And I am one to be spit on in the face.
Mine eye also is dim with sorrow,
And all my frame a shadow.
Upright [men] will be amazed at this,
And the guiltless stirred up against the ungodly.
But the righteous shall hold on his way,
And the clean of hands increase in strength.
But as for you all, return now, and come on;
Yet I find not a wise one among you.
My days are gone, my plans are broken —
The possessions of my heart.
Night they put for day, light near
Out of the face of darkness!
If I wait, Sheol [is] my house,
I have spread my bed in the darkness,
To corruption I have cried, Thou [art] my father,
To the worm, My mother and my sister.
Where then now [is] my hope?
Yea, my hope, who beholdeth it?
To the bars of Sheol it goeth down,

When at the same time [is] rest on the dust.

Patient as Job proved, he does not spare the obstinacy of his friends, who could not make good, and who would not retract, their uncharitable inferences. Hence he begins his second reply to Eliphaz with a sharp complaint at their threadbare comments. Consolation there was none, only trouble extreme, in the words of them all. Hence he longed for an end of words of no more weight than the wind. It would be better to answer calmly, if they must speak, and not with the sharpness of vexation. Were it possible for them to stand in his stead, he could say at least as cutting words, and shake his head quite as tryingly. With his mouth he could strengthen them and assuage with lip-consolation.

But here he arrests himself; his pain was none the less if he spoke; and if he forbore, what left him? He recurs to his deepest grief. If he could only look up, and find Him all brightness and love! But it was not so. He had fairly tired him out with afflictions, desolated all his circle, and tied himself up. His bodily state, his emaciation, testified against him openly. He was torn as by a wild beast with every mark of cruel unsparing wrath, teeth gnashing, eyes sharpened, mouth gaping. Thus did his enemies smite his cheeks with reproach, and muster in full force against him. God, he says plainly, had shut him up to the perverse man, and turned him over into the hand of the wicked. Nothing can exceed the graphic power with which he describes his troubles: out of ease seized by the neck, and smashed and broken in pieces, and set up as a mark to smite, with arrows whirring round, and his reins split unsparingly, and his gall poured to the earth, broken by breach upon breach, as could not but be if such a warrior ran upon him; so that he was brought

down to the last degree of misery, as well as degradation, grief upon grief, and with nothing save the shadow of death before his eyelids, though no violence stained his hand, and his prayer was pure.

Job therefore calls on the earth not to hide his blood, (his life then, as it were, poured out, that it might stand forth to open vision), and to the same end that his cry should find no place to rest in here below, but go straight on high. Therefore his eye turned upward, and he speaks in confident faith that, spite of his inexplicable, or rather as yet unexplained, calamities, his witness is in heaven, even God Himself, to testify on his behalf in those high places. From his friends, who were but mockers, through total misapprehension of the case and haste to judge him, rather than own their ignorance, he can but weep out his sorrow and supplication to God. Such seems to be the simplest way of translating and understanding the language, which is far from easy; instead of taking as a plural of excellency in the sense of “interpreter;” and thus rendering it, “My interpreter is my friend,” etc., and applying all throughout to God, who knows all, and will not distort or misconceive anything, whatever the present may convey to those who look at the surface. There is certainly in any rendering the looking for God to plead as well as judge: which it is strange that any Christian should think said by Job “with melancholy quaintness,” instead of seeing in it a singular longing after that which was more fully realised in the mediation of Christ with God, a man for men, and God with God. But truth, to be prized and really known, must first be learned in the soul’s guilt and need, not by the flickering lamp of the scholar. It was so assuredly that Job was uttering this striking

anticipation of what every believer learns through the Holy Spirit, but in his own deep wants as laid bare humblingly before God. Vindication in this life Job did not expect; but grace was yet to give, as it gives us too, more than faith looks for. For faith is in us, though of God, and has its measure; grace is in Him, free, unmixed, and unlimited.

In Job 17, which of course carries on the same line as the close of Job 16, Job speaks of what he could not but expect naturally under such a pressure of overwhelming blows and piercing stabs. His spirit was broken, the light of his days gone out, the graves before him. There is obscurity in the next clause, mainly from the opening words, which, taken as “if not,” imply that, unless he were mistaken, he was subject to the strangest illusions, and these so pertinaciously present, that his eye could dwell on nothing else. But others understand the sense to be a form of asseveration. “Truly mockery is with me [that is, speaking of the effort to make him, a dying man, confess what he knew was unfounded, and only existing in their evil surmisings], and on their quarrelling, or pertinacity, mine eye dwelleth.” Job therefore entreats of God to engage and be surety for him with Himself: who else would strike hands with him? His friends had proved themselves morally incompetent, and He who had closed their heart to understanding would not exalt them. If one betrays his friends to be spoiled, the eyes of his children shall pine away. But however he himself might now be a bye-word, and openly an object of insult, his eye dim through grief and his whole frame a shadow, upright men should yet be amazed at this, and the guiltless roused against the ungodly, but the righteous

should hold fast on their way, and the man of clean hands increase in strength.

Finally, Job bids them come on again, though satisfied of their total lack of spiritual understanding. He had made up his mind for death, as well as the utter dissolution of his every cherished plan. His friends might hold out fresh and bright anticipations on his repentance, putting night for day, and light near out of very darkness; whereas, if he was to hope, the grave was his house, and his bed spread in darkness, corruption and the worm his nearest of kin. Where, then, was his hope? Yea, his hope, who sees it? He sees none other than descending to the grave, where they should rest together on the dust. How blessedly in contrast with such gloomy words of a saint is the strong encouragement we possess, having fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and entering into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, Jesus, made an high priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec!

Job 18 - Bildad’s Second Discourse.

Bildad, who is ever brief, retorts on the copious and impassioned answers of Job, not only as contemptuous towards his friends, but as altogether vain in the effort to justify himself, while evidently an object of divine displeasure and judgment for concealed evil. Did he alone constitute an exception to the invariably righteous government of God? If not, why such a volume of words, and why such vehement invectives? Divine judgment, however, would take its way none the less surely and awfully for universal warning.

And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said,

How long will ye make a hunt for15 words?

Consider, and afterwards we will speak.

Why are we accounted as cattle,

Stopped up [that is, stupid] in your eyes?

He teareth his soul in his anger:

Shall the earth be forsaken for thee,

And shall a rock be removed out of its place?

Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,

And the flame of his fire shall not shine.

The light in his tabernacle shall be dark,

And his lamp shall be put out with him.

The steps of his strength shall be straitened,

And his own counsel shall cast him down.

For by his feet is he driven into a net,

And he walketh over the meshes;

The trap seizeth on his heel;

The snare prevaileth over him;

His cord [is] hidden in the earth,

And his trap upon the pathway.

Terrors shall terrify him around,

And scare him at his footsteps.

His calamity16 [is] hungry,

And destruction [is] ready at his side.

The first-born of death devoureth the parts of his skin —
Devoureth his parts.

His confidence shall be torn out of his tent,

And shall march him off to the king of terrors;

There shall dwell in his tent what [is] not his;

On his dwelling shall sulphur be scattered.

Beneath, his roots shall be dried up,

And above, his branch shall be cut off.

His memorial shall perish from the earth,

And he shall have no name on the plain.

They shall drive him from light into darkness,

And shall chase him from the world.

No shoot nor sprout shall he have among his people,

And no escaped one in his dwellings.

At his day they of the west will be astonished,

And they of the east take fright.

Surely so the dwellings of the wicked,

And this the place of [him that] knoweth not God.

Thus keenly does Bildad cleave to his severe impression of Job's state before God, formed by the (to him) irresistible evidence of divine judgments, which had swept away all his prosperity, his family, his health, and left him a prey to agonizing sorrows and conflicts in his soul. How could any reasonable man question more than he that God had a controversy with Job, who was suffering only as he deserved, as surely as God is just? He therefore felt no small vexation at the continuance of a controversy when the case was really and unanswerably plain. It was only Job's contemptuous self-

assurance that could evade for a moment the force of their reasoning. Let Job be as violently restive as he may, he will find out in the end that, as they are not to be counted cattle for stupidity, so the moral government of God is as immovable as the course of the earth, or the stubborn rock. What a man sows he reaps: if evil, ruin; if good, blessing. But of the latter Bildad has not a word to say. Did he know what grace works through faith? Faith can not only remove the rock, but cast a mountain into the sea.

Of this Bildad knew little or nothing. He only thinks of the deep wickedness, whatever the fair outside, which had drawn down on Job such unparalleled misery from God. So, in forcible figures, he sets out the extinction of all light in the ungodly, when the flame of his fire should shine no more, and the lamp over him should go out. No effects should extricate, but rather involve him more; and not rashness, but his own counsel, plunge him in utter ruin. No craft avails, but ensnares, him that trusts himself instead of God; and hence his own feet send him into the net, and he walks over the meshes, heedless of what is underneath. The trap, the snare, the cord, meet him wherever he turns; terrors alarm him on every side, and dog his footsteps. His calamity, instead of being satiated, is hungry for more; and destruction, or a heavy load of suffering, is at his side, ready to weigh him down. Deadly disease — death's first-born — is already devouring the parts of his skin — devouring, more than the skin, the parts themselves. In short, all that makes his tent bright, in the present or in prospect, is torn out, and he has to march off to the king of terrors.

Nor does the blast of God stop with the evil-doer; but, extending far and long beyond himself, it hangs over his

memory, and pursues his descendants. Hence there dwells in his tent that which shall not be his own, and over his habitation sulphur is scattered. Nothing but withers above ground, and all underneath dries away. Neither in the settled parts of the earth does his memorial stand, nor has he a name in the wilderness, but he is an outlaw from the habitable world, consigned from light to darkness, with no sprout nor shoot remaining among his people, not one escaped in his dwellings. The desolation is complete; so much so, that they of the west are astounded on account of his day; and they of the east take fright; unless, with some ancients and moderns, we take these words as descriptions, not of place, but time, and so understand “posterity” and “ancestors.” But it is hard to see how “ancestors” could be horrified, though we can readily think of “posterity” being astonished. Bildad concludes his answer with the assurance that only thus does it befall the dwellings of the wicked, and thus the place of him that knows not God. The application, in his mind, is as obvious as it is mistaken; the abstract truth abides, and has its own just place.

Job 19 - The Answer Of Job.

None can wonder that the strong language was extremely wounding to him whose integrity was not only questioned, but regarded as the cover of mere godless hypocrisy, and his sufferings as the precursor of a destruction without remedy. His rejoinder shows, however, that if Job felt the solemn warning to be not only beside the mark but impertinent and cruel, he rises completely above the atmosphere of his self-constituted judges, owns the hand of God in all his sorrows without

reserve, looks for final vindication, and most gravely admonishes those who misjudged him.

And Job answered and said,

How long will ye vex my soul,

And crush me to pieces with words?

These ten times ye reproach me,

And are not ashamed to stun me;

And, after all, if I have erred,

With me doth mine error lodge.

If indeed ye boast against me,

And argue my reproach against me,

Know now that God hath wrested me,

And compassed me round with His net.

Lo, I cry of violence, and am not heard,

I call out, but [there is] no justice.

He hath hedged my way that I cannot pass,

And hath set darkness on my paths.

He hath stripped me of my glory,

And hath taken the crown of my head.

He ruineth me on every side, and I am going;

And my hope He uprooteth like a tree.

He kindleth His anger against me,

And He regardeth me as His enemies.

His troops come together, and heap up their way against me, And encamp round about my tabernacle.

My brethren He put far away from me,

And mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

My kinsmen have ceased, and my confidants have forgotten me. Guests of my house, and my maid, count me a stranger, A foreigner I am become in their eyes.

I call to my servant, but he answereth not;

With my mouth I make supplication to him.

My breath is strange to my wife,

And my entreaties for the children of my body.

Even youngsters despise me; I rise, and they speak of me. All my intimates abhorred me, and those I loved turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and my flesh;

And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.

Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends,

For the hand of God hath stricken me.

Why do ye persecute me as God,

And are ye not satisfied with my flesh?

O17 that my words were but written!

O18 that they were but inscribed in a19 book!

With a pen of iron and lead,

Graven in a rock for ever!

And I know my Redeemer liveth,

And later He shall stand up on the earth;

And after my skin this is torn in pieces,

Yet from my flesh shall I see God,

Whom I shall see for myself,

And mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger:

My reins consume in mine inwards.

If ye say, How shall we persecute him,

And the root of the matter is found in him?

Fear for yourselves before the sword,

For there is wrath, crimes of the sword;

That ye may know [there is] a judgment.

Thus does Job deprecate the persistent suspicion which pursues him, spite of his solemn protestations of innocence. If it were indeed a chastisement of evil, it was his own affair. But he would meet their thought, and frankly acknowledge that his trouble did come from God. It was He who had hurled him down, and compassed him in inextricable toils. It was He who refused to listen to his cry, and gave no ear to his appeals. It was Eloah who had hedged up his way that he could not escape, covered his path with darkness, stripped him of honour, and taken the crown from off his head, crushing him on every side, so that he was going, and uprooting even his hope. It was He whose anger burned against him, and who counted him as of His foes, massing His troops, and rearing mounds against him, and encamping right around. Nor this only: it was He who embittered his social circle, and the privacy of home; his brethren removed, his acquaintance estranged, his kinsmen failed, his familiars oblivious; his sojourners, his maid, counting him a stranger, an alien; his servant called in vain, though supplicated abjectly; himself an object of aversion to his wife, even when yearning after those nearest to him. The very youngsters despised him, and,

if he rose, spoke at him, instead of paying any respect; all his intimates loathed him, and those he loved were turned against him. For indeed he was emaciation personally, escaped with nothing but the skin of his teeth.

But he once more appeals to their compassion in presence of such ruin and misery, and the more because he owned it to be the hand of Eloah; and he asks why they should follow him up like God, and not be satisfied with his flesh. Then does the truth of God's intervention at the end flash so brightly before his soul that he wishes his words written, inscribed in the book, nay, graved with a pen of iron and with lead on a rock for ever. And no wonder. He knows his Kinsman-Redeemer lives, and, the Last One, shall stand on the dust; and, no matter what the ravages of this mortal, from his flesh he shall see Eloah — see Him for himself, his eyes seeing Him, and not a stranger; so that his reins within pine for it now. Hence he admonishes his friends, if they persecuted and sought to fasten on him a moral cause for his woes, to dread an avenging sword for themselves. For if that be the day of resurrection power, it will be also one of retributive dealing and wrath, when the sins that escape man await God's sword. There will be no mistake then as to judgment. This was a cutting reproof for his friends. For faith rests on God's word, unbelief will be satisfied with nothing less than the facts when fulfilled, to interpret it. But the fulfilment, in fact, will be the sure punishment and utter ruin of the unbelieving in that day.

The principle, indeed, of seeing in facts or history the interpretation of prophecy is wholly vicious at all times. For it is, as we have just seen, to quit the ground of faith

for that of unbelief, which is only convinced when it sees. Faith, on the contrary, proves that the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of the prophetic word, which is found to centre in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. For no prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation. It is part of a system converging on the Lord, who will judge the wicked and reign in power; and this, as it is wholly outside of man's will, the Spirit ever holds out in the word of God.

It will be noticed also that the concrete man is before the mind in the Old Testament anticipations of that day, no less than in the New. Nowhere does revelation stop short at the incomplete state when the spirit is severed from the body; though it is distinct both as to the peculiar source and immortal character of man's soul from the beginning. But faith looks onward to full blessedness for man and the vindication of the word of God in glory.

Job 20 - Second Discourse Of Zophar.

The last of the three comes forward once more, even avowing the haste, if not irritation, under which he sought to deal with Job. Zophar's main point is the transient character of the evil-doer's triumph. If such an one seem to rise up fast to the highest pinnacle of prosperity, it is but to be precipitated suddenly into the lowest pit of wretchedness and infamy, the evident object of divine resentment.

And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said,

Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me,

And hence my haste in me.

A reprimand to my shame I have to hear;

Yet the spirit of my understanding answereth, for me.

Knowest thou this from of old,

From the placing of man on the earth?

From near [is] the triumphing of the wicked,

And the joy of the ungodly for a moment.

Though his height mount to the heavens,

And his head reach the cloud,

Like his dung he perisheth for ever;

They that saw him shall say, Where [is] he?

Like a dream shall he fly away, and not be found,

And he shall be scared away like a vision of the night.
The eye scanned him, [but] not again;

And his place beholdeth him no more.

His children shall seek to please the poor,

And his hands give back his wealth.

His bones were full of youthful vigour,

Which will lie with him in the dust.

Though evil maketh sweet in his mouth —

He hideth it under his tongue,

He is sparing of it, and will not let it go,

And retaineth it in the midst of his palate —

His food is changed in his bowels,

The poison of asps is within him.

Wealth hath he swallowed, and shall disgorge it:

God will eject it again out of his belly.

He shall suck the poison of asps:

The tongue of the viper shall slay him.

He shall not gaze on rivulets,

Flowings of streams of honey and butter.

What he laboured for, he shall restore, and not swallow. As the property his exchange, and he rejoiceth not, For he crushed, abandoned, the poor, Seized a house, and built it not;

For he knew no rest in his belly;

He shall not escape with his desirable thing,

There is no remnant of his eating.

Therefore his prosperity endureth not.

In the fulness of his superfluity he is straitened,

Every hand of a wretch shall be upon him.

That it may be to the filling of his belly,

He shall send against him the burning of His anger,

And rain upon him with his food.

He fleeth from a weapon of iron,

A bow of copper pierceth him through;

It is drawn, and it cometh out of the body,

And the glittering sword proceedeth out of his gall:

Upon him [are] terrors.

All darkness [is] hid for his treasures,

A fire not blown consumeth him;

It shall fare ill with what is left in his tent.

The heavens reveal his iniquity,

And the earth riseth up against him.

The increase of his house departeth,

Things that ran away in the day of His anger.

This [is] the portion of the wicked man from God [Elohim], And the heritage of his sentence from God [El].

The triumphant tone of Job provoked the hasty and self-confident spirit of Zophar, and deep shame, because of a reproachful reproof, which he considered as undeserved, by his friends, as it ill became the man who was suffering the due reward of his deeds and state. Hence he was burning to speak and rejoin, and his irrepressible impulse he mistook for fulness of solid matter. Yet, as applied to the case in hand, they were no more than his own “thoughts,” true to his usual egotism, as distinguished from the grave wisdom of Eliphaz, and the traditional knowledge of Bildad. Job, in his opinion, had better beware: a jubilee of the godless is of the briefest. Lift up his head as he may, he perishes for ever, as the most offensive thing that men sweep away, so that they that see him say, Where is he? It is the fullest contrast with the positive blessing of faith: he that does the will of God abides for ever; he that does it not is as a dream, or night-vision. Scanned once, he is not before the eye again; his place knows him no more.

Retribution sets in too for his children as well as himself. How could it be otherwise? For, however sweet to him, and enjoyed tenaciously, evil might be, it was poison within; and the riches so greedily and unscrupulously devoured God makes him vomit forth, himself too slain as by a venomous bite. Honey and cream may flow in

rivulets, brooks, streams, but they yield no pleasure to him. What he had laboured for he gives back, and swallows not; as the property of exchange, he rejoices not; for he ground down and forsook the poor, seized on a house he was not to build, being cut off before his plans were mature and he could enjoy. For, insatiate in inward greed, he should not escape with what he values most — not a remnant for his eating — and his prosperity does not endure.

How blinding is religious prejudice which could think thus of Job! Wrath is cruel, anger is outrageous, and who is able to stand before envy or jealousy? But error in religious judgment may be the most cutting of all, and this in proportion to the earnestness with which it is embraced; for the thought of God is then abused to exclude every atom of human, not to say of brotherly, kindness. See how the final scene is painted! In the fulness of abundance, says Zophar, his straits come: not a wretch that stretches not out his hand against him. God will give him plenty, but it will be the burning of His wrath, raining it on him with his food. Does he seek to avoid some weapon of iron? The bow of copper pierces him through. The language is most telling. It is drawn, and no sooner this than it comes forth from his flesh, the glittering sword out of his gall. Some understand “He is gone! terrors over him,” which certainly falls in with the graphic suddenness of the ruin described. But the older versions are adverse to Rosenmüller, Schultens, etc., who take it thus.

Finally, not wealth, but all darkness, is hid for his treasures; he is heaping it up for the day of wrath; a fire not blown on, but burning from within, shall consume him, and what has escaped former judgments shall then

fare ill in his tent. Instead of the heavens and the earth appearing to attest his innocence, according to Job's appeal in Job 16:18 et seqq., they must give their evidence decisively against him, the increase of his house too departing as evanescent things in the day of divine wrath. This is the lot of the wicked man from Elohim, and his heritage awarded by El is, that he should lose all and be lost himself,

Job 21 - The Answer Of Job.

And Job answered and said,

Hear my speech with attention,

And let this be your consolation.

Suffer me, and I will speak,

And after I have spoken thou mayest mock.

As for me, [is] my complaint to man?

And why then should not my spirit be short?

Turn to me, and be astonished, and lay hand on mouth.

Truly, if I think on [it], I am troubled,

And my flesh doth shudder.

Why do the wicked live, become old,

And mighty in wealth?

Their seed is established with them in their sight,

And their issues before their eyes.

Their houses [are] peace, without fear,

And the rod of God [is] not upon them.

His bull gendereth, and faileth not,

His cow calveth, and miscarrieth not.
They send forth their sucklings as a flock,
And their children frisk.
They lift [their voice] to timbrel and harp,
And rejoice at the sound of a pipe.
They wear out their days in prosperity,
And in a moment sink [to] Sheol.
Yet they say to God, Depart from us,
For we desired not the knowledge of Thy ways:
What [is] the Almighty that we should serve Him?
And what profit have we if we meet Him?
Lo! their good [is] not in their hand.
The counsel of the wicked be far from me.
How oft is the lamp of the wicked put out,
And their destruction cometh upon them —
Torments He appointeth in His anger!
They are as straw before wind,
And as chaff a whirlwind stealeth.
God layeth up his iniquity for his children,
He repayeth him, and he knoweth [it].
His own eyes see his blow,
And he drinketh of the wrath of the Almighty.
For what delight [hath] he in his house after him,
When the number of his months is cut off?

Shall [one] teach God [El] knowledge,
And He nevertheless judgeth the righteous?
This [man] dieth in the fulness of his strength,
Altogether at ease, and quiet;
His troughs are full of milk,
And the marrow of his bones is soaked.
And this [man] dieth with a bitter soul,
And hath not eaten of the good.
Together they lie down in the dust.
And the worm covereth them over.
Lo! I know your thoughts,
And the plots ye do violently against me.
For ye say, Where [is] the house of the prince?
And where the tent of the habitations of the wicked?
Have ye not asked the passers-by?
And their signs do ye not know?
To a day of destruction the wicked is spared,
To a day of great wrath they are led off.
Who to his face declareth his way,
And who requiteth him what he hath done?
And he, to the graves he is brought,
And over the heap he keepeth watch.
Sweet to him are the clods of the valley,
And after him draweth everybody.

And [there is] no counting before him.

How vainly then ye comfort me!

Your answers remain falsehood.

Job subjects his third assailant to a closer examination, after a call to hear, not without severity. It would console him most for them to listen attentively. After he had spoken, Zophar might continue what he cannot but call mockery. Job felt far more truly than they that his was no common trial, and that they had wholly failed to help him in discerning its ground, character, and object. That it came from God he doubted no more than they; that it looked, yet could not be, penal he felt; yet was he wholly unable to divine the how and wherefore of his strange, and profound, and prolonged sufferings. They might complain if he complained as to man. But that God should so try one who held fast to his integrity to Himself, and who utterly denied their surmises of hidden wickedness, did try his spirit to the utmost, and account for his impatience. But he summons with marked solemnity to hear what he admits made himself shudder, yet an undeniable truth, in flat contradiction of their narrow thoughts, and wise saws, and uncharitable dogmatizing, that the wicked, instead of being cut down young, live on, grow old, become great in power, with their posterity established round about them, and their offspring before their eyes; that their households are free from fear or scourge; that their farms flourish; that they enjoy life to the full, spending their days prosperously, till, in a moment, not with lingering disease or racked with agony, they sink to Sheol; yet, spite of every good, not only not owning God in thankful

praise, but desiring no knowledge of God, yea distance from Him, and accounting prayer wholly useless.

Job, however, stands to it that somehow the prosperity of the wicked is not in their hand but God's, yet he abhors their counsel and ways. How often, he asks, does their lamp go out, and destruction break on them, as God is pleased to apportion in His displeasure? It may be now and then, hardly often; it is false to say always. The day is coming when the ungodly, instead of prospering, shall be like the chaff which the wind driveth away. (Ps. 1) The friends antedated the time, directing their eyes (blinded, alas!) to the present, like Christendom, instead of waiting, like Job, for the resurrection and the kingdom. It may fall on his children, not on the man himself, in this world. Job looks on to the judgment, when the evil-doer must suffer. Let none then misjudge God's ways, or draw unfounded inferences from His government at present. Look at these two men, each with a full cup, one of happiness, the other of misery; both lying dead together. Appearances prove nothing but the haste and folly of those who judge before the time. Such were their thoughts and plots to the wrong of himself. They might have learnt better from those that pass by, that the wicked is spared for a day of doom; yet who would tell him so? He is buried with no less care than others, people following in his wake, as countless souls before. Thus evidently vain was their consolation, and their answers fallacious.

Job 22 - Third Discourse Of Eliphaz.

The third series in the discussion opens with a discourse from Eliphaz, in which he sets forth the superiority of

God to all results from the service of man, however noble in his own eyes. Provoked by the pertinacity of Job in the denial of hidden sin, he launches out first into questions, then into direct charges, which betrayed his conviction that Job, far from the righteous man he assumed to be, was really hard, selfish, unfeeling, and unjust, himself really the mere man of might and arrogance, who had sent away widows and orphans, till he was caught in his own meshes and troubled by fear. Indeed he does not hesitate to impute free-thinking to Job, heedless of the warning God has given even in this world, that they may not shut out Himself and His oversight, cheated by the serpent to think that He is too high to notice mere worms of the earth. But as the wicked cannot thus act even now with impunity, so the righteous rejoice at His dealings however solemn. To Him therefore Eliphaz commends Job. Acquaintance with Him, and repentance in His sight, would soon be followed by outward and inward blessings; so that he should not only be relieved from the divine pressure now upon him, but be used to intercede for others, and should deliver the guilty through his integrity.

And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

Can a man [a hero] then profit God?

For, being wise, he profiteth himself.

[Is it] then a pleasure to the Almighty if thou art righteous, And gain if thou makest thy ways perfect?

Will He out of fear of thee argue with thee,

Enter into judgment with thee?

Is not thy wickedness great,

And no end of thine iniquities?

For thou distrainedst thy brother without cause,

And didst strip off the clothes of the naked;

To the weary thou gavest no water,

And from the hungry didst withhold bread.

And the man of might — his was the land,

And the accepted of face dwelleth in it.

Widows didst thou send empty away,

And the arms of the fatherless were broken.

Therefore round about thee [are] snares,

And sudden fear overpowereth thee.

Or seest thou not the darkness,

And the flood of waters covering thee?

[Is] not God [Eloah] in the height of the heavens?

And see the top of the stars, how high they are!

And thou sayest, What knoweth God?

Will He judge through the darkness?

Thick clouds [are] a covering to Him, and He seeth not,
And He walketh on the circle of the heavens.

Wilt thou keep to the old way

Which men of iniquity trod,

Who were snatched away untimely:

A flood was poured on their foundation;

Who were saying to God, Depart from us,

And what could the Almighty do for them?

And He filled their houses with good!

But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

The righteous will see and rejoice,

And the innocent mock at them:

Is not our adversary cut down?

And the fire devoureth their residue.

Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with Him, and be at peace; Thereby shall good come to thee.

Receive, I pray thee, law from His mouth,

And lay up His words in thy heart.

If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up; ([If] thou put iniquity far away from thy tent), And put precious ore on the dust, And that of Ophir as stones of brooks;

And the Almighty shall be thy precious ores,

And silver of toilings to thee.

For then in the Almighty shalt thou delight,

And lift up thy face to God [Eloah].

Thou shalt pray to Him, and He shall hear thee,

And thou shalt pay thy vows,

And thou shalt decree a thing, and it is established to thee, And light shall shine on thy ways.

When they are dejected, then shalt thou say, Lift up,

And He will save him of downcast eyes;

He will deliver him that is not guiltless,

And he is rescued by the cleanness of thy hands.

Thus does Eliphaz press on Job the inquiries whether God could derive benefit from the worth of any man, be he who he may, because his prudence benefits himself — whether Job's righteousness was a pleasure to the Almighty, or the blamelessness of his ways a gain to Him. He resents the notion as absurd and insolent, that God could be influenced to swerve from His unbending rectitude, and therefore infers extreme wickedness from the extreme dealings of His hand. Was it not monstrous for Job to challenge Him to an action at law? It was not to be thought of that He would argue with Job through fear of him. There was but one reasonable conclusion: Job was suffering greatly because his wickedness was great, and his iniquities not ended. Warming with indignation, he ventures to specify the sins he conceived to be judged of God in the case. Stripped of his goods, had he furnished water to the weary, or bread to the famished? Had he not been inhuman enough to take a pledge of his brother causelessly, yea, to deprive the naked of their clothing? His course had really been a mingled one of power on the one hand, and of favour on the other, arrogant, yet fawning, so as to settle himself in the earth which he sought, whatever he might aver to the contrary. And if he sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were not held up but broken, who could wonder that snares were all around him, and sudden fear confounding him? Was it not the awful foreboding of coming and worse judgment?

It is a fair question whether verse 11 be more correctly taken as concluding the first part of the chapter, as is most obvious and commonly understood, or as introducing a new and still worse imputation. If the latter, the sense would run thus: Job had already owned

in Job 19. that God had fenced up his way that he could not pass, and had set darkness upon his paths. Eliphaz now turns the confession against him, by asking if he did not see the darkness and the flood of waters covering him. So not a few, from Ewald to Delitzch. The Septuagint has (“the light hath turned out darkness to thee”), whence it would appear that these Greek translators must have read rather than the opening particle, on the correctness of which assumption Michaelis acts in adopting it as the true text.

There can be no doubt that the charge which follows is one of deadly sceptical impiety; as if the incomparable glory of God excluded His concerning Himself with the actions and thoughts of man on earth. Job had indeed dwelt on the unsearchable wisdom and might of God as sovereign and irresistible; he had complained of severe dealings, but nothing could be less true, or more undeserved, than that he denied His government. The insinuation was due only to the perverse hypothesis of Eliphaz. Job was at least as far as himself from saying, What doth God know? Will He judge through the darkness? Thick clouds are a covering to Him, and He seeth not, and He walketh on the circle of the heavens. Such language and such thoughts were foreign to Job. Certainly Eliphaz could not be more opposed to the old path trodden by the antediluvian sinners, who had been swept away before the time, when their foundation was poured away in a flood (or a flood poured on it). And most justly; for did they not say to God, Depart from us; and what could the Almighty do for them, though He had filled their houses with good? In vain then did Eliphaz retort on Job his own saying here, as at the beginning of his discourse. (Compare Job 21:14-16.) Job

was as sincere in his abhorrence of the sentiment as Eliphaz, who had no real ground for thus reflecting on Job. It was the bitter fruit of his hard, and narrow, and misleading theory of present affliction, as if it could flow from no source but God's estimate of our evil.

Not that God does not mark, when and where He pleases, His sense of man's impiety; and when He does, Job joins Eliphaz and the righteous generally in setting it to his seal that God is wise and just: above all will it be manifest in that day when divine judgment will deal definitively with all that is opposed to God's will and to His people. But the memory is apt to be treacherous in controversy, else Eliphaz could not have forgotten how impressively Job had brought before his friends that day, and without the least hesitation of heart or conscience. So that we might apply to him the spirit of the New Testament word, and affirm that he was one of those who love the Lord's appearing, when evil shall no more oppress nor defile, but vanish before the light and joy of day.

Next comes the exhortation. It is well when, in love and with a sound judgment, we are admonished; but was it so here? A word fitly spoken, how good it is! But the call in this case assumed that Job was a wicked man, and we may find occasion to admire the patience he manifests, as well as see where he falls short. It is delightful to hear the message of love go forth, but what where it implies that a true believer is a hypocrite?

In truth Job was better acquainted with God than any of his friends: how painful to have the gravest of them so speaking as to impute worse than ignorance! "Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace: thereby

shall good come to thee. Receive, I pray thee, law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart." There are those to whom such a call would be loving and appropriate. The mistake was as to Job's state. The friends might have learnt much; they had presumed to judge, and they had judged wrongly. They had no right notion of God's gracious work with souls to humble them, breaking self down, and making His grace infinitely precious. Hence, as they saw nothing but retributive dealing with hidden wickedness, the extraordinary trials of Job gave them the fullest possible impression; and Eliphaz, regarding him as a renegade, exhorts him to return to the Almighty, and he shall be built up, and to put iniquity far away from his tabernacles: a faithful saying, if addressed to one far away from God; but how galling to a deeply-tried saint to be exhorted to lay his precious ore on the dust, and that of Ophir as pebbles of the brooks, and Shaddai should be to him his precious ores and hard-won silver! "For then in Shaddai shalt thou delight, and lift up thy face to Eloah: thou shalt pray to him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. And thou shalt decree a thing, and it is established to thee, and light shall shine on thy ways."

This seemed needed and wise advice, doubtless, to Eliphaz, and in many a case it would be most applicable; but it was wholly out of place for Job, to whom gold or silver were as the dust of the balance, and the favour of God everything. There was no solution of the trial as yet. Hidden sin was not in question, nor consequently repentance of it, but a deep submission to God's will, who could employ the enemy to bring out the patience of the sufferer, and his friends to lay bare his impatience.

Eliphaz did not so much as touch the true question. He misjudged Job, and would have aggravated the malady instead of curing it. There was no lack of practical righteousness in the ways of Job, nor did his failure lie in the neglect of kindness to others, nor even of prayer to God. But was he nothing in his own eyes? Was grace everything to him? Did a word that Eliphaz had said tend to teach him either lesson?

It is remarkable, however, that the close of Eliphaz's discourse was yet to be verified before the book ends, in the efficacy of Job's intercession for Eliphaz himself. "When they are dejected, then shalt thou say, Lift up, and He will save him of downcast eyes; He will deliver him that is not guiltless, and he is rescued by the cleanness of thy hands."

It may be observed here that, which the Authorized Version takes in the more common sense of "island," or "house," as Good prefers, is really a negative particle, which reappears in I-chabod (not-glory): so Gesenius clearly proves, with a discussion on its origin, in his Hebrew and Chaldee Thes. i., 79, 80. Dathe follows Reiske's proposal to read, a man; but, even if allowable in itself, this enfeebles the idea; for if intercession rescues one who is not guiltless, it is more to the purpose than availing only for the innocent. Indeed the true version had been given long ago by Tremellius and Junius, and even in the Chaldee paraphrase, and followed by Schultens and others.

Job 23, Job 24. - Answer Of Job.

The tone of the answer is calmer, and somewhat more comely, though he says that today also his complaint is rebellion (or bitter), and his stroke heavier than his

groaning. But his desire is, as before, to draw near to God, and have His decision, in the face of all the circumstances that seemed to testify against his integrity, and of friends carried away by appearance, and as ready to condemn him now as his worst enemies. Nothing disturbs fellowship more than misjudgment, unless it be positive sin, especially when concealed under high pretension to godliness; and this was just the question between Job and his friends. On the other hand, while re-asserting his good conscience and his ways, Job owns to a shrinking from His presence, because He is inflexible in His decrees, and unnerves the heart by the thought of Himself more than darkness. And this leads him, in chapter 24, to show, not that God has not a moral government now, but how incomprehensible it is to man, the first half dwelling on the sad sufferings of the innocent under wicked and mighty foes, the second on the successful evil-doers, who long carry on their villainy in secret, till condign punishment comes from God, as it will, beyond doubt, at the end.

Job 23

And Job answered and said,

Also today [is] my complaint rebellion,

My stroke is heavier than my groaning.

O that I knew where to find Him!

I would come unto His chair of state,

I would draw up the cause before Him,

And would fill my mouth with arguments;

I would know the words He would answer me,

And understand what He would say to me.

Would He contend with me by main strength?

Nay, but He would give heed to me.

There would a righteous one be pleading with Him,

And I should be for ever quit of my judge.

Behold, I go eastward, but He is not there,

And westward, but I cannot perceive Him;

To the north, where He worketh, but cannot behold [Him]; He veileth the south, and I see [Him] not.

But He knoweth the way, who is with me;

He trieth me, as gold I come forth.

To His step my foot hath held,

His way have I kept, and not turned aside:

The commandment of His lips I have not left,

More than my law [or my daily bread],

Have I kept the sayings of His mouth.

But He [is] in one thing, and who will turn Him?

And His soul desireth, and He will accomplish.

For He performeth what is appointed me,

And much of the like [is] with Him.

Therefore I am confounded before His face;

I consider, and am afraid before Him.

For God [El] hath made my heart soft,

And the Almighty hath confounded me,

For I was not cut off before the darkness,

And before me covered He the thick darkness.

Job 24

Why, since times are not hid from the Almighty,

Do not those who know Him see His days?

They remove landmarks; they rob flocks, and feed;

They drive the ass of the orphan, they distrain the ox of the widow; They thrust the needy out of the way, The poor of the land must hide together.

Behold, wild asses in the wilderness, they go forth,

Early about their work, after prey;

The desert [is] to him bread for the little ones;

In the field they reap his cattle-fodder,

And the vineyard of the wicked they glean.

They make the naked lodge without clothing,

And without covering in the cold.

With the rain of mountains they are drenched,

And, shelterless, they embrace a rock.

They pluck the orphan from the breast,

And on the poor lay distraint.

Naked they go without clothing,

And hungry they bear the sheaf,

They make oil within their walls,

They tread wine-vats, and they thirst.

Out of the city mortals groan,

And the soul of the wounded crieth out;

Yet God regardeth not the folly!

They are among the rebels against the light,

They know not His ways, nor remain in His paths.

With the light the murderer riseth,

He slayeth the poor and needy,

And in the night he is as a thief.

And the adulterer’s eye watches for the twilight,

Saying, “No eye observeth me,”

And he layeth a veil over the face.

In the dark he breaketh into houses,

They keep themselves close by day, they know not the light. For morning is to them altogether death-shade, When he discerneth the terrors of the death-shade.

Light [is] he on the face of the waters;

The portion of those on the land is despised,

He turneth not to the way of the vineyards.

Drought and heat consume the snow-waters;

[So doth] sheol [those that] have sinned,

The womb forgetteth him, the worm feedeth on him,

He is no more remembered, and wickedness is broken like a tree. He devoureth the barren that beareth not, and doeth the widow no good. And he hath drawn the mighty by his power, He riseth, and none believeth in life.

He [God] giveth confidence to him, and he is supported; And His eyes are on their ways.

High they are a little while, and are not,

And they sink; like all they are shut up,

And are cut off, like the topping ears of corn.

And if not so now, who proveth me a liar,

And maketh my word nought?

The sufferer still pleads the extremity of his sorrows as accounting for his rebellious complaint, and affirms that the hand laid on him was even heavier than his groaning. If he could only find God, he would stand before His tribunal, lay out his case before Him, and argue it out fully there, where he would learn from Himself the grounds of what seemed wholly inexplicable, and understand why He had so dealt with His servant. Far from meeting with fresh trial there, or such scorn as his friends poured on him, he was confident that God would use His power to strengthen his weakness. The hands of God were infinitely preferable to man's, even were he the oldest of his friends, and he was confident, being assured of his own integrity. He should thus get quit of his judge, instead of enduring the lingering suspicion of those who reasoned from the outside show of things, without a single fact to justify it. Nothing is harder to disprove than that which has its only, but deep, root in the minds of opponents who assume to have God's mind, and commit themselves thoroughly to saying so.

But there was his fresh trouble: he knew not where to find God. If he went east or west, it was equally vain; either He was not there, or Job could not perceive Him. If he turned to the north, with its hail and snows, where He works, he could not get a glimpse; much less where

He veils the south in mist and cloud. But of this he was sure, that God knew the way with Job, and that, after His trial of him, he should come forth as gold; for, as he so frequently says, his foot had held firmly to His step, and he had, without turning aside, kept His way. From the commandment of His lips he had not swerved: more than his law (for Job used to speak and act as a prince) had he kept the sayings of His mouth.

But then there was the serious reflection that, as God was assuredly in these extraordinary afflictions, Job felt the impossibility of turning Him aside from His inscrutable purpose, and that what was appointed to him would come to pass without fail, for He has His mind, and does it always. Therefore was Job confounded before His face, and fear grew as he considered it. For El unnerved his heart, and Shaddai confounded him. Eliphaz might talk of the darkness which he owned did surround him, and he might impute it to hidden iniquity; it was God's doing so that appalled and perplexed him. Some understand the last sentence to mean that he had this sense of dread because God did not cut him off before the darkness came, and He had not covered the thick blackness from his face.

So the beginning of Job 24 has furnished room for no small debate, many moderns preferring to understand and divide it thus: Why are times not reserved by the Almighty, and do His friends [literally, knowers] not see His days? The times are judicial terms when He dispenses justice, and the days are an even more common expression of like intervention. The difference is that the latter clause makes the sense of the former still narrower, or more definite. I have given what most approves itself to my mind, and distinguished between

the times not hid from Shaddai, and those who know Him not seeing His days of retribution. It would not have been strange in those ignorant of Him. It is the enigma of psalms and prophets, and must be till Christ solves it.

Then Job expands on the allowed evil of men, who profit by it shamelessly. Who of men can reckon up the shades of human fraud and force, of corruption and violence, without and within, but above all on the defenceless and the poor? The country and the city, the desert and the sea, are the varied scenes of wickedness as varied, where men embezzle and plunder; and in the abodes of civilization the darkness before the day calls them out to intrigues and crimes as dark, without a notice from God; while the restless sea gives scope to a deeper restlessness; yet they die, and are buried just as others. Again, family ties yield as little guarantee against cruelty as the public life where a despot reigns, regardless of everything but his own will.

It is not that Job doubted all to be under the eye of God, though as yet His hand be not on the world, while death comes in to cut off the highest when they least expect it. He is sure that his estimate cannot be gainsaid.

Job 25 - Third Discourse Of Bildad.

This brief chapter contains the final discourse of Bildad. It is plain that the three friends are all but silenced. We shall see ere long that Zophar has not a word more to add. Job has much in proof that they, none of them, saw aright even the surface of his trial, not to speak of God’s ways underneath. Yet Bildad speaks grandly of God’s dominion as suited to overwhelm all thought of human righteousness, and sets out the sun and stars as pale

and impure in presence of His light: how much more a mortal, son of Adam!

And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said,

With Him [are] dominion and fear;

He maketh peace in His high places.

Is their number to His armies?

And on whom ariseth not His light?

And how is mortal man righteous with God (El)?

And how is he pure, born of a woman?

Behold, to the moon, and it shineth not,

And the stars are not pure in His eyes:

How much less mortal man, a maggot;

And the son of man, a worm!

Such is the closing effort of Bildad, evidently wishing to say something, rather than having something to say. So far as it is a reply, it seems directed against the opening of Job's answer to Eliphaz (Job 23), as has been noticed by others. The main point is the awful majesty of God, who must resent the unhallowed thought of man's drawing near to His throne, above all, to debate with Him as if He could mistake, or the creature vindicate itself against His dealings. What gross forgetfulness of His countless hosts, as if His power could be measured by man; and what ignorance of His all-reaching light, which penetrates and manifests the remotest and otherwise hidden objects in the universe!

But he does injustice to Job's asseverations of integrity, if he alludes to them in the latter part (for Job in no way denied man's natural impurity), but had, on the contrary,

already heard, in reply to himself, a full demolition of every pretension to righteousness in Job 9. Job simply repudiated the imputation of deep evil, cloaked by high professions of piety, on his part, as the cause of his exceeding trial. But he was as far as Bildad from putting the creature on a false level with the Creator, least of all man, morally corrupt as he is. The lights of heaven lack lustre in his eyes: what is a sinner accounted? Abstractly, what he urges is unquestionable truth; as a reply and application to Job, it is perverse and futile.

Job 26 - Answer Of Job.

The rejoinder of Job begins with bitter sarcasm on the abundant help afforded by Bildad’s curt speech, which really betrayed the inability of the friends to continue the discussion, and that judgment must go by default, on the triumphant counter-proof that in this life the righteous may suffer and the wicked prosper. He then asserts the magnificent power of God with a bold elevation far beyond Bildad, who failed to see the true question.

And Job answered and said,

How thou hast helped the powerless,

Saved the arm that is strengthless!

How thou hast counselled the unwise,

And declared wisdom in abundance!

To whom hast thou uttered words?

And whose breath came forth from thee?

The shades [Rephaim] tremble

Beneath the waters, and they that dwell there.

Sheol [is] naked before Him,

And destruction hath no covering.

He spreadeth the north over the void,

He hangeth the earth upon nothing.

He bindeth up waters in His thick clouds,

And the cloud is not rent under them.

He fasteneth the face of the throne,

He spreadeth over it His cloud.

He hath placed a bound on the face of the waters,

Up to the limits of light and darkness.

The pillars of the heavens tremble,

And are astonished at His rebuke.

By His power He stilleth the sea,

And by His understanding smiteth Rahab.

By His Spirit the heavens are brightness,

His hand pierceth the fleeing serpent.

Lo, these [are] the ends of His ways,

And what a whisper of a word we hear of Him!

And the thunder of His might who understandeth?

The irony with which Job notices the last effort of the interlocutors is not more withering than is evident the sublime description of God's glory in creation. Job begins with the, to us, invisible depths to which are consigned the gigantic forms of those who once fought against God, and are now made to tremble, though the hour of judgment be not yet come. He sees not only

peace in the high places, but the dread of God piercing far beyond the earthly scenes of His government. Sheol and Anaddon stand unveiled before Him. How incomparably nobler and more accurate is the description of the world than anything in the mythology of the heathen, or their philosophy! God is spoken of as spreading the north over empty space, Himself sustaining the vault of heaven, and suspending the earth on nothing, tying up the waters in thick clouds, so that their contents should not escape till He please; while He encloses the face of the throne (the outside of the heavens towards the earth), spreading over it His clouds. Then Job glances at the waters beneath, and the horizon, where darkness meets light; but the mightiest of earth's pillars, towering on high, are made to tremble and wonder at God's rebuke, while the restless sea is stilled at His pleasure, and the proud foe is smitten by His knowledge. It is by His Spirit that the heavens are brightness, and it is His hand that woundeth the fleeing serpent, a figurative description of the constellation in the sky. Yet Job rightly feels that these are but the extremities or fringes of His ways; and if it be but a whisper that we hear, what must be the thunder of His might?

Job 27 - Fresh Discourse Of Job Begins.

Bildad has been answered as well as Eliphaz; and now Zophar, the remaining or third censor, is silent. Not so Job; he has more to say, to which he gives a sententious form. He swears by the living God that, though he had not been vindicated as yet by Him, but, on the contrary, called still to a most bitter trial, he would never while he lived admit that the surmises against him were right,

nor give up the assertion of his integrity — that they indeed were the guilty people who falsely accused him. For what is the hope of the impure (or hypocrite) when God deals with his soul? Does he delight himself in Shaddai, or call on Him at all times? They had all seen such a case, and therefore had no excuse for confounding Job's with it, and so speaking the merest trash. At any rate, as they had proved themselves incapable of a just application, he would let them know the sure end of ungodliness: calamities, without and within, for his offspring as for himself, till every trace of ill-gotten gain vanished, and death opened the inevitable doom for the man whom men, if not the wind itself, hissed out of his place, exulting over his destruction.

And Job continued to utter his parable, and said,

God [El] liveth! He hath turned aside my right,

And the Almighty hath embittered my soul;

All the while Thy breath [is] in me,

And God's spirit in my nostrils,

My lips shall not speak wickedness,

Nor my tongue utter deceit.

Abomination to me if I justify you!

Till I expire I will not part from mine integrity:

I hold to my righteousness, and will not let it go:

Of my days my heart reproacheth not.

Mine enemies be as the wicked,

And mine adversary as the unrighteous.

For what [is] the hope of the impure20 that he shall gain, When God shall draw out21 his soul?

Doth God [El] hear his cry when trouble cometh on him?

Doth he delight in the Almighty? Doth he call on God at all times?

I will teach you of the hand of God:

What [is] with the Almighty I hide not.

Behold, ye all of you have seen; and why this — years altogether vain? This [is] the portion of a wicked man with God, And the heritage of oppressors they receive from the Almighty. If his children multiply, [it is] for the words, And his offspring have not enough of bread;

His residue are buried in death, and their widows weep not. If he heap up silver as dust, and prepare clothing as clay, He prepareth, but the righteous shall put [it] on, And the innocent shall divide the silver.

He hath built his house as a moth, and as a booth the watchman needeth. He lieth down, but shall not be gathered;

He openeth his eyes, and he is not.

Terrors overtake him as waters, by night a tempest stealeth him away. An east wind taketh him up, and he is gone, and it sweepeth him out of his place; And it casteth at him, and spareth not; from its hand he would gladly flee. It clappeth its hands at him, and hisseth him out of his place.

The opening language, differing from all that introduces Job’s words hitherto, seems to imply that he paused, after his reply to Bildad, long enough to show that Zophar and the rest had nothing more to say, though no

doubt as yet unconvinced. He begins again with unwonted solemnity. He appeals to the living El, though owning that He it was who turned aside His judgment, and made his soul bitter for the present, that as long as he breathed his lips should not speak wickedness, nor his tongue murmur deceit. It would be but profanation for him to allow them to be in the right; so to his dying breath he would stand to his integrity, and hold fast his righteousness, without letting it go. For indeed his conscience was good; his heart reproached none of his doings. He was conscious of nothing to account for his trials; yet thereby he had allowed already that he was not justified. But what could he think of those who availed themselves of the trials that pressed him down? He could come to no other conclusion than that, if he were innocent, they who took the place of his enemy must be regarded as the wicked party, and those who assailed him as the unrighteous. He was at least as sure as they that the hope of the hypocrite or profane must perish when God shall summon his soul, and that as God hears not his cry when the long-deferred trouble falls on him, so he neither delights in God at any time, nor calls on Him at all times. That Job had claimed for himself continual clinging to God and vindication of His honour, spite of his own unparalleled sorrows at His hand, the friends well knew; and, because they could not reconcile the two things, they had betrayed themselves into the guilt of surmising Job to be guilty.

In the latter part of the chapter Job expatiates with great force on a case which they had before their eyes no less than he, but which he must expound for them, as they had utterly failed to lay it before him. It is the end of the godless, a theme he would have avoided if his

conscience were not good. They had trifled vainly with the matter. He would teach them of God's hand, and not keep back what is with Shaddai. For his children, however many, come the sword and want; they fall, unburied and unwept even of those nearest to them. His treasures go to strangers who are worthy. The house he built turns out as frail as a moth, like a shed the watchman puts up by the way. He lies down rich, to wake up to his ruin before God; and his destruction too is as sudden as overwhelming, terrors overtaking him as waters, like a whirlwind by night which snatches him up and whirls him away, spite of pitiful efforts to escape, as if it really mocked his misery and the place that once knew him.

Job 28

The connection between this chapter and the preceding has perplexed readers and writers on the book; but, though it passes (as not infrequently do Job's discourses) into a sort of soliloquy, there seems to be an intelligible and weighty link with what went immediately before, where the miserable end of the ungodly fool is set out most vividly. This might appear an extreme case; but in truth it is the too general experience of the race, that men walk after a vain show, zealous after every other object under the sun, yea, in the bowels of the earth, and in the depths of the sea, overlooking that wisdom which consists in and is inseparable from the fear of the Lord, and that understanding which departs from evil. Such is God's saying, who knows the place of wisdom inscrutable to all others, for destruction and death can only say that they have heard its report with their ears. Not seeing the connection, the Vulgate,

followed by Luther, etc., gives no expression to the particle as others soften it down into a musing ejaculation, “Yes truly,” “Indeed.” The antithesis in any case is in verve 12, “But wisdom,” etc.

For there is a vein for the silver,

And a place for the gold they refine.

Iron is taken out of earth,

And stone molten into copper.

He [man] putteth an end to darkness,

And to the end searcheth he all,

The stone of darkness and death-shade.

He breaketh a shaft away from a dweller,

Forgotten of a foot they hang suspended,

Away from men they swing:

The earth, out of it cometh bread,

And under it is turned up as it were fire.

Its stones [are] the place of the sapphires,

And nuggets of gold it22 hath,

A path no bird of prey hath known,

Nor vulture’s eye hath seen.

The sons of pride have not trodden it,

Nor the dark lion passed over it.

He [man] layeth his hand on flint,

He overturneth mountains by the root,

He cutteth rivers in the rocks,

And his eye seeth every precious thing.
Floods he bindeth from dripping.23
And bringeth to light what was hidden.
But wisdom, where shall it be found?
And where this, the place of understanding?
No mortal knoweth its price,
Nor is it found in the land of the living.
The depth saith, Not in me [is] it,
And the sea saith, It [is] not with me.
Pure gold is not given for it,
Nor is silver weighed, its price.
It cannot be weighed with gem of Ophir,
With the precious onyx or the sapphire.
Gold and glass24 cannot equal it,
Nor its exchange [be] a vessel of fine gold.
Coral or pearl is not to be mentioned.
And the acquisition of wisdom [is] above rubies,
The topaz of Cush doth not match it,
With the clear gem it is not weighed.
And wisdom, whence cometh it,
And where this, the place of understanding?
And further it is hidden from the eyes of all living,
And it is concealed from the birds of the heavens,
Destruction and Death have said,

With our ears we have heard its report.

God understandeth its way, and He knoweth its place.

For He looketh to the ends of the earth,

He seeth under the whole heaven.

In making to wind its weight,

And meting out the waters by measure,

In making a law for the rain,

And a way for the lightning of the thunder,

Then He saw and declared it,

He established and also searched it out;

And unto man He said,

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom,

And to depart from evil understanding.

It is impossible to overlook the comprehensive grasp of nature, and even art, here surveyed, especially as the passage stands correctly rendered in verses 4-11, where even the Authorised Version fails in duly presenting particular phrases as well as the connection. Both are given more accurately, I believe, in the version before the reader, and in general by those who have translated during the last century and more, when attention was drawn by A. Schultens to the allusion made to mining operations, misunderstood in earlier days.

Job then speaks of the realm of nature searched out with the keenest avidity by man, who familiarises himself with the vein or mine where silver lies, as he takes care to refine the gold he discovers not so disposed. So too with iron and copper ore molten for use. He knows how

to pursue his way spite of darkness, overcome with artificial light, no matter what the danger, learnt every now and then at cost of life. We see described the shaft formed far away from human dwelling, and means used to convey men where none could walk, suspended by ropes, it would seem, and swinging to and fro. We see not only the earth cultivated on its surface, but means of fuel found beneath its stones, the place of the sapphire and nuggets of gold. Into such depths, ransacked for its hidden treasure, no bird has penetrated, nor vulture's eye seen a path; not the boldest of beasts has trodden there, not even the dark or fierce lion has passed over it. Man's daring resources, with covetousness behind, conquer all difficulties. The hard flint yields to his hand, and mountains he overturns by the root if they stand in his way, as he cuts rivers in the rocks, to reach the precious things his eye discerns. Nor is it only letting the waters off in suited channels, but he binds floods from oozing and making their way through, so as the better to bring to light what lay concealed.

But if such is man's successful pursuit of the least accessible objects in the bowels of the earth, where shall wisdom be found? and where the place of understanding? And it is the harder to find, as no mortal knows its price, and in fact it is not found in the land of the living. The depth disowns its presence, the sea yet more emphatically. Vain is the hope of adequate exchange; gold or silver is weighed in vain; nor gem of Ophir, nor onyx, nor sapphire, nor golden glass, nor work of art in gold, nor coral or pearl, nor topaz, nor jewel of clearest lustre. Again, then whence comes wisdom? and where the place of understanding? But if besides it be hidden from the eyes of all living, and

concealed from the birds of the heavens; if destruction and death can only say that they have heard its report, God understands its way and He knows its place. The universe in no degree distracts Him: He looks to the ends of the earth, He sees not only in but under the whole heaven. Nothing is too ethereal or too vast for His ken and sway. In appointing to the winds its weight (surely a remarkable thought and word for these days), and meting out the waters by measure, in controlling the rain and the lightning, He none the less laid down the foundation of all righteousness, and this for favoured man on earth to hear. It is to give God His rights. Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. It is to be subject morally to God as Master, fearing Him and departing from evil — the true wisdom and understanding of man.

Job 29

A fresh discourse of Job here begins, and it is his final one, which naturally parts into the three chapters which follow, each presenting a distinct portion, and the whole a very complete summary of the case, as it now presented itself to the sufferer's spirit. He takes a retrospective glance at his past life, when divine favour lavished on him every enjoyment that an upright soul could desire on earth, and this in the relief of the needy and distressed, quite as much as in the universal honour of those that knew him. Then in Job 30 he contrasts his actual circumstances of degradation, an object of scorn and insult to the lowest, even of the young, and this without the smallest comfort within, yea, the bitterest dregs of his cup lying in the fact that he cried unheard to God who indeed with strong hand was putting him

down, as surely as He had once blessed and exalted him; so that he could only surrender himself to hopeless sorrow as regards this life. Yet does he, in Job 31, with the utmost detail and solemnity repudiate all consciousness of secret iniquity, whether wandering in lust, or in any stain on domestic propriety, either in public or in religious life, so as not only to imprecate judgments if there was hidden evil, but to speak with unbecoming boldness in the presence of God, who however well knew that His poor servant was far more distant from hypocrisy than his friends that suspected him. Thus runs the first of these sections.

And Job continued to utter his parable and said,

Who giveth me like the months of old,25

Like the days when God guarded me,

When His lamp, it shone over my head —

By His light I walked [through] darkness;

As I was in the days of the harvest

When God’s familiarity26 [was] over my tent;

While the Almighty [was] still with me,

My young ones around me;

When I washed my steps in cream,

And the rock alongside me [poured] rivers of oil;

When I went out to the gate by the city,27

In the open place I established my seat;

Youths saw me and hid themselves

And the aged rose — stood up,

Princes refrained from words

And laid the hand on their mouth,

The voice of nobles was arrested,

And their tongue cleaved to their palate.

For the ear heard and praised me,

And an eye saw and testified to me.

For I delivered the poor that cried,

And the fatherless that had no helper.

The blessing of the perishing came on me,

And the heart of the widow I made sing.

Righteousness I put on, and it put me on,

As a robe and a diadem mine equity.

I was eyes to the blind, and feet [was] I to the lame,

A father to the needy, and the cause I knew not I searched. And I broke the jaw of the wicked, And flung the prey out of his teeth.

And I said, With my nest I shall expire,

And as sand28 shall multiply my days.

My root is open toward the waters,

And dew lodgeth all night on my branches.

Mine honour remaineth fresh with me,

And my bow is renewed in my hand.

They hearken to me, they wait, and are silent for my counsel. After my word they repeat not, And my discourse droppeth on them, And they wait for me as rain, And their mouth they open wide [as] for the latter

rain. I laugh on them when they have no confidence,29
And the light of my face they cannot cast down.

I choose their way for them, and sit head,

And dwelt as king in the troop, the comforter of mourners.

Some of the finest compositions of genius in ancient and in modern times embody a similar retrospect, out of the depths of present misery, on past prosperity and honour; but, touching as they may be, they fall as far short of that which has just come before us, as the character of an Oedipus or a Lear is inferior to this holy man of old. None need travel out of scripture — I do not say for truth, found nowhere else, but — for the most admirable and affecting picture of reverses, borne patiently, though not perfectly, till He came whose alone it was to sum up all, divine and human, unalloyed and unconfounded in His own person. Immeasurably far below Him was Job, yet as far above the favourite sufferers of dramatists and other poets as faith is beyond unbelief. Nor is it only on the human side that we see the gulf that separates the inspired book from the best writings of men, but yet more on the divine, where no vengeful being looms behind to take a spiteful pleasure in blighting at length man’s earthly happiness. There is indeed such a being, yet a creature of vast but limited capacity of malicious power, whose defeat is here revealed for our comfort; and yet more fully the delight of God in the final joy and blessing of those who honour Him with subjection of heart and word and ways, and this even on earth before men, as it will be on the largest scale when the Lord appears in His kingdom.

Job then sets before us a beautiful account of his previous life, when God shone on the days and months as they glided by, His lamp above his head, His light enabling him to walk through darkness. Especially does he recall the days of his harvest, of maturity rather than youth, when he enjoyed the familiar presence and counsel of Eloah over his tent life, and beneath the shadow of Shaddai, his young surrounding him, and the proverbial blessings of earth beyond measure abundant and accessible. Nor did honour fail outside his own domains; for if he went from [or to] the gate up to the city, and took his seat in the broadway or market, youths hid themselves in awe and the grey-headed rose standing up till he seated himself. Leading men or rulers abstained from speech and imposed on themselves respectful silence; those nobles or men of mark whose voices were wont to be heard, were hushed with tongue cleaving to the palate; so great the reverence that greeted Job's presence in their midst, with an influence all the more because it was unofficial.

Other testimony too did not fail: what distress had ever sought his help in vain? What tale of woe been slighted? What sight of wretchedness forgotten? And those relieved did not see or hear their benefactor unmoved, if his left hand knew not what his right had done. God does not let die the memory of unselfish goodness; and the poor can render as true a witness to loving-kindness, as the rich to a greatness beyond their own. And was not Job the deliverer of the poor, the orphan, the perishing, and the widow? Indeed this field of his beneficent, ay and righteous, activity was large. As he put on justice, so did it fit Job, and judgment became him like mantle and turban. Eyes was he to him that had none, and feet to

the lame, and to the needy a father, refusing no pains to search out a cause unknown; nor was his just zeal less to be dreaded by evil-doers — so would he break the tusks of bad men, and pluck the prey from their teeth.

Assuredly, if ever mortal was entitled to look for a tranquil future from God and before men, it was the man of Uz. And he did say, “In [or with] my nest shall I expire and like the sand [or palm], multiply my days, my root open to the water, and the dew all night on my branch, my glory remaining with me, and my bow renewed in my hand.” For how could he ignore the weight attached to his words, the waiting and silence for it; the absence of rejoinder; the welcome reception of it, as thirsty land waits for rain, with open mouth as for the latter rain? His laugh was suited to dispel distrust, instead of their despondency darkening the light of his countenance. In short Job was their cherished counsellor in difficulty, sat as chief, dwelt like a king in the army or troop, and really was one that comforted the mourners. Such without a break had been his life of yore.

Job 30

Now Job sets forth the misery and degradation to which he had been suddenly reduced. And, first, he dwells on the disdain which was his portion, not from the high and haughty, but from the most wretched and despicable of men. None was so low that he could not regard Job with derision and scorn. It would be hard to find such a picture of utter baseness in the habits of men; yet was there no expression of malicious contempt which he had not to endure from these loathsome objects, who set on him, not only with their vulgar ribaldry, but with the coarsest of practical jokes and rude indecorums, which

utterly unnerved him. But then a deeper and more constant sorrow oppressed him, for he could not shut out from himself the harrowing conviction that his ceaseless sufferings in the body were from the hand of God, from whom he might have looked for compassion. Whereas now he could not but abandon all hope of relief or deliverance from above, any more than of the commonest sympathy from men ordinarily quick enough to feel for the misery of their fellows.

And now at me they laugh, younger in days than I,

Whose fathers I had disdained to set with the dogs of my flock! Even the strength of their hands, what [was] it to me?

In them the prime was lost through want and hunger,

Who yesterday were gnawing the desert, the waste, and the wild, Plucking saltwort in the jungles, roots of broom their food. At them, driven out of the midst, they hooted, as [at] a thief, To dwell in the horror of glens, dens of the earth, and rocks. Among the bushes they brayed, under the nettles huddled, Sons of folly, sons of no-name, who were whipped out of the land.

And now I am become their song, and I am their bye-word; Abhorring me, they get far from me, And even withhold not spittle from my face.

For He hath loosed my cord, and humbled me,

And they have cast away the bridle before my face.

On the right riseth up a brood; they push aside my feet, And cast up against me their destructive ways;

They tear up my path, helping on my downfall;

They have no helper; they come as [through] a wide breach, Under the ruin they roll onward.

Terrors turn on me; they pursue like a storm my dignity, And my prosperity like a cloud is gone.

And now my soul poureth itself out upon me;

Days of suffering hold me fast;

The night pierceth my bones, and my gnawers rest not.

With great violence is my clothing changed;

It girdeth me as the collar of my vest.

He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become as dust and ashes. I cry to Thee, but Thou dost not answer me;

I stand, and Thou dost look fixedly at me.

Thou art changed to a cruel one towards me,

With the strength of Thy hand Thou warrest against me.

Raising me on the wind, Thou makest me borne off,

And in my very substance30 dissolvest me.

And I know Thou art bringing me to death,

And to the house of assembly for all living.

Surely there is no prayer when He putteth forth the hand, Though they cry out, in His destroying.

For have I not wept over one whose day is hard?

Was [not] my soul sad over the needy?

Yet when I looked for good, evil came,

And when I waited for light, darkness came.

My bowels are made to boil, and are not silent;

Days of affliction have overtaken me.

I am going as blackened without the sun;

I stand up in the assembly, I cry out.

Of jackals am I become brother, and companion of ostriches. My skin off me is black, and my bones are burned with heat, And my harp is [turned] to wailing, and my pipe to the voice of weepers.

The acute feelings of the eastern grandee come out vividly in this resumption of complaint. His sensitiveness was in no way impaired by his astonishing reverses, and his deep and varied sufferings, but, on the contrary, as one might expect, quickened thereby to the highest degree. Thus he does not merely speak of the cruel age of mockery he had to endure from a crew of youths, incapable of appreciating worth, or of feeling for others in trouble, but breaking forth into shameless mirth over his unparalleled misery. He looks at the antecedents and belongings of those his juniors, who spared no unseasonable and unfeeling jibe that could wound to the quick, and cannot but express the reflection that he would have disdained to rank even their fathers with the dogs of his flock. Even for physical strength they were worthless, their prime being perished through want and hunger. What else could be expected from such as had been till now gnawing what they could find in the desert? and this not where bright spots smiled, but where was unrelieved waste and wild, plucking saltwort, when they could find it, in the jungles, and finding food, wretched as it was, in roots of broom or juniper. How sad to think of such degradation for members of the human race even in those early days! Such social outcasts, with whom we commonly connect the overthronged dens of infamy and crime in some great

city, were not wanting then behind the scenes of desert life. At them, says Job, driven out of the midst, men hooted as at a thief, compelled to find a dwelling in horrible glens, in dens of the earth, and in hollow rocks. Among the bushes they could hardly be said to speak, but brayed; he adds, under the nettles they herded, after some beastly sort, sons of folly, and too obscure for a name, notorious only for vice and its surrounding punishment.

And now Job was become their song and their bye-word. Even such as those, wretched troglodytes if not worse from their origin, dared to turn him into merriment and spiteful outrage. In their abhorrence they would retire far away, or, if they drew near, it was to pour on him the lowest mark of ignominious contempt. But Job could see that God's hand was behind all the humiliation to which he was subjected. The Keri gives "my," that is, Job's, cord; the Kethib, "His," that is, God's, which Ewald interprets as a bow-string, Conant as a rein. The sense seems to be the letting loose of trouble and persecutions. They took their stand as bearing witness against the sufferer on the right (see Ps. 109:6; Zech. 3:1), as has been noticed by others. Thus was he deprived of firm ground to stand on; so that he could only compare himself to some place exposed to all the ways and means of a siege and assault, the tenor of his life being violently broken up, and they needing no help who helped to precipitate his ruin. For they poured in as through a wide breach, rolling onward under the crash of ruin; while a crowd of terrors turned on him, each chasing his dignity away like a hurricane, and his prosperity vanishing like vapour.

Hence he was utterly unnerved, and his soul dissolved, as it were, in sorrow, as days of suffering held him fast; and the night, which ordinarily affords a respite to the most wretched, aggravated his misery to the piercing of his bones, as if they were picked out from him, and the gnawers of his flesh not only began their work before the time, but this sleeplessly. Such was the condition of his body, that it was only by the utmost violence his clothing could be changed; it surrounded him as tightly as the collar of a close-fitting vest. What could he feel but that God had cast him into the mire of abasement, so as to become like dust and ashes? Job crying to Him, and He not answering; Job standing, and He gazing fixedly at him! for there seems no warrant for transporting the negative into the later clause. Job did not doubt God's contemplating all, which made His non-intervention the keener pang; and he ventured to say that He who had erst blessed him was now changing Himself into a being cruel toward him, and making war on him with all His might, raising him up in a storm-car, and causing him to be borne away only the more thoroughly to dissolve his very being. So that he knew it was God bringing him to death, and to the house where living men assemble at last.

Lastly, Job contrasts his own misery, thus without a hearing or alleviation from above, with his tenderness towards incomparably less troubles among his fellows; whereas, when he now cried, worse followed. Yet what could exceed his inward feeling, or what the effect outwardly on his person, and this, not by natural or external causes, but by unheard-of blows and consuming disease, and by soul-exercises worse than all? He had even cried out among men, and not to God only, and this

so dolefully as to set him with brutes and birds notorious for their yells and screeches.

Such is the central part of what Job here pours forth, more like a soliloquy than a reply to the already silenced. It is an expression of gloom the deepest, because of the bright past he had enjoyed by God's favour, which had too much usurped the place of God Himself before his soul; and it is immediately followed by a most minute and energetic repudiation of such sins as might have been and were conceived to be the secret cause of his sudden and complete downfall from the highest prosperity to the depths of misery. No solution of the riddle as yet appears. On the contrary the difficulty thickens, and God is yet more hidden, the more that the circumstances of the past and the present are dwelt on, with a conscience on which no evil lay. For all this is but self, not God; and we must humble ourselves under His mighty hand, if we would be exalted in due time. It is not self-defence however true which wins the blessing, any more than repining or wounded feeling, but justifying God and learning his own vileness in His presence, as we shall see.

Job 31

Here, as the conclusion of his last discourse, Job makes the most solemn and complete protestation of his innocence; not of course denying what he had already owned of man's condition — of his own among the rest, but absolutely repudiating the thought of grievous wickedness concealed under a fair exterior, with which God could be now waging war, as his friends had surmised. In personal purity — and this again as a married man, in his behaviour toward his domestics, in

his remembrance of the poor and exposed, in his abhorrence of idolatry and avarice, in his cultivation of generous and hospitable ways, in his hatred of hypocrisy, he prays that, if false, he may be put to utter shame, appeals to the Almighty for an answer, and avers his willingness to endure the closest scrutiny, where no evil can be cloaked or tolerated; nay, more, he imprecates a curse on himself from His hand, that, if it can tell of fraud or violence, baneful weeds and thorns may take the place of wheat or barley.

I have presented a covenant to mine eyes,

And how should I think on a maiden?

And what [would be] the portion of Eloah from above,

And inheritance of Shaddai from on high?

[Is there] not destruction to the wicked,

And a strange [dream] to the workers of iniquity?

Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?

If I walked with falsehood, and my foot hasted to deceit,
(Let Him weigh me in a balance of justice, And let Eloah know mine integrity,)

If my step turned aside from the way,

And my heart walked after mine eyes,

And a blot cleaved to my hands,

Let me sow, and another eat, and my produce be uprooted.

If my heart was enticed about a woman,

And I laid wait at my neighbour’s door,

Let my wife grind for another, and others bow down on her. For this [is] an infamy, and that a crime for a judge.

For a fire it [is], it consumeth to destruction,

And it would uproot all my increase.

If I despised the right of my bondman

Or of my bondmaid, in their contending with me,

What then shall I do when God [El] ariseth?

And when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?

In the belly did not He that made me make him?

And did not One fashion us in the womb?

If I kept back the poor from [their] desire,

And the eyes of the widow made to pine,

Or ate my morsel by myself,

And the orphan had not eaten of it (For from my path I brought him up as a father, And her I guided from my mother’s womb);

If I saw [any] perishing without clothing,

And the needy without covering;

If his loins blessed me not,

And he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;

If I shook my hand over the orphan,

When I saw my help in the gate;

Let my shoulder fall from the blade,

And mine arm be broken from the bone.

For the destruction of God [El] was a terror to me,

And before His majesty I was powerless.

If I made gold my confidence,

And to the pure gold said, My trust;

If I rejoiced because my weal [was] great,

And because my hand found much;

If I saw the light when it shineth

And the moon walking splendidly,

And my heart was secretly enticed

And my hand kissed my mouth (And this were a crime for judges, For to God (El) above I had lied);

If I rejoiced over the ruin of my hater,

And got uplifted when evil found him; —

Yea, I suffered not my palate to sin

By asking that his soul might be under a curse;

If the men of my tent said not,

Who giveth one not satisfied with his flesh?

The stranger passed not the night in the street;

I opened my doors to the traveller;

If I, like Adam, covered my transgressions,

Hiding in my bosom mine iniquity,

Because I feared the great multitude,

And the contempt of families terrified me,

So that I am silent, I go not out of the door.

O that One would hear me! Lo, my sign.

Let Shaddai answer me,

And mine adversary with the charge:

Would I not carry it on my shoulder?

I would bind it as crowns on me.

The number of my steps I would tell Him,

As a prince would I go near to Him.

If my land cry out against me, and its furrows weep together, If its strength I consumed without wrong, And caused the soul of its owners to expire, Instead of wheat let thorns come up, And weeds instead of barley.

The words of Job are ended.

Deeply interesting and instructive is this closing burst of indignant self-defence on Job's part. Valuable as the law might be — for surely God does nothing in vain — we can see how high was the moral standard for the soul and for the walk of godly men outside Israel, before the legislation from Sinai, as appears in the patriarchs of Genesis. Nor is it only in matters of right and wrong, of which the conscience could judge with more or less precision, according to the amount of light possessed; but we see the effect, in the soul and its affections and judgments, of divine revelation. God had spoken words, and had wrought too in solemn ways with men individually and universally, in grace and in judgment, long before He had inspired men to write His mind by divine power. And faith received His word, and pondered on His dealings, to rich profit, before scripture; though scripture, when it was vouchsafed, added much to the blessing, and increased the responsibility, of those who possessed it, and alas! of all who despise it.

For it is an immense favour to have God's words in a permanent as well as perfect form, so communicating

His mind, whether about Himself and His ways, or about man and man's ways: how much more when He spoke, not by servants, but in His Son, by whom He wrought eternal redemption! On this, however, we dwell not now, but weigh what God gives us of those early days, where we see, as here, how the Holy Spirit, spite of scanty revelation, enabled saints, like Job, to feel so becomingly as to God, no less than in their ordinary walk of every day. But let us remember that the same faith which turned the little then to such admirable account will not be satisfied now without a deep and growing entrance into all the written word, and a hearty fellowship with Christ in all of joy or sorrow that His name entails on us, whether we think of our being in Him above, or of His being in us here below. Grace never enfeebles the sense of what is due to God's nature or authority, but, on the contrary, strengthens him who knows it by faith to walk, and worship, and testify accordingly. Knowledge or privilege, however precious intrinsically, is to us worse than useless, if we love not the good and hate the evil, as He judges each. And now our responsibility is measured by the fullest light and the nearest relationship; for Christ is revealed, and the Holy Ghost given, and we are His children by that Spirit, crying Abba, Father.

Law, as the apostle teaches us, came in by the bye (), not as a rule of life, as men perversely imagine, but rather of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. 3) Christ is really that rule — Christ as revealed in the word of God as a whole, and applied by the Spirit. Law came in parenthetically that the offence might abound, the power of sin, not of holiness, as grace is, the exact counterpart of law. Hence we see right ways and holy

thoughts before the law; as we are called so much the more, that sin should not have dominion over us, because we are not under law but under grace. We have died with Christ to law as distinctly and absolutely as to sin: such is the teaching of the Holy Ghost in Romans 6 - 8, where it is a question of life as the ground for holy walk, not of blood as for the remission of sins. Would that God's children cast their theological idols to the moles and to the bats, and sought to know and enjoy better the liberty wherewith Christ sets free! Let them be assured that as they would be all the gainers in solid peace, so His name would have glory in their exceeding and abounding in love toward one another, and toward all, to the confirming of their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

To return, then, Job formally and minutely tests himself by a very comprehensive bill of delinquency, and this toward God as well as man, by failure in good as well as by self-gratification or other sins. We may be assured that not one of the friends who virtually arraigned him could have afforded to try himself as Job proceeds to do here. He judges unclean lusts as well as actions; and this in the fear of Him who had power to cast soul and body into hell — Him who meanwhile took cognisance of all his steps. Vanity or falsehood, too, was just as far from Job's spirit and ways as impurity. Whatever men might think who drew conclusions from appearances, he could ask God to weigh him in a just balance, whether he had resorted to deceit, or turned aside from the way, and if so, that another should reap the results of his labour, and that retribution, even as to his own wife, should follow any such consuming evil on his part. Most

touchingly does he show that, if in an exalted position, his heart never forgot that his servants were of the same race, of the same human family as himself, to the exclusion of unfeeling personal pride. Nor was it merely a strong sense of relationship within the household, for his compassion ever went out to suffering humanity — the widow and the fatherless, the needy and the naked — and this not casually, but with constant and unwearied care as a father, and with vigilance against taking the least advantage through influence with others: so powerfully, he could say, had the fear of God, and his indignant vindication of all such acted within him, as to render that hardness a total stranger to his heart. And trust in gold, the covetousness which the New Testament calls idolatry, was as abhorrent to his spirit as the giving to the highest orbs of creation the glory due to God alone; which iniquity would seem to have been in those patriarchal days as distinctly punishable before the judge, as the insidious corruptors of domestic sanctity. (Compare vers. 9-11 with vers. 26-28)

Further, he most solemnly abjures all joy over an enemy’s calamity, though he had not in the most indirect way asked it; and he could appeal to those most familiar with the habits of his life, whether a single soul had ever gone from him discontented with his fare, or even a stranger near him was left shelterless; and he could absolutely deny the tendency to conceal evil, which we have all derived from our first father, uninfluenced by the fear of man which is its habitual motive.

Finally, he again renews his desire for the Almighty Himself to answer, this being his affidavit, as we say, with his mark or signature, as he earnestly wishes the

counter-statement in the case, which, far from dreading, he longs for, and declares he would wreathe it round his head like chaplets of honour, and, far from hiding, tell all out, as he drew near like a prince, instead of a conscience-stricken coward. No violence nor fraud lay within; not a field could cry against Job, nor its furrows weep together, as the ground did where Abel fell, as many a plot has since testified against kings and queens, down to the basest of men, throughout this world's sad history. But he asks that, if any wrong had sullied his life, even in such transactions as these, thorns and darnel might curse his toils, instead of the wheat or barley he had sown.

The friends were wholly wrong, unjustifiable, and uncharitable; what Job says was true, but he knows not yet all the truth about himself, as none could of God, till He came who is the Truth, and proved it in grace to the uttermost in His cross. But Job was occupied and satisfied with himself. From this God would deliver him, and bless him thus more than ever. No flesh shall glory in His presence; and this Job must learn — to glory only in Him. We shall see in the sequel how he was taught it, humbly and graciously. But Job ended his words before it was even begun.

Job 32

A new, and hitherto unnoticed, person joins the great debate, now that even Job is silent. It is not that he only just enters the scene, for he soon gives the fullest proof that one present had listened most attentively to all that had been urged, and very especially to his arguments who had stopped the mouths of those that misjudged him. He is careful to apologise for his own intervention,

and would evidently have preferred to listen, if any one older than himself had produced matter relevant to the question, and adequate to expose the not infrequent occasions in which the sufferer had been provoked into impropriety. There is no lack of moral courage or of force in dealing with Job's actual words and line of thought. Whilst he avoids insinuating evil of which none knew, he does not spare where there was too high a thought of self, or a lack of reverence toward God, in one under His correcting hand. He has juster thoughts as to the divine discipline of the soul than any one of the interlocutors, not excepting Job himself, who had not yet been brought down to the true place of nothingness before God. The introduction and first discourse of Elihu go down to the end of Job 33.

Job 32

And these three men ceased answering Job, because he [was] righteous in his own eyes. And the anger of Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned: against Job his anger burned, because of his justifying himself rather than God; and against his three friends his anger burned, because they found no answer, yet condemned Job. And Elihu had waited for Job in words [that is, till Job had spoken], because they [were] older than he in days; and Elihu saw that [there was] no answer in the mouth of the three men, and his anger burned. And Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I [am] young in days, and ye [are] aged:

Therefore I did shrink,

And feared to show you mine opinion.

I said, Let days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom. Surely the spirit [it is] in mortal man, And the breath of Shaddai giveth them wit.

Not the great [in years] are wise,

Nor do the aged understand judgment.

Therefore I say, Hearken to me;

I will declare my knowledge, even I,

Lo! I have waited for your words,

I gave ear to your reasons,

Until ye might search out replies,

And to you I gave attention;

And, behold, there is none that refuteth Job,

That among you answereth his sayings,

Lest ye should say, We have found wisdom.

God [El] shall drive him away, not man.

But at me he directed no word,

And with your words I answer him not.

They broke down, they answer not again,

Words are fled away from them;

And I waited, but they did not speak,

For they ceased, they answered no more.

I also will answer my part,

I also will declare mine opinion.

For I am full of words;

The spirit of my inwards constraineth me.

Behold, my inwards [are] like wine not opened,
Like fresh wine-skins it is working.
I will speak, that I may be refreshed,
I will open my lips, and answer.
Let me not, I pray you, accept any one’s face.
Neither to man will I give flattering titles.
For I know not to give flattering titles;
[Else] my Maker would soon take me away.

Job 33

Notwithstanding, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech,
And hearken to my every word.
Behold, I pray thee, I opened my mouth,
My tongue speaketh in my palate.
My words [shall be] the uprightness of my heart,
And my knowledge shall my lips utter purely.
The Spirit of God [El] hath made me,
And the breath of Shaddai gave me life.
If thou canst, answer me;
Draw up before me, take thy stand.
Lo! I am God’s [El], as thou;
Out of clay was I also formed.
Behold, my terror will not affright thee,
And my hand shall not be heavy on thee.
Surely thou hast said in mine ears,

And I heard the voice of the words:
I am pure, without transgression,
I [am] clean, and have no iniquity:
Lo! He findeth hostilities against me,
He counteth me as His enemy;
He putteth my feet into the stocks;
He watcheth all my ways.
Behold, in this thou art not right, I answer thee;
For God [Eloah] is greater than a mortal.
Why hast thou contended against Him?
For He answereth not of all His matters.
When God [El] speaketh once, and twice, —
[Man] regardeth it not —
In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on mortals,
In slumberings on the bed;
Then He openeth the ear of mortals,
And sealeth up their instruction,
To withdraw man [from] doing;
And pride from man he concealeth.
He keepeth back his soul from corruption,
And his life from passing away by the dart.
He is also chastised with pains on his bed,
And the strife of his bones [is] lasting.

And his life loatheth bread,

And his soul meat of desire.

His flesh wasteth out of sight,

And his bones that were not seen stand out,

And his soul draweth near to corruption,

And his life to the destroyers.

If there be by him a messenger,

An interpreter, one of a thousand,

To declare to man His uprightness;

And He is gracious to him, and saith,

Deliver him from going down to corruption:

I have found a ransom.

His flesh [is] fresher than childhood,

He returneth to the days of his youth.

He supplicateth [Eloah] God,

And He accepteth him.

And he shall see His face with rejoicing,

And He requiteth to mortal man His righteousness.

He singeth before mortals, and saith,

I sinned and perverted right, and it satisfied me not.

He ransomed my soul from passing to corruption,

And my life looketh on the light.

Lo! all these worketh God [El] twice, thrice, with man,
To bring back his soul from corruption, That he may be enlightened with the light of life.

Attend, O Job, hearken to me;

Be silent, and I shall speak.

If thou hast words, answer me —

Speak, for I have a desire to justify thee.

If not, hearken thou unto me;

Keep silence, and I will teach thee wisdom.

Jerome, or the pseudo-Jerome (Opera, ed. Vall. iii., App. 895 et seqq.), seems to have led the way in attacking the new speaker, as others followed, including the venerable Bede, who confounded him with Balaam; a Jewish writer dared to count him Satan in disguise; whilst too many to name, Protestants and Catholics down to our own time, held a view of him only less disparaging. But those who weigh far more in godliness and discernment see in him one who brings a juster and more comprehensive appraisal of Job and his friends, and the first real insight, displayed throughout the book, into the place and aim of discipline through suffering.

The opening verses of Job 32 show the deep emotion and displeasure of Elihu at the unsatisfactory issue of the discussion, unprofitable to man, and not to the honour of God; whereas, comparatively young as he was, he could not but feel a burning desire for the reproof of what was rash and wrong on man’s part, and for the vindication of God’s character and glory. But if Elihu feels reluctantly forced to speak in presence of men from whom he would gladly have learnt, if they could have taught, the mind of God, he is careful to stand only for what comes from God. He is taught, as never before, how spiritual wisdom is of God’s Spirit, not of man’s age. It is the very reverse

of self-confidence or vain-glory, though out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks.

On what other ground could a younger speak, and speak in terms corrective of all who had gone before? His silence, sustained till even Job had no more to say, broken when Job, no less than his friends, could not but feel that the riddle was as yet unexplained, is the strongest proof how little he deserves censure as bold, forward, officious, conceited, arrogant, boastful, and I know not what more; while the scope of his remarks exposes the folly of those philosophising dreamers who brand him as an aimless and unanswered talker left in the shade that he merited. One can only reply that all men have not faith, and that such as thus judge of scripture manifest a mind void of discernment, and scarce anywhere more than in a verdict like this on Elihu. He certainly sets in the most vivid light the total failure of those who had condemned Job without confuting him, and not without insinuations which condemned themselves. He feels that, as being unassailed by the sufferer, and in no way sharing their uncharitableness, he is in a position to lay bare not a little that was uncomely and presumptuous. He was amazed at the total rout of the friends, when he could not but own how much was in his heart claiming utterance irrepressibly, without respect of persons, and in the fear of God.

But he addresses himself, above all, to Job, to whom he was about to speak with all possible candour. He did not set himself up unbecomingly, speaking of what he could not know, but as man to man, wholly dependent on God. He did not judge, but would fain appeal to him, and plead with him, as belonging to God, just like himself,

and as he, a fellow-creature made of clay, so that awe had no place, but weight of truth only. (Compare Job 13:21) For this already had Job expressed the longing desire, even though he had too boldly declared his readiness to litigate with Him who is over all. In disputing God's dealings with him, in asserting his own purity, without aught amiss, in imputing ungracious, capricious, arbitrary ways to God, Job had evidently put himself in the wrong. It is enough to answer that God is greater than weak man, and is necessarily sovereign, giving none account of His matters. Yet He speaks to man, slow to hear His voice, in dreams and visions of the night, to open the ear, and seal instruction, so as to restrain man from activity and pride: also by chastenings of bodily sickness and pain, for the awakening of the soul, when all else becomes distasteful. But most fully does He use a messenger, as interpreting his mind, however rarely found, to let man see his uprightness, as well as how gracious He is, in delivering from what is incomparably worse, by virtue of what He had ever before Him (Rom. 3:25), when the guilty one (now won to God) returns to more than wonted health, enjoys lowly happy intercourse with Him, and gives to his fellows a testimony, humbling but bright, of the undeserved mercy that delivers.

Such are the ways frequent with God, by dreams, chastenings, and messengers, to arouse man to a due sense of himself before God, and thereby rescue him from corruption, that he may be enlightened with the light of life. It is intelligible that men, no matter how erudite or superstitious, who knew not the gospel nor even the Spirit's application of the law to their own condition, should overlook the value of this wonderful

appeal from Elihu, himself doing the part of the interpreter with Job, the appeal of a man's heart purified by faith to unfeigned love, and filled with the sense of God's goodness, rich in resources to arrest the self-willed madness of the race. The everlasting gospel had its witness in Elihu, as surely as Noah preached righteousness to the ungodly antediluvians, whose judgment of old was not idle, nor did their destruction slumber. Mark the personal earnestness of the man, equally ready to listen as to speak, if by any means the soul should be won to a better appreciation of God, and therefore importunate in repeated calls, which weary all who share not the like love of souls for the Lord's sake. He was only the truer and more effective also, because he never dreams of sparing sin, even in word or thought, and was quick to feel for His honour who is the spring of all that is good. Not one of the disputants shows such a reckoning on grace in God as this young and valiant champion of the truth.

Job 34

The second discourse of Elihu has for its scope to prove that the divine equity in government is in no way to be doubted, and that Job, who did venture to impeach it, is himself deserving of grave censure, as giving countenance, in thought and word, to the evil and scornful. God, sovereign in Himself, cannot err in His ways, but is necessarily righteous. So Abraham reasoned in Genesis 18:25; so all men, unless their mind and conscience be defiled. Impossible to conceive of injustice in the Almighty. His servants may fail — never the Fountain of all good. And if it be in the highest degree unseemly to tax a king with worthlessness, how much

more to impute wrong to Him who is infinitely above all kings, and knows not the rich before the poor, having made both alike! Therefore under the invisible hand of God falls the mighty ruler whose guilt was marked of Him, spite of the darkness that enveloped it, now in the night, now openly, so as to warn others, as well as to deal with himself, and to relieve the oppressed. Submission of heart is, then, the only due feeling for man, that he may be taught more, as becomes one conscious of his faults, and turning from them in the fear of God. And what can be less consistent than, like Job, to insinuate unrighteousness to God, and withal appeal to His decision and desire his intervention? Elihu (who is sure of the sympathy of intelligent men) could not wish Job relieved, but rather tried to the uttermost for thus adding rebellion to his sin, and multiplying his words, not only among them, but at God.

And Elihu answered and said,

Hear, ye wise men, my words,

And ye men of knowledge give ear to me;

For the ear trieth words, and the palate tasteth food.

Let us choose for ourselves judgment,

Let us know among ourselves what [is] good.

For Job hath said, I am righteous,

And God [El] hath turned aside my right;

Against my right I shall lie:

My wound [is] mortal, without transgression.

Who [is] a man like Job?

He drinketh mockery like water,

And goeth in company with workers of iniquity,
So as to go with men of wickedness;
For he hath said, It profiteth not a man
That he should delight himself with God.
Therefore, hear me, ye men of heart;
Far be it from God [El] to do wickedness,
And [from] Shaddai to do perverseness.
For the work of man he reporteth to him,
And causeth each to find according to his way.
Yea, verily, God [El] doth not act wickedly,
And Shaddai doth not pervert the right.
Who committed to Him the earth?
And who established the whole world?
If He should set His heart on Himself —
Gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,
All flesh would expire together,
And man return to dust.
And if [thou hast] understanding, hear this,
Give ear to the voice of my words.
Yea, doth a hater of right govern?
And wilt thou condemn the mighty just One?
Shall one to a king say, Belial; to princes, Wicked?
Who accepteth not the person of princes,
Nor hath known the rich before the poor?

For the work of His hands [are] they all;

In a moment they die; even at midnight

Is a people shaken, and passeth away,

And the mighty are removed without hand.

For His eyes [are] on the ways of a man,

And He seeth all his steps.

There is no darkness nor death-shade,

Where the workers of iniquity may hide.

For He doth not regard man more,

That he should go to God [El] in judgment;

He breaketh the mighty without inquiry,

And He setteth up others in their stead.

Therefore He knoweth their works,

And overthroweth them in the night, and they are bruised. As wicked did He strike them publicly,31 Who purposely turned aside from after Him, And attended not to any of His ways, So that the cry of the poor should come to Him, And the cry of the oppressed He heareth.

And He giveth rest, and who can disturb?

And hideth His face, and who beholdeth it?

Whether as to a nation or to a man, the same,

That a corrupt man reign not,

Nor snares [be] to the people.

For had man [but] said to God [El],

I have suffered, I will not offend:

Things beyond [what] I see teach me:

I have done iniquity — I will not do it again.

According to thy judgment shall He requite him?

Nay, but thou hast rejected,

Thou hast chosen, and not I.

And what thou knowest, speak.

Let men of heart tell me,

And let a wise man hear me:

Job hath not spoken with knowledge,

And his words [were] not with wisdom.

Would that Job were proved to the uttermost,

Because of replies like men of iniquity;

For he addeth to his sin rebellion,

In the midst of us he mocketh [lit. clappeth],

And multiplieth his words against God [El].

Thus does Elihu vindicate God and His ways with man, which the three elders had so painfully misconstrued, not only to their own loss and the increased anguish of the sufferer, but to the dishonour of Him whom they knew too little to represent aright. Elihu would have his words subjected to the keenest discrimination. Truth has nothing to fear from this, if men listen with conscience toward God, not with the misjudged will which refuses all that lowers man, as all truth cannot but do, for he is fallen. But the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, as surely as fools despise wisdom and instruction. Therefore does he call men of wisdom and knowledge to hearken. There is an inner man no less than an outer, and he cannot escape responsibility.

Judgment surely becomes man to choose, and to know what is good in an evil world.

At once Elihu seizes on Job's self-justification, as if God could set aside the right, or treat with unfairness. This he brands as worthy of a scorner, and expresses for himself the pain with which he had heard Job's heroic strain, drinking not indeed iniquity like water, as Eliphaz had harshly said, but a taunting style, or mockery, which really tended to the encouragement of evil-doers. And was it comely to say that man is not profited from having pleasure with God? Elihu scouts the thought of iniquity with God, the Judge of all; and who or what was man to sit in judgment on the Almighty? Was it he, or who, that put Him in charge of the earth? And who founded the universe? Creation owes its being and conservation to His disinterested goodness, who had only to absorb His care on Himself, gathering up His all-quickening Spirit, and all flesh would breathe its last, and man, the chief of all here below, return to dust.

Besides, government has its rights, and reverence is due to those in power and dignity. Therefore he appeals to his understanding whether a hater of right governed, and he condemned the mighty Just One? If no man could address a king or prince with a disrespectful word, what was it to speak unworthily of Him who, infinitely higher than the highest, has no respect of persons, nor knows the rich before the poor, all being the work of His hands? Death comes in a moment; and the night is half spent when a people is shaken and pass away, and the mighty are removed, and not by hand. For all things are naked and open to His eyes with whom we have to do, the ways of a man and all his steps. Nor is there darkness or death-shade dense enough to hide the

workers of iniquity; neither needs He to look a second time on a man ere going to God in judgment, but is entitled, without further scrutiny, to break the mighty, and to set up others in their room. He takes cognisance of their deeds, and overturns in a night, and they are crushed, as wicked, struck openly before others, for deliberate slight of Him and His ways, and in vindication of the poor and oppressed who cried to Him. So truly sovereign is He, and withal just and merciful: nation or man makes no difference, He being above both, lest a corrupt man reign, and the people be ensnared.

Man — Job — should have rather humbled himself to God, bowing to His hand and owning his fault, with desire to be taught, and to sin no more. Was God to recompense according to Job's mind? It was he that repudiated, and he that chose, not Elihu. It was for Job, then, to speak what he knew. Elihu turns to men of discretion, that they may say whether such language was wise, or according to knowledge. He wished him not afflicted, but proved thoroughly, because of answers meet for or countenancing the wicked. For this was to add presumption in divine things, or a breaking away from authority, and this not without a sense of exultation over the rest, in a multitude of words to God, wherein there lacked not sin.

Job 35

It is not only unkind insinuation which has danger for the heart. There is need of vigilance and self-judgment. And we do well, always and in everything, above all to vindicate God, who needs nothing from us, and can in no way be a debtor to us, yet deigns to occupy Himself with us in infinitely condescending mercy end compassion.

Here Job had failed, not under the blows which fell on him so heavily and fast, but when stung by the evil surmisings of men who knew incomparably less of God than he; and as they could not help the sufferer to the secret none of them understood, so they hindered and provoked him by the cruel misunderstanding they expressed. Elihu lets him know plainly that he thought too much of himself, and forgot the majesty of God. One should not use complaints which imply failure in His moral government, who is infallibly right, and beyond measure good. None should indulge in the dream of blamelessness before God. The heavens are high above man; but God is high above the heavens, and if man will talk of himself or his doings, what can all this be to God, who is above all man's measures? And if He seem to disregard the cry of the oppressed, He has good reason, and they fail to ask aright; else their lamentations would soon change to songs of thankful praise in the night. To groan is not enough, as the brute may; it is to God that the tried should cry. God remains God, and is the judge of all, however slow to punish, as He surely will in His day. Feebleness in giving God credit for what He is spite of appearances, Elihu feels, had betrayed Job into no little impropriety of speech.

And Elihu answered and said,

Hast thou counted this for judgment,

[That] thou hast said, I am more right than God?

For thou askest what is the gain to thee,

What profit shall I have, more than by my sin?

I will answer thee words, and with thee thy friends.

Look at the heavens, and see,

And behold the clouds — they are higher than thee.

If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him?

Thy transgressions are multiplied, what doest thou to Him? If thou art righteous, what givest thou to Him?

Or what receiveth He from thy hand?

Thy wickedness [is] to man like thyself,

And thy righteousness to a son of man.

Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out,

They cry because of the arm of the mighty.

But no man saith, Where [is] Eloah my maker,

That giveth songs in the night,

That teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,

And maketh us wiser than the fowls of the heavens?

There they cry, but He answereth not,

Because of the haughtiness of the wicked.

Surely God [El] doth not hear vanity,

And Shaddai beholdeth it not.

Though thou say thou seest Him not,

Judgment [is] before Him, and wait thou on Him.

And now, because His anger hath not punished aught,

Doth He not very much regard insolence?

Therefore Job openeth his mouth to vanity,

He multiplieth words without knowledge.

Elihu did not tax Job with anything so presumptuous as a direct assertion of his own superior righteousness to

God's. But to impeach His ways because of conscious integrity under severe trial, to complain of His dealings as hard toward oneself, or as indifferent to others, what is this if not a virtual censure of His government, and implied preference of one's own thoughts? To judge from self, or anything here, to God, now especially that sin is come into the world, with all its bitter consequences and darkening influences, is always false ground; and Job needed to learn, as his friends yet more and with less excuse, that it is alone wise, becoming, and even safe to reason from Him and His revelation of Himself to ourselves or anything else. This Elihu could not do as those who have seen Jesus and the Father in Him the Son, and that Son a man on earth. But he does what he could under God's teaching, and from the heavens above man he points to His majesty above all. Man's sin is serious for himself, and may be so for his fellows; but what difference does it make for God? Not all the transgressors that dare most can darken a ray of His glory, though He may turn all, as He will, to exalt as well as to manifest what He is. And so with the righteousness of man: what does it confer on God? or what does He receive at man's hand? God is the unchanging One, always good, never unrighteous: it is man, the human race, which is affected by one's righteousness or iniquity.

Doubtless, in such a world as this, there never lacks an oppressor, and oppression abounds, and the oppressed cry out and wail because of the violence of the mighty. Is it that God does not hear or feel? Not so, but that even human anguish fails to lead to God. As the prophet, long after, complained of the pride and silliness of stricken Israel: "They have not cried unto me with their heart,

when they howled upon their beds." (Hosea 7:14.) So of men generally Elihu declares that none said, Where is Eloah my maker, who can change all and deliver at the worst extremity, thus giving songs in the night, teaching us more than the beasts of the field, and making us wiser than the birds of the heavens? Now it is this very God-consciousness which distinguishes man from every other animal of earth or air; not the mind, or as the heathen and others thought, but spirit — the highest part of the inner man. It is the spirit which, capable as it is of enjoying God, constitutes the wretchedness of the lost man, as it is therein by will he is God's enemy. Hence their reluctance to tell their sorrows to the one effectual source of help, and His apparent indifference, while all is open before Him, and known for ever. There are haughty as well as wicked; there are thoughtless of God who suffer from man. His eyes, His ears, are open to those who appeal, not to vain cries which have no more spiritual, or perhaps even moral, feeling than of the brutes that perish. Shaddai regards not, though all power be His to protect and deliver. But He will interpose, though men believe not, and saints are downcast, if not destroyed. Judgment is before Him. It is for the believer to wait on and for Him. Insolence of speech is none the less hateful because He not yet punishes. Job, therefore, had spoken to no purpose, and his words were multiplied without knowledge. It was sorrowful so to speak, but the truth.

Job 36, Job 37.

We have next the final discourse of Elihu, in which he proceeds to clench his justification of God's ways against Job, who had virtually impeached them. He no longer

deals with the human side, but rises up to God’s own character, and His moral government of men, wherein mercy rejoices against judgment. But there is, withal, that distinct reference to His glory in creation and providence which is characteristic of the Old Testament generally, whether law or prophets, yet with ample and definite application ethically: an admirable transition to the interposition of Jehovah Himself, which immediately follows.

And Elihu added, and said,

Wait for me a little, and I will show thee;

For [there are] yet words for Eloah.

I will fetch my knowledge from afar,

And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker:

For truly my words [shall] not [be] falsehood:

One upright in knowledge [is] with thee.32

Lo! God [El] [is] great, and despiseth not,

Great in strength — in heart.

He letteth not the ungodly live,

And giveth the afflicted their right.

He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous,

And with kings on the throne, yea, He establisheth them for ever, And they are exalted.

And if, bound in fetters, they be held with cords of affliction, Then He showeth them their work, And their transgressions that they have been mighty;

And He openeth their ear to the instruction,

And saith to them, that they turn back from vanity.

If they hear and serve, they end their days in good,

And their years in pleasantness;

But if they hear not, their soul passeth by [or like] the dart, And expireth in want of knowledge;

And the impious in heart lay up wrath,

They cry not when He bindeth them;

Their soul dieth like that of youths,

And their life among the polluted.

He delivereth the afflicted by His affliction,

And He uncovereth their ear by trouble;

And thee, too, He lureth out of the jaws of distress,

A wide place, on the site of which [is] no straitness,

And the setting of thy table fulness of fatness.

But hast thou filled up the judgment of the wicked?

Judgment and justice will take hold.

For beware, lest wrath stir thee against the blow,

And a great ransom turn not the scale in thy favour.

Will He value thy wealth? Not gold, nor all the powers of might. Desire not the might, the going up of nations on the spot. Take heed — look not to sin, So that thou wouldest choose this rather than affliction.

Lo! God exalteth by His power:

Who is a teacher like Him?

Who hath assigned to Him His way?

And who hath said, Thou doest wrong?

Remember that thou magnify His work,

Which mortals behold; all men looked on it;

Mortal man looketh attentively from afar.

Lo! God [is] great — we know not;

As for the number of His years, [there is] no searching. When He draineth off the drops of water, They condense into rain in place of its mist, So that clouds drop, they distil copiously on man.

Yea, doth one understand the spreading of the cloud?

The noises of His tabernacle?

Lo! He hath spread over it His light,

And hath covered the depths [or roots] of the sea.

For by them He judgeth the nations;

He giveth food in abundance.

On both hands He covereth lightning,

And giveth it a charge in striking.

The noise of it announceth concerning Him,

Store of wrath against perversity.33

Job 37

Yea, at this my heart trembleth,

And it standeth up from out of its place.

Hear, O hear, the roar of His voice,

And the rumbling that goeth forth out of His mouth.

Under the whole heaven He directeth it,

And His light into the borders of the earth.

After it roareth a voice,

He thundereth with the voice of His majesty,

And restraineth them not when His voice is heard.

God thundereth marvellously with His voice,

Doing great things which we know not.

For to the snow He saith, Fall to the earth,

And to the small rain, and to the rains of strength.

The hand of every man He sealeth up,

That all mortals of His work may come to knowledge.

And the wild beast goeth into lair,

And continueth in his abodes.

Out of its chamber cometh the hurricane,

And cold out of scatterings.

From the breath of God frost is given,

And the breadth of the waters is compressed.

And He loadeth with moisture the cloud,

He scattereth the cloud of His light,

Round about it turneth itself by His counsels,

That they may do all for which He commandeth them

On the face of the world-earth.

Whether for a scourge, or for His earth (or, land),

Or for mercy, He causeth it to come.

Hear this, O Job; stand and consider the wonders of God. Knowest thou how God charged them, And He maketh the lightning of His cloud to flash?

Knowest thou the balancings of a cloud,

The marvels of Him that is perfect in knowledge,

Thou, whose garments are warm,

When the earth becomes still from the south?

Dost thou with Him spread out the sky,

Firm as a molten mirror?

Teach us what we shall say to Him?

We cannot set forth because of darkness.

Shall it be told Him that I would speak?

Did he say that he would be destroyed?34

And now indeed one seeth not the light,

Which shineth brightly in the skies;

But a wind passeth by, and cleareth them away.

From the north cometh forth gold [that is, golden brightness]: With God [is] terrible splendour.

The Almighty! we do not find Him out; great in power and judgment, And great in righteousness, He will not give answer.

Therefore men fear Him: He looketh not on all the wise of heart.

Elihu had yet somewhat to say on behalf of the impugned dealings of God, who is not one-sided, like man, always apt to fail in power if benevolent, if mighty in compassionate goodness. In God not only is each reality perfect, but so is the whole, if we may so speak of the Infinite. If His greatness be beyond measure, so is His condescending mercy, and His heart, or

understanding, is as vast as His power. The Lord, the New Testament, asserts to us incessantly, the minutest care of His Father, while all things serve His will. Hence the assurance to the soul that knows Him, that, in the long-run, the godly shall not be permitted to wither, nor the afflicted be denied their right. But, as Job had already insisted most truly against his friends, it is not yet the day for the exercise and display of His earthly righteousness in His kingdom; and hence piety suffers, and iniquity of every sort, especially toward God, may flourish in high places. He speaks of the righteous, as under His eye, in the highest honour, but presently as bound with fetters of humiliating sorrow, which God nevertheless uses for good in showing them their ways of pride, opening their ears to discipline, and turning them back from the evil which they had failed to judge. Obedience is the path of good and joy; heedlessness, of ruin in every way. They do always err in their heart; they have not known His ways. Corruption, or hypocrisy, and its course and end, are graphically set forth; as is the patient goodness of God in using affliction for the blessing of him who is taught by it. Not that He has pleasure in inflicting sorrow, but contrariwise, when the lesson is learnt, He brings out the sufferer into a large place, where is no straitness, but all abundance. Still, wrong is wrong in whomsoever, and he that does it, though righteous in the main, must bear his own burden; and justly, for nowhere is it worse than in one who has so far forgotten God, after, it may be, long serving Him.

Job, therefore, had reason for care, lest his excited feeling might stir him up against the blow, and a worse thing befall him, where all resources fail, and the night,

wherein none can work, is no comfort. It is dangerous, but very possible, to choose what is worse than affliction, or because of it. Elihu presses how God works loftily by His power, as he challenges anyone to say, Who is a Master like Him? Who has given Him a charge concerning His way? or who has ever said, Thou hast acted unjustly? It were better to reflect that His work should be magnified which men have beheld, or celebrated, all looking at it with amazement, mortals gazing at it from afar.

Again, does he assert that God is great, or exalted, and to us incomprehensible, as the number of His years cannot be searched out. If the phenomena are so admirable, what the wisdom, power, and goodness that devised and formed all, with the most evident view to the earth and man on it, unto His own glory! What skill and care in His production of every drop of water filtered into rain, in or with His mist! What bountiful provision, as the high clouds drop down, and distil it on the multitudes of men! Then what outspreadings of the clouds, and what the tumult of His tabernacle! Not that there is any lack of light which He spreads over it, whilst He wraps up in darkness the roots of the sea. By these (the clouds and lightning) He judges nations, whilst He gives food in abundance; and most graphic is the image of God covering His hands with light, while He commands it where to strike, or against the enemy, the noise of the storm telling of Him, a store of wrath against iniquity, or, as others understand, the very cattle telling of the rising tempest.

There is every reason to connect, not to sever, Job 37. “Yea, also, at this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of its place.” And what can be finer than the description

that follows of the thunder and lightning, so vivid, that not a few conceive that Elihu sees a storm in progress, with its attendant roar and rumble, followed by the fall of snow or rain in varying measures? What can man do, in presence of God's awful voice, but seek to learn? Even the wild boast retires to covert, and keeps to his abodes, while the whirlwind comes out of its chamber, and out of the north the cold. But God's breath too works marvellous change. Out of it is given ice, and the broad waters are compressed; and He loads the cloud also with moisture, and scatters the clouds of His light. Turn about as it may, it none the less executes what He commands it on the face of the world of the earth. Whether it be as a chastising rod, if this be destined for His earth, or for kindness, it is God's causing it to them.

Who and what was Job then to arraign His ways? It were better to weigh all, stand still, and consider His wonders. Granted, that there is such a thing as law in the universe; but did Job know in whom to speak of them now, how God imposed it on the atmosphere, and caused the light of His cloud to shine? Did he know aught about the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge, and gives the earth rest [and so sultriness] from the south wind, so that all is changed to scorching heat? Man can feel, but can he explain? Had Job, with God, spread out the skies, strong as a molten mirror? If so, he could inform us what we should say to Him: otherwise we have no ability to set aught in order because of darkness. Shall it be told Him that I would speak? or did one say that he would be swallowed up? as Elihu insinuated for his presumption. Yet now one sees not the light which glances brightly in the skies; but a wind passes, and clears them. From the

north comes the golden light: as around Eloah is terrible majesty. Job had spoken thus unguardedly; but it is repudiated. He who does not gaze on the Son cannot face God. Shaddai, whom we cannot find out, excellent in power and in justice, and abounding in righteousness, will not oppress. Therefore men fear Him, as He regards not those that are wise in their own conceit.

Job 38, Job 39. - Jehovah's Intervention.

In a material age which questions the personality of Him who created and governs, who saves and will judge, one cannot wonder that it seems wholly incredible that He should appear and speak. Yet the great facts which abide before all eyes, and attest to every upright mind and conscience the only writings worthy to be considered divine revelations, bear witness to the same great truth, only on a larger scale. For it is impossible adequately to account for either the law or the gospel, either Old Testament or New, apart from the intervention of God. How God manifested His voice at this time is no more set out in detail here than elsewhere, save that He is said to have answered Job out of the storm or whirlwind. The fact is distinctly revealed, and this is enough for faith. It was what Job had ardently longed for, though dreading it, not because his conscience was bad, but through not yet knowing himself in His presence; and the end of the Lord that He is exceedingly pitiful and of tender mercy. The moral profit of such an intervention is beyond man's estimate.

And Jehovah answered Job out of the storm and said,

Who [is] this darkening counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, and I will ask thee, and make Me know.

Where wast thou when I founded the earth?
Declare if thou hast understanding.
Who fixed its measure that thou shouldest know,
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereon are its sockets sunken,
Or who laid down its corner-stone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
And [who] shut up the sea with doors,
When it burst forth — came out of the womb,
When I made the cloud its garment,
And thick darkness its swaddling-band,
And broke for it my law, and set bars and doors,
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther,
And here let one set against the pride of thy waves?
Hast thou, from thy days, commanded the mornings,
Made the dawn to know its place,
To take hold of the wings of the earth,
That the wicked might be shaken out of it,
That it may change like signet-clay,
And things stand forth like a garment,
And from the wicked their light is withheld,
And the uplifted arm is broken?
Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea,

And walked about the secret of the deep?

Have the gates of death been disclosed to thee?

And seest thou the gates of the shadow of death?

Hast thou strictly attended to the breadths of the earth?
Declare if thou knowest the whole of it.

What [is] the way the light dwelleth,

And darkness, where [is] its place,

That thou mightest bring it to its bound,

And that thou mightest know the path [to] its house?

Thou knowest! for thou wast then born,

And the number of thy days [is] great.

Hast thou entered into the storehouses of the snow,

Or hast thou seen the storehouses of the hail,

Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,

Against the day of battle and war?

Where is the way the light is distributed,

The east wind is dispersed over the earth?

Who divideth water-courses for the torrents,

Or a way for the lightning of thunder,

To cause it to rain on the land [where is] no man,

The wilderness wherein [is] no man,

To satisfy the desolate and waste,

And to make the place of the green herb to sprout?

Hath the rain a father? or who begetteth the drops of
dew? Out of whose womb cometh the ice?

And the frost of heaven, who bringeth it forth?

The waters hide themselves like stone,

And the face of the deep cleaveth together.

Canst thou bind the bands of the Pleiades;

Or unloose the traces of Orion?

Canst thou bring forth the Zodiac in his season,

And as for Arcturus with its young, guide them?

Knowest thou the laws of heaven?

Canst thou set its dominion over the earth?

Canst thou apply thy voice to the cloud,

And abundance of water shall cover thee?

Canst thou send forth lightnings, and they shall go

And say to thee, Here we [are]!

Who put wisdom in the inward parts?

Or who gave understanding to the perception?

Who regulateth the clouds by wisdom,

Or who inclineth the pitchers of heaven,

When the dust is poured into hardness,

And the clods are compacted together?

Thus magnificently does Jehovah challenge Job to that conference he had yearned after. But where is the hero now? Why silent before Him to whose seat he was so prompt to go? Doughty words he had uttered in abundance when he silenced his three friends. But now he must learn his own measure from Jehovah and confess it to Him, if the words of Elihu still left him

silent, and his own mouth failed as yet to vindicate the unfailing ways of God with His people.

The first thing done is to overwhelm him, who pretended to sit in judgment on God's moral ways, with the sense of his utter ignorance and powerlessness in the least things of divine energy, even in the creation. Where was Job when Jehovah founded the earth? What knew he of its measure fixed, or the line stretched on it, any more than of its deep sunken bases, or its corner-stone? And where when He set limits to the sea? He whose understanding stood baffled at such a question was not in a position to judge of His deep things. Angels were there indeed to shout for joy when the sea was born and swaddled in the clouds and thick darkness; but, while its wild lawlessness strove to rise up against the divine restraint, bars and doors were set and the irrevocable sentence fixed, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; and here be the pride of thy waves staid. Where was Job in all this? Yet was it but a little and comparatively low part of the Creator's power and wisdom. For what of the sky, of the dawn? Had Job, since the beginning of his days, commanded the morning, or caused the day-spring to disclose the wicked in their ways, setting all out plainly as the impression of a seal, or the embroidered figures of a robe, so that evil had no longer its congenial darkness, and the arm was arrested in the very act of striking? Had Job so much as visited the fountains of the sea, and gone to explore the secret of the great deep? Had the gates of death been revealed to him, or those realms of darkness impenetrable to mortal eye? Or even to the breadth of the earth, could he say that he had bent his attention, or assert that he knew it all? Where the way to light's dwelling, and where the place of

darkness, that he might undertake their direction at their source? Of course Job must know, whose immense space of life took in their creation! And then the magazines of snow and hail, had he entered and seen their vast stores reserved by Jehovah for the time of trouble when the day of battle rages for men that war? And where the way whence light or the lightning is parted, and the east wind is driven over the earth? Who divided the courses of the torrents from above, or the path of the thunder flash, followed on the one hand by rain, where man is not, but all is desolate and waste, and on the other to swell vegetation where it is already? And what could Job say of the rain or the process of dew, of ice or of hoar-frost? What part did he play in these arrangements of God for the supply or the check of moisture here below? And what force could he exert on the heavenly bodies? Could he bind the Pleiades or loose the traces of Orion? Could he lead forth Mazzaroth in its times, or guide the Bear and its sons? What did Job know of the laws of heaven? and could he arrange their dominion over the earth? Could he call aloud to the clouds to cover him with abundance of waters? Could he commission the lightnings to stand submissive at his summons? Yet how small a part is all this of God’s ways, whose it is to put wisdom within and to give understanding to the spirit, who numbers the clouds and inclines (or stays) the pitchers of heaven, when the dust is dissolved, and the clods are compacted together!

From the wonders of inanimate creation above, beneath, and around, Jehovah now turns to the phenomena of the animal kingdom. The lion, the raven, the wild goat or ibex, the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle successively appear, to convince of

ignorance and powerlessness him who ventures to sit in judgment on God’s doings.

Dost thou hunt prey for the lioness,

And fill the desire of the young lions,

When they couch in dens — abide in the covert in ambush?

Who provideth for the raven his meat,

When his young cry to God [El] — wander without food?

Knowest thou the time when the wild goats bear?

Watchest thou over the calving of the hinds?

Numberest thou the months that they fulfil?

And knowest thou the time of their bearing?

They bow themselves, they bring forth their young,

They cast away their pangs.

Their young fatten, grow up in the desert,

They go forth, and return to them no more!

Who sent forth the wild ass free,

And who loosed the bands of the fleeing one?

Whose house I made the desert, and his abode the salt land. He laugheth at the tumult of the city, The cries of the driver he heareth not, The range of mountains [is] his pasture, And he seeketh after every green thing.

Will the wild ox choose to serve thee?

Will he pass the night over thy crib?

Dost thou bind the wild ox in the furrow of his cord?

Doth he harrow the valleys after thee?

Wilt thou trust him because his strength [is] great?

And wilt thou leave unto him thy labour?

Dost thou trust him that he will bring back thy seed,

And gather up thy threshing-floor?

The wing of the ostrich waveth joyously:

Is it the pinion and plumage of the stork?

For she leaveth on the earth her eggs,

And warmeth [them] on the dust,

And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,

And that the wild beast may trample them.

She (lit. he) is hard on her young [as if] not for her;
Without fear her labour is in vain;

For God hath caused her to forget wisdom,

And hath not given her a portion in understanding;

What time she lifteth herself up on high,

She laugheth at the horse, and at his rider.

Dost thou give to the horse might?

Dost thou clothe his neck with quivering mane?

Dost thou make him leap like the locust?

The majesty of his snorting is terrible.

They paw in the valley, and he exulteth in strength;

He goeth forth to meet the armour.

He laugheth at fear, and trembleth not,

Nor turneth back from the face of the sword.

Against him rattleth the quiver, the blade of spear and lance. With rush and rage he swalloweth the ground, And stayeth not fixed when the trumpet soundeth.

Among the trumpets he saith, Aha!

And from afar he scenteth the battle,

The thunder of the chieftains, and the shouting.

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,

And spread his pinions to the south?

Doth the eagle mount up at thy bidding,

And build his nest on high?

He inhabiteth a rock, and lodgeth

On the tooth of a rock, and a fastness.

Thence he espieth food; afar his eyes behold,

And his young ones lap blood,

And where the slain [are], there [is] he.

If the king of wild beasts is first named, it is not without purpose that the raven follows. The contrast is marked; but Jehovah cared for both. He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. Was Job the one to hunt prey for the lioness, and fill the craving of her young, themselves soon enough learning to catch the prey, and springing from the thickets where they couched? Was it for Job to provide the raven with meat? Did not the cry of its young enter the ear of God, as they wandered, voracious, without food? Again, was it Job that looked after the mountain goat, or kept watch over the hinds at a time most critical for themselves and their offspring? Assuredly there is not one whose months El does not count, whose time of bearing He does not

know. He that reckons the hairs of our heads, sees every sparrow that falls, and has His part in all, as the Saviour let the trembling disciples know for their encouragement, as they went forth at His word. So here Jehovah shows that, if man boasts His scanty knowledge of beasts and birds, and counts their classification science, it is His province, not man's, to enter into and watch over the need of every one, the most removed from human habitation, no loss than those whose croakings disturb man's ease, it may be, but are ever before God, who has made them all, and provides for each as a faithful Creator.

Think of the blindness of rationalism, which, in so magnificent a disproof of human presumption and complaint of God, sees no more than Job's ignorance of the time a hind, or other animal named, takes in gestation! Clearly it is a question here, not of zoological lore, but of that beneficent care which accompanies perfect knowledge of every creature. If God exercised such vigilant oversight, according to the goodness and wisdom which made them, over young or old, beast or bird, even the least familiar or most inaccessible, was it not for Job to listen and learn, instead of darkening counsel by words without knowledge? And certainly His ways with saints are incomparably deeper than His dealings with the mere animal realm. Yet there we see everywhere His sovereign disposal. He, not man, has made them what they are, and ordered their habits and their habitations. If He has given some to be the burden-bearers of man, He has given others immunity from any such servitude, as the wild ass, with its house in the desert, and its dwelling-place in the steppe, where a city's tumult, and a driver's cries are unknown, and the

mountain range he can reconnoitre at will, as he searches out every green thing.

Nor can Job, or any other, pretend, whatever their thoughts or talk, that they can reduce the wild ox to the purposes of man in ordinary labour, or to submit quietly to his control or care. His strength might be invaluable; but He who made all, and gave Adam dominion over fish and fowl, cattle, every reptile, and all the earth did not bind the wild ox to the furrow of his cord, nor to harrow after Job; nor did He ask Job to leave labours of the field to his responsibility, whether at the beginning, or at the end.

And as to the ostrich, let its wing speed ever so joyously, still God is sovereign here, let man reason as he may, and makes it to differ as widely as one can conceive, from the pinion and plumage of the stork, whose care for its offspring is proverbially familiar. No bird is, on the contrary, so stolid as she, where natural instincts are usually strongest, none less cautious. But this is not without God, who takes in more than man can grasp, and is pleased, of His own will and wisdom, to deprive the ostrich of wisdom, though He has also endowed her with a swiftness which mocks the swiftest horse with its rider. Let man then mark, learn, and worship, and not set up to judge God or to murmur. This were folly more guilty than the racer’s of the desert, as well as irreverence and rebellion.

From this Jehovah turns to the war-horse, described in a way worthy of Him who spoke, which makes the more vivid impression, as here He comes down to where we might be disposed to think ourselves at home. Other animals might be more or less strange and distant; but

though man, and Arab man above all, might conceive himself to have some title to speak of what he most loves to use for use or ease, for pride or love, what had he to do with giving the horse its might or fluttering mane? its locust-like bound? the glory of its snorting, a terror to others? its pawing, impatient of restraint, and exulting in its strength? or its undismayed advance, no matter what the clang or the flash of arms? See how with impetuous rage it seems to bite the ground, so that it is not to be held in when the trumpets sound, and it answers each blast with Aha! as it scents the fight from afar, and the thunder and the shouting of the chiefs.

Next, was it man that taught the hawk to soar, and spread his wings to the land of Teman? Was it he who bade the eagle mount up, and build his house on the high rock, whence his piercing eye descries food, or gives his young ones to lap blood? or himself to be where the slain are found?

Job 40, Job 41. - Jehovah's Renewed Intervention.

It is Jehovah-God then, who alone orders, alone knows, with a beneficent wisdom which takes in every creature, and not least those which are obviously outside all the care or even ken of man. Is he then either to contend with God, or, if he be so presumptuous, can he pretend to instruct God? Job feels and owns his vileness; he proceeds no farther in such a path; and Jehovah gives a final word in what follows.

Job 40

And Jehovah answered Job, and said,

Is the censurer to correct with the Almighty?

The reprover of God, let him answer it.

And Job answered Jehovah, and said,

Lo! I am vile: what shall I answer Thee?

I have laid my hand on my mouth;

Once have I spoken, but I will not reply,

Yea, twice, but I will add no more.

And Jehovah answered Job out of the storm, and said,

Gird up now thy loins like a man:

I will ask thee, and cause thou Me to know.

Wilt thou also annul My judgment?

Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be justified?

Or hast thou an arm like God (El),

And with a voice like Him dost thou thunder?

Put on then majesty and grandeur,

And honour and beauty put on;

Scatter abroad the outbursts of thine anger,

See every proud one, and humble him;

See every proud one — make him bow,

And tread down the wicked in their place;

Hide them in the dust together; bind their faces in secret: Then even I will praise thee, that thy right hand saveth thee.

Behold, now, Behemoth, which I made with thee:

He eateth chives as an ox. Behold, now, his strength [is] in his loins, And his might in the muscles of his belly As a cedar he bendeth his tail;

The sinews of his thighs are knit together,

His bones [are] tubes of copper, his spine as a bar of iron. He [is] chief of the ways of God: his Maker presented his scythe, For the mountains bring food for him, And all the beasts of the field play there.

Under the lotuses he lieth down,

In the covert of the reed and the fen;

The lotuses cover him with their shade,

The osiers of the water-course cover him.

Lo, a flood overfloweth — he hasteth not away,

He is confident when a Jordan rusheth to his mouth.

Doth [one] take him before his eyes?

Doth [he] pierce through the nose with snares?

Job 41

Dost thou draw leviathan with an angle,

Or, with a cord thou lettest down, his tongue?

Dost thou put a rush in his nose,

Or bore his jaw with a thorn?

Will he multiply supplications to thee?

Will he speak to thee tender things?

Will he make a covenant with thee?

Wilt thou take him [for] ever as a slave?

Wilt thou sport with him as a bird, and bind him for thy girls? Let partners bargain for him — divide him among traders! Dost thou fill his skin with pikes, or his head

with fish-spears? Put thine hand on him — remember the battle —

Thou wilt not do it again:

Behold, his hope proveth false.

Even at the sight of him is not [one] cast down?

None is so fierce as to provoke him.

And who [is] he that maketh a stand before Me?

Who first gave to Me, and I must repay?

Under the whole heaven it [is] Mine.

I will not be silent about his parts,

And the matter of his powers, and the beauty of his structure. Who hath uncovered the face of his garment?

Into his double jaws who entereth in?

The doors of his face, who hath opened?

Round about his teeth [is] terror;

A pride [are] the concave shields, shut up [as] a close seal; One to another they join, and air entereth not between them; One to another they adhere, they hold together and separate not. His sneezing flasheth forth light, And his eyes [are] as eyelids of the dawn.

Out of his mouth proceed torches, sparks of fire escape. Out of his nostrils issue the smoke, as out of a seething pot and cauldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame cometh out from his mouth. In his neck strength lodgeth, and before him danceth terror. The flakes of his flesh are fitted close together;

They are fixed fast on him, immovable.

His heart [is] firm as a stone, as a nether [millstone]. At his rising up the mighty tremble; from terror they miss their mark. The sword of his overtaker doth not hold, spear, mace, nor lance; He reckoneth iron as straw, copper as rotten wood;

The bolt (child) of the bow causeth him not to flee;

Sling-stones are changed into stubble for him;

Clubs are reckoned as stubble;

He laugheth at the shaking of a javelin.

His under parts [are] the sharpest of shards;

He spreadeth a threshing-roller on the mire,

He maketh the deep boil as a pot,

He maketh the sea like a pot of ointment:

After him he maketh the path to shine —

One would think the deep hoary.

There is not on the dust dominion over him [or, like his], Who is made to be without dread;

He looketh on all that is high,

He [is] king over all the sons of pride.

It is one thing to review the opinions of men, as Job might those of his friends, quite another to sit in judgment on Jehovah's ways. Job had wished to come near His seat, and plead his own cause. Here He was now, if Job could answer, according to the boldness of his reproofs. The only answer he does make is to acknowledge himself vile. He had no answer to the divine challenge beyond the confession implied in laying his hand on his mouth. Once he had spoken, but he

would not reply; twice, but he would add no more. The folly of insubmission is now before his soul. He had spoken too much: silence became him. It was for Jehovah to speak.

And Jehovah does answer out of the storm, and challenge Job to gird up his loins as a hero: let the creature then cause the Creator to know, seeing that He now asks questions at his mouth! What a proud thing is the flesh, and no better in the saint than in the sinner! Would Job also arraign and set aside the moral dealings of Jehovah? — nay, more, condemn Him, in order to have himself justified? Exactly the reverse is that which grace produces in every soul that is born of God — readiness to take His part against self, to sit in judgment on one's own ways, and bow to the word, let it blow ever so witheringly on every way or word, thought and feeling. Such is repentance, always found in a saint, but often needing to be more inwrought where its solemn lessons were too hastily learnt at the first. Wisdom is beyond power, and in nothing more than in moral ways. Perhaps then, if Job fail here, he can compare in strength. Has he an arm like El? Does he thunder with a like voice? Let us see him deck himself with majesty, and grandeur, and honour, and beauty. What! that poor object of compassion! Let him scatter abroad the outbursts of his anger. What! that woe-begone sufferer! Yes, if he venture to sit in judgment on God's dealings, let him first see every proud one and humble him, see every proud one — make him low, and tread down the wicked in their place. Compared with such a title to speak of God, it were a light thing to hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret; yet Jehovah declares that even then He would praise Job, and own

that his right hand saves him. What painstaking goodness in casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, that he who glories may glory in the Lord!

Then his attention is drawn to two creatures of God, not now land-animals or birds, as in the former discourses, but amphibious, though there have not been wanting people of erudition who contend for the elephant as meant by Behemoth (Job 41:15), thinking that the name is a plural. majest. of. This, however, does not suit the description, particularly as to the tail; and the name is, as competent men believe, an Egyptian designation (p — ehe — mo, literally water ox) of the hippopotamus in Shemitic form. Again, the Leviathan here described (Job 41) seems to be beyond doubt, not the dolphin or the whale, as some learned men have argued, but the crocodile. So most have been convinced since Bochart (Hieroz. iii. pp. 705, etc., 737, etc.). It is impossible to conceive anything more graphic than the accounts of each, nor more forcible than the inference for Job or any other. If such the might of mere brutes, the effect of God’s creative will, what folly to resist, censure, or even judge His ways!

One cannot doubt that there was divine design in the detailed description of the river-horse (or ox), on the one hand, and, on the other, in the still more minute particulars of the crocodile. To an upright mind like Job’s, they were directly and powerfully suited to overwhelm him under the sense that He who could do everything deigned to make man the object of His ways on earth, and ordered all things to form him in submission of heart to Himself. It is not here the vast height, and depth, and extent, and variety of His

arrangements in inanimate nature, or in the animal world, which, inexplicable as they may be to man, constitute so admirable a whole; but now two mighty objects, familiar to those near the Nile, which vindicate God's title as the only One who can judge absolutely in wisdom and goodness, as supreme in power and providence. Job therefore should be deeply ashamed of his self-sufficiency.

Huge as Behemoth is, he eats herbage like the ox. Unlike the elephant, which is vulnerable underneath, sinews are there of surpassing strength; like a cedar he bends his tail, and the sinews of his thighs are firmly knit together, his bones as copper and iron: yet, masterpiece as he is of God's ways, he is furnished only with a scythe-like tooth to graze the mountains, where all the beasts of the field gambol. And high ground is not where he loves to lie down, but under the lotuses, where the reed and the fen yield a covert, as the lotuses act as a shade, and the osiers too. No swelling floods startle him: he awaits with composure a Jordan rushing to his mouth. The closing words are difficult, and very different the impressions on the translators' minds, some regarding them not as a question, nor ironically, but as descriptive of his capture.

But in this at least we may see a contrast with what follows of the crocodile, where ordinary means are ridiculed in the opening words of Job 41 for securing that formidable saurian. But, if secured, is he soft and yielding, ready to do perpetual service? or can you sport with him as a bird or hind, as a plaything for girls? Ah! no commodity for traders is he, nor game for the hunter, nor safe adversary for battle; the very sight might prostrate, and foolhardy is the man that would provoke.

Yet what is that to making a stand before God? and who ever gave to Him that He should repay, Whose is all under heaven?

Details are then given, from verse 12 to the end. Who would divest that creature of his coat? Who would enter his double jaws, or open the doors of his face, with terror round his teeth? Then what majesty (or pride) the concave shields, close as a seal, so that breath cannot enter, and that every part holds together inseparably! What light in his sneezing! Eyes and mouth emit brightness, or sparks of fire, and smoke out of his nostrils as of a cauldron. Strength lodges in his neck, and terror characterises all before him: what is left elsewhere in him is firm and immovable, his heart solid as stone, as the nether millstone. No wonder the mightiest tremble at his uprising — that they miss their mark through fear — that, if one does overtake him, the sword does not hold, nor spear, mace, nor lance; for he counts iron as straw, copper as rotten wood, and pays no heed to arrows, sling-stones, clubs, or javelins. Nor can any account be more condensed or expressive than of the lower parts, the underneath being compared to the sharpest of shards, as he rolls it like a sledge over the rivers. He is still more at ease in the water, making the deep boil as a pot, and the sea like an apothecary’s mixture. A ship does not more distinctly make its path shine after it with its hoary wake.

And that there is no such sway on earth as his is attested remarkably by the famous Lacépède, cited by the late Mr. Carteret Carey, who tells us that, not sharing his subsistence with the vulture (like the eagle), nor with the tiger (like the lion), he exercises a dominion more absolute than that of the lion and of the eagle; and

he enjoys an empire so much the more durable, as, belonging to two elements, he can the more easily avoid snares; as, having less heat in the blood, he has less need to repair power not so soon exhausted; and as being able longer to resist hunger, he less frequently engages in dangerous conflicts. These, and other elements, still more obvious and already stated, of a physical kind, instinctively contribute to his fearlessness; so that, though a reptile, he can look the highest in the face, as formidable with his tail as with his teeth, not to speak of his impenetrable armour: a veritable king over all the sons of pride or ferocity.

But this may suffice. It was in no way intended to send Job, or any other, to study the external works of God as a means of learning His mind, but a most impressive proof taken from His least things, which nevertheless overawe him who regards them with the smallest attention, and fill him with the sense of his own feebleness. What then are His great things far beyond man's province? What the unseen and eternal, the existence of which, and his own relation to which, none can exclude, save by the most hardening unbelief to his own degradation and destruction as well as to God's dishonour! This, however, was not Job's fault, nor yet of his friends. But the unparalleled trials which had put him to the proof had been used of God, not only to disprove the narrow and uncharitable hypothesis of those who see in God only a Judge, and in trials only a proof of the wickedness of those who suffer them, but also to detect the folly of a saint's indulging a good opinion of himself to the forgetfulness of God's sovereign grace, and to convince him of the need of his dependence on Him and of the value of confidence in Him. Whatever appearances may

say, whatever the trials, God is above all evil, working by all things for the good of those that love Him. And this, assuredly, is love, though it be not that deepest demonstration He gave later on, when He sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. It is the love of the same God, who is love.

Job 42 - Jehovah's End.

We have now the second and closing answer of Job to Jehovah, while the three friends have not a word to say, as silent before His solemn intervention and appeal, as they had been silenced by the sufferer, and unable to speak with Elihu. Here is the moral solution of the book before formal sentence on the great controversy was pronounced in verses 7, 8, or the open mark of divine blessing followed, as in verses 10-17.

And Job answered Jehovah, and said,

I know that Thou canst do all things,

And no purpose is cut off from Thee.

Who [is] this darkening counsel without knowledge?

Therefore I declared what I understood not,

Things too wonderful for me, that I knew not.

Hear, I pray Thee, and I will speak:

I ask Thee, and make Thou me to know.

By the hearing of the ear I heard Thee;

But now mine eye seeth Thee:

Therefore do I loathe [myself], and repent in dust and ashes.

The work is now effected in the sufferer's soul. Sincerity there had been throughout; but the very consciousness of integrity had put off the lesson when taught, or rather turned aside, by the thorny suspicions of the three friends; and he who needed to learn his own nothingness before God, and absolute indebtedness to grace, was as much lifted up in spirit above their insinuations, as crushed by dealings of God, of which he could understand nothing. Elihu had brought in the blessed light of soul discipline, whether to make God known where utter darkness reigned, or to purge away hindrances to a better knowledge and a deeper faithfulness. But Jehovah's intervention brought him into His presence, in a self-judgment which made him feel, not the glory of God only, as never before, but himself nothing but an object of His grace. How much more should this be true of us who now know Him in redemption, and behold His glory in the face of Jesus glorified on high!

The friends are silent; Job does not believe in his heart only but makes confession with his mouth. He murmurs, he resents, he questions no more, but frankly owns, as a thing realised in his soul, that Jehovah is able for all things, and no purpose withheld from Him. Evil in men or Satan, ruin everywhere in this fallen world, had touched Him in no wise. His own difficulties and reasonings were but the insubmissiveness of heart of one who, as Jehovah had Himself said in His exordium, darkened counsel without knowledge. It was Job that proclaimed his own ignorance, declaring that he did not understand, things too wonderful for him that he knew not. Not a word now about his friends, or their lack of intelligence, as of candour and charity, however true. He

judges himself before God; and uses the words which God had applied to him, the withering proof of his presumption, as the lowly expression of one who felt his need of learning from God, and of desire that it might be wrought in him. Finally, he acknowledges that anything he had previously known of God was but like a report from afar, compared with that near and deep sight of Him which made him loathe himself, so as to repent in dust and ashes. He humbles himself under God's mighty hand, that he may be exalted in due time.

But God humbles the proud, and this meanwhile where He is more or less known, as He will for the most stubborn in a day at hand. So He turns to those who had displeased Him in His dealings with Job: —

"And it came to pass that, after Jehovah spake these words to Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the Temanite, Mine anger is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken to (or of)35 Me rightly as My servant Job. And now take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go unto My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and Job, My servant, shall pray for you — for surely his face I accept — that I may not deal with you [after your] folly, for ye have not spoken to36 (or, of) Me rightly as My servant Job. And Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, [and] Zophar the Naamathite, went and did as Jehovah had said unto them; and Jehovah accepted the face of Job. And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job in his praying for his friends; and Jehovah increased all that Job had two-fold. And there came unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all his former acquaintance, and ate bread with him in his house, and condoled with him, and comforted him over all the evil

which Jehovah had brought upon him; and they gave him each a kesitah, and each a ring of gold. And Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. And he had seven sons and three daughters; and he called the name of the first Jemima, and the name of the second Kezia, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And there were not found in all the land women fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them inheritance in the midst of their brethren. And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations; and Job died, old and sated [with] days."

Thus did the Supreme Arbiter of all moral relationship decide in Job's favour, not because of his patience, great as it was proverbially, but because, in spite of the most severely searching trial — and not least from those who should have helped on the work of grace, instead of judging him ruthlessly according to appearances, which made them unjust to the sufferer, and left them wholly ignorant of God's mind — he had at length submitted absolutely to God, and vindicated Him in the recognition of his own worthlessness; while his friends failed to own their error, not to Job only or Elihu but even to Jehovah, preserving to the last the sullen reserve of pride, not judged but wounded. No repudiation of themselves did they manifest, no repentance in dust and ashes, like Job, any more than a real and thorough magnifying of Him who thus deigned to make known His decision for the profit of faith throughout all time here below. It is clear and certain that all done in the body, yea, that the counsels of the heart, with the hidden things of

darkness, are yet to stand out in the day that is coming; but God reveals this to act on our souls now, in promoting, to the highest degree, both self-judgment and the refusal of censoriousness. No notion can be more false, or less holy, than putting all off till then. Faith seeks and finds the blessing of it now; but if of faith, it is by grace, which judges self in God's light, and abhors all hasty and acrimonious judgment of others. In that day shall every true soul have praise of God, who may, as in this case before us, vindicate one, and rebuke another, even now. But then, and only then, does the Christian look for it absolutely, which keeps him peaceful and dependent while waiting till the Lord come.

Here the reversal was complete. Jehovah intimated to Eliphaz His anger against himself and his two companions: they had not spoken to Him rightly, like His servant Job. They must needs therefore approach Him by sacrifice through the very one they had so grievously misjudged, Godward and manward, persecuting him whom, we may perhaps say, God had smitten, and certainly talking to the grief of one whom He had wounded. And His servant Job, whose prayers they had contemned, would pray for them, lest they should be blotted out of the book of the living, for indeed they had wrought folly, in their thoughts and words at least, and Jehovah otherwise must deal with it on them, for they had not vindicated Him like Job. They therefore had thus to bow; while favour and blessing more than ever crowned Job, Jehovah turning his captivity when he prayed for his friends. How gracious, as well as righteous, are His ways! How holy and wholesome! So He proved Himself then; and so He is still, when far

more fully, yea perfectly, revealed in Christ. And as we see then the form of pious confession by burnt-offering, so follows, in accordance with that day, the outward seal of earthly blessing in divinely marked abundance. Men may point to the twofold increase with wonder; and compare Job's household and stock at the end of his trial with its account before the trial began. Do they think God cannot act as He will, or count, or write? What senseless unbelief! He is Sovereign, and nothing could be more suitable or impressive then, in itself to be a lesson for man always; and if He does not so bless now, it is because other and higher ways of grace are in accomplishment, in harmony with the cross of Christ on earth, and His glorification in heaven. But He is the same God, ever good and ever wise, and His end then, as also His beginning now, is, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Nor does it seem to me uninstructive that the daughters are singled out by name, especially in a quarter, and before the days, where men are all, and women but playthings or upper slaves. Not such was God's mind, even for those who feared Him, outside the privileges and polity of Israel. How contrasted the imposture of man more than two thousand years after! The days of Job, confirmed by all else in the book, fall in with the patriarchal condition; as the style of the book seems to point to Moses. The use of the divine names would perfectly suit in this ease; as it also furnishes a very striking demonstration of their folly, who, following a strangely shallow notion, construe them into evidence of different writings separated by a long interval of time. The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets alike refute the notion as opposed to facts and displaying ignorance of

their distinctive design under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the same writer.

May the believer humbly, happily, and holily enjoy the wisdom and goodness of God in His word, nowhere more conspicuous and withal profound than in that which unbelief misreads to its sin, darkness, misery and ruin; as credulous of its own conceits, as ready to sit in judgment on God and His word.

London: G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square. 1879.

1 That is, whole, sound, sincere.

2 Perhaps the construction may be, as many think, “drinketh up my spirit.”

3 Possibly it may mean the streams, not caravans, that wind about.

4 Or, Eastern rush.

5 Or, hypocrite.

6 Literally with, and hence as fast as.

7 Many understand this difficult phrase as, “But I am conscious of nothing myself;” or, again, “But in this state I have no self-possession.”

8 Or, A lantern, contemptible in etc,

9 Or, according to the Ketib, I have no hope, or I will not wait. Others contend that the Keri means until I am slain, I wait; or, I wait for Him that He may slay me.

10 Literally, in his not day.

11 Hence, perhaps, “to embolden.”

12 Or, archers.

13 That is, a few years.

14 Or, if not.

15 Or, an end to.

16 The Peschito, followed by not a few moderns, has here calamity, and certainly this sense seems easier. The Vulgate, Authorized Version, and many critics, prefer “strength.”

17 Literally, who will grant…?

18 Literally, who will grant…?

19 Literally, the.

20 Or hypocrite.

21 is a hard word to account for and connect with the scope. Gesenius, etc., take it as “draw out,” or “unsheath” like a sword from its scabbard. Gesenius owns, however, that Schnurrer’s suggestion is not to be despised, who takes it as abridged for with compensation in the vowel lengthened for the dropped, in the sense of “demand,” as in Luke 12:20.

22 Or he, that is, man.

23 Literally, weeping.

24 Pareau, who has written elaborately on this chapter (De Immortalitatis ac Vitae Futurae Notitiis ab antiquissimo Jobi Scriptore adhibitis), understands this to be vitrum auratum, or vitrum auro ornatum, a combination which seems to have been highly prized of old, but unknown to moderns, like some few other of their rarities.

25 That is, O that I were as in, etc.

26 Or, counsel

27 The question is between Job’s own door, or the gate of the city, where deliberations and justice were sought, which Job attended from the country.

28 is taken by the Sept. and Vulgate, etc., as “the palm” or sand-tree, usually called from its towering straightness.

And this sense would fall in with the context excellently. But the Jewish Rabbinical commentators, following the Talmud, and followed by Ewald, Rosenmüller, Dillmann, Delitzsch, etc., regard it as “the phoenix.” Bochart (Hieroz. 819) reminds us that so some of the fathers took the of Psalm 92:13, as a testimony to resurrection. It is needless to argue against the reference to this fabulous bird, which suits the context as badly as it does in itself. For the common view see Psalm 139, Habakkuk 1:9 where the sea or shore is not added; and here it was the less necessary, as the sand of the desert is no less countless: so in Targ., Syr., Arm.; so Luther, Trem. and Jun.; so even Gesenius, Umbreit, and Renan, not to speak of orthodox scholars in general.

29 This is generally taken to mean that, if Job laid aside his dignified gravity, so far as to smile on them, they could scarcely believe in his paying them such notice. But the sense seems given correctly in the text, and more agreeably to the connection. It has been also suggested to understand it as intimating that they would not believe that Job would laugh at them, nor cause to fall the light, or dignified cheerfulness of his face. Mr. Carey considers to mean “they presume” (literally, trust), and the sense to be that, spite of his graciousness, they do not carelessly provoke or take advantage.

30 After the Kethib many, as Ewald, Delitzsch, etc., read, tempest or crash of the storm. Gesenius, etc., read,, “Thou terrifiest me” or terrifying. The Keri is followed in the Authorised Version, and here.

31 Lit. in the place of those seeing.

32 This has also been taken to mean that it is One perfect in knowledge who dealt with Job (cf. Job 37:16); and verse3 has been rendered, in unison with this, as a raising of his thought to the Afar, and an ascribing right to his Maker, as the ground for speaking confidently in His name. The double preposition, and, it is argued, favours this; but I greatly doubt all this.

33 The difficulty of arriving at a sure rendering of verse 33 is great, from the ambiguity of the terms. Some take as God’s noise, not the clouds; others as his will or his friend. Moreover doesmean possession, store, or cattle? or, as Lee zeal? Hence the last clause is by many taken as “the cattle even announce) Him uprising;” for as may mean “also” “even” or “wrath,” so it is a question whether means a “rising up” or “perversity,”

34 That is, if one should say so, he would perish.

35 The most common version and sense is that given in the A.V. “of” or “in respect to” as in Luther, Piscator, Trem. and most other translations. The LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate give “before” or in presence of God. But if subjective reasons had not wrought to confound with, none would deny that simply means to me. Noldius does try to muster examples, but not one seems parallel to the present case. They seem contextual or elliptic, and in the sense of direct object in question. At any rate the reader has the different renderings before him.

36 Ibid.