

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE WITNESS OF JOB TO JESUS CHRIST.

BY WILHELM VISCHER, Lecturer in Theology at the Seminary of Bethel, near Bielefeld, Germany.

Translated by the Rev. Allan Ellison, B.D., Rector of Washfield, Tiverton.

INTRODUCTION.

[The following expository article on the Book of Job has appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten* for the year 1933, pp. 386-414, and is here given in an English translation by kind permission of the author.

"Bethel" is the headquarters of the school of theology associated with the name of Dr. Karl Barth; and *Zwischen den Zeiten*, "*Between the Ages*," is the bi-monthly review issued by this school of theologians, to which Barth himself and many other able theological thinkers are contributors.

The metrical translations of portions of the dialogues are the author's own, based of course on Luther's Bible. For their rendering into English blank verse I am myself responsible. In a few cases these are paraphrases, rather than translations, and are intended to convey the general sense of longer passages. Many will be found to correspond closely to the Revised Version of the English Bible.

Any notes or other passages for which the translator is responsible are marked with initials.—THE TRANSLATOR.]

WHAT is the actual question to which an answer is sought in the Book of Job with such passionate earnestness?

Is it in fact, as usually supposed, the question as to the meaning of suffering put somewhat thus—Why does God allow an innocent person to suffer? That this question comes up on the first glance at Job himself, and that it is debated in the speeches in the book, hardly anyone will be inclined to deny. And yet it should not escape an attentive reader that the book puts the question somewhat differently, that in fact it is a different question which is put. Job's sufferings are not the starting-point; they are not the impulse which puts the dramatic speeches into movement. Before Job suffers he is made the subject of a controversy. His suffering is not the actual problem, but rather the means by which the real question is brought forward for decision. What this actual question is becomes apparent at once when we open the book, and follow its course of thought without prejudice.

CHAPTERS I AND 2.

There was a man who lived in the land of Uz. He was a singularly pious man, and at the same time a man of unusual wealth (chap. i, vv. 1-5). It is with regard to him the question is raised, and this takes place in the following manner. In the second scene, which is portrayed at the Court of God in Heaven—a scene with which, according to the syntax of the Hebrew text, the actual discussion begins—God declares: "This man is truly pious." Satan throws doubt upon it. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" It is in this "*for nought*" the actual question lies. It is so expressly laid down in the dialogue of God with Satan that it acquires the meaning—Is there anywhere a pious man who is really disinterested? Is there such a thing as *genuine* piety? The doubt of Satan is set in opposition to the good confidence of God.

Who is this Satan? Obviously not the "Enemy of God," and still less the principle of Evil. Rather he is a high official of Jehovah, as it were the "Attorney-General" of the Kingdom of God. It is the office of this Attorney-General to report to the Judge hidden lawlessness which has no other accuser. Can there be in the Kingdom of God a more insidious form of offence than piety which is concealed self-interest? To be pious means withal to fear, love and trust God above all things. And that is in fact the aim of Creation, which has its crowning-point in the creation of Man. God wills to have in correspondence with Himself a creature who lives entirely of His goodness and for His goodness, and who from his whole heart loves Him—loves Himself and not any good received. If there is no single individual who corresponds to this good Will of God, then the world is not good, and, though His world might be otherwise perfect, the work of God has miscarried. But if there is one, though it be but one, then through him God is justified, and through that one man all others are justified. More is at stake than Job himself. God lays down for this one man His pledged word, because round this one point the value of His whole Creation revolves. God's honour is at stake. The nature of Satan is doubt; and

"Doubt is that which changeth Good to Evil" (Goethe, *Iphigenie*.
See Gen. iii, vv. 1 ff.; Matt. iv, vv. 1-11).

He doubts the justification of the confidence which God places in Job.—"Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and blessed him in all that he possesses? But stretch forth Thy hand and touch all that he hath and—I venture to say he will renounce Thee to Thy face." The connection between being good and possessing good must be dissolved if it is to be proved that Job is really true to God for God's sake.

Blow after blow falls upon Job, without his being able even to draw a breath between. But when all that he had, his possessions, his children, are taken from him in one day, he has but one thing to say. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed

be the Name of the Lord." It is not the gifts Job thinks of but only the Giver. He curses not, no, he gives thanks.

God is justified. The book might have closed here, and, as Albrecht Alt has pointed out, there might have followed, so far as can be judged at first sight, the concluding verses (chap. xlii, vv. 11 ff.). That is to say, when in those verses Job's relations come to him to eat bread and to condole with him, that presupposes, according to Palestinian custom, not Job's sickness, but the fact that deaths had occurred in his house.

But does Job's answer really put aside the doubts of Satan? God says to Satan at the next audience, "I am justified. You have incited Me to destroy Job for nought." Notice once more the "for nought." Satan does not admit himself beaten "Skin for skin, yea all that a man has will he give for his life." Man is such a thorough egotist that if it comes to the point he will sacrifice everything, even his nearest and dearest to save himself. I maintain that this has been proved so in Job's case. He has not yet taken his own skin to market, but "stretch forth Thy hand now and touch his bone and his flesh and I venture to say he will renounce Thee to Thy face."

In order that his ultimate motives may be revealed, God gives over Job into the hand of Satan. The good man is stricken with a terrible and loathsome disease, probably it is leprosy. Job retires in silence from the company of his fellows and sits among the ashes. His wife can restrain herself no longer. She says to Job—and Satan speaks through her as tempter, as once he did through Eve—"Curse God and die." But he answers her, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women" (i.e. who do not take God seriously as God); "Have we received good from God and shall we not also receive evil?" Job desires not goods, not the thing which is good; he lives of God's goodness which lies beyond good and evil. He honours the Divine Hand all the same, whether it gives or takes away, thankful for the fact that it is God's Hand. That Hand is dealing with him and that of itself is goodness.

So Job sits among the ashes to the praise of God and keeps the pledged word which the Creator has given for him. Here again the book might have closed with this further picture of the good man put to torture "for nought." But now someone takes up the challenge which is thrown down (Is it the same or another "Poet"?), treads upon the bow as it were, and stretches upon it the bow-string of the speeches with a power and tenseness such that at any moment the bow threatens to snap. The test can be no further increased through outward pain, but the inward torture can be intensified without limit by spiritual investigation. If in a measure it be a relief to those who suffer to give utterance to their feelings, then too, in the depths of suffering, the open discussion of the question of God in the presence of quiet resignation means an incomparably worse torture than any pain. And this is what now arises when Job's friends come on the scene. These are wise men, sons of the East, such as in the Bible are held to be the keenest

thinkers, men whose mental probings do not shrink from even the deepest abysses of Reality. Job, like them, is an Edomite (cf. chap. i. 1 with Lam. iv. 21—A.E.). The Name by which God revealed Himself to the Israelites is not named in the speeches. The voice of Edom is there heard; the exceeding bitter cry of Esau the rejected brother for the blessing echoes throughout the book. It is the most startling confession of the free will of God, Who gives no account of His gracious choice, spoken by the mouth of one afflicted by Him. The expositor of the book must notice above all whether and in what sense the problem of the first two chapters is also discussed in the speeches. Do they also deal with the justification of God Who vouches with His word of Truth that Job is faithful to Him, and that his piety is directed toward Himself, His own pure goodness, and not any good received? Do the speeches seek to get more deeply to the root of the matter, and to dissociate piety from advantage, the being good from possessing good things? Or is their object something else?

When the friends see Job they rend their garments, throw dust toward heaven upon their heads, and sit before him on the earth seven days and seven nights without one word for his sufferings.

CHAPTER 3.

This maddening, inexpressibly eloquent silence Job can endure no longer. What now breaks forth from the pain of his heart is the cry of despair which sounds like the shrillest contradiction to his quiet resignation.

“ Accursed be the day when I was born,
 The night which spake: ‘ A man child is conceived.’
 Let them be hurled backward into Chaos,
 And nevermore inscribed among the months.
 Why died I not from my mother’s womb?
 Why is light given to the wretched man
 And life prolonged to one whose soul is bitter?
 To the man whose way is hidden,
 The man whom God has hedged in? ”

This last is the same expression as that used by Satan when he said God had “ made a hedge ” about Job (chap. i. 10).

When God at the beginning through His Word “ Let there be light,” called the world into life, that surely can only have had the meaning that His creatures were to know Him, and to live happily in the light of His countenance. What then is the use of a life which is not lived in the light of God? Better for it that it had never been born.

Fearful as this cry is, it is the cry of a man who cannot live without God. He says not a word about his sickness or his losses. The terrible thing which he cannot endure is the feeling of being forsaken of God.

CHAPTERS 4, 5.

Eliphaz the Temanite, who is the first to answer, diagnoses Job’s case as that of one spiritually exhausted, one who has wandered

away from God. He tries to calm him by pointing to his piety as the guarantee that God will surely not deal amiss with him.

“ Ought not thy fear of God to make thee trust,
Thy pious walk to inspire thy heart with hope ?
Think now, did ever godly man go under,
Or ever was the righteous man destroyed ? ”

Certainly the question is to be asked ; and Eliphaz gives this question great emphasis through the picture of a ghostly revelation.

“ Is ever mortal righteous before God,
Can mortal man be pure before his Maker,
Who findeth folly even in His angels ? ”

Therefore do not lift up thyself in rebellious thought against God.

“ The fool is slain by his own indignation.
But I would rather humbly seek to God
And unto God would I submit my cause ;
Who doeth great things and unsearchable,
Marvellous things whereof there is no number,
The wise He taketh in their own craftiness,
The skill of cunning men He maketh foolish.”

These words plainly are a warning to Job against the temptations of the Serpent who was more subtle than any beast of the field, and tempted the first human beings to seek “ to be as Gods, knowing good and evil.”

“ The man is happy whom God chasteneth,
The chastening of God despise thou not.
For God doth wound and healeth thee again,
He maketh sore and bindeth up thy wound.
From every trouble He can rescue thee,
Till thou at last shalt come unto thy grave
As a ripe sheaf is carried to the barn.
So is it now, so have we searched it out,
To that give thou good heed and mark it well.”

(*gnōthi seautō* is the translation of the Septuagint with a significant reference to the famous Delphic precept, “ know thyself.”)

However well meant all this is, and however beautifully expressed, it is really a refined temptation of Satan to draw Job away from pure faith. To connect piety thus with advantage is subversive of piety. The man who does good to get good by it does not fear God simply for God's sake—“ for nought.” That was made clear by the conversation of God with Satan, and the question then was, Is Job's faith really pure ? The creed of Eliphaz, however, which underlies and supports all that he has said, and which Job must believe if he is to find any comfort in the thoughts of Eliphaz, is this—God is Righteous: to the good man He makes good come, to the wicked evil. The strict correspondence of being good and having good is therefore the righteousness of God. The fact that no one is absolutely righteous before God does not deprive this fundamental law of its force, but makes it merely applicable to the individual case, even when the appearance, so far as men can

see, contradicts it. But if Job assents to this law of Right and Faith, then Satan has won his case against God.

CHAPTERS 6, 7.

Now however in the case of Job something more than the theoretical-practical balance of human conduct and Divine recompense is out of gear. The whole of his thinking has lost its balance.

“ Oh that my grief could be weighed,
My calamity laid in a balance !
They are heavier now than the sand of the sea,
And bewilderment robs me of speech.”

All conceptions are broken down with him. His “ theology ” is like a shattered vessel, no longer capable of containing God’s action and human fate. He holds nothing now but potsherds in his hands to be witnesses to the irrefragable Truth of God. How can they be such ?

“ The darts of the Mighty One pierce me,
Their venom exhausteth my spirit,
The terrors of God are against me arrayed.”

He has only a prayer left, the greatest prayer of his life.

“ Oh that God were pleased now to slay me ;
And that His Hand would strike and cut me off !
’Twould be my comfort then : I would rejoice
In suffering’s sharpest pangs that I had never
Denied the Word of the Most Holy One.”

If he can no longer live in God’s Presence then at least let him die by His Hand. Only let there be no more of this torture. He cannot endure it longer, and fears that it must drive him to doubt and despair, to the breach of his faith in God. Oh, that his friends could but see that all that matters most is at stake for him, that his union with God hangs as it were upon a thread ! If only they would not argue, but just have sympathy with him ! But they are just like mirage streams, to which the caravan in the desert turns aside in vain, in the hope of escaping a lingering death by thirst. Therefore he turns away from them to God. All the speeches of Job show this turning to God. Firstly he tells his friends that he is not concerned with this legal kind of righteousness of which they speak. And then he turns away from men, who do not understand him, to God his Creator and Friend, with an entirely different kind of appeal for justice, with the appeal of the creature to the mercy of the Creator.

“ Doth not man live in service hard on earth ?
Are not his days like those of a day labourer,
Who longeth for the peaceful evening shades,
So hard his toil is and so short his time,
Gone like a dream, quicker than weaver’s shuttle ?
Remember that my life is but a breath
And soon my eyes shall see good things no more,
Thy friendly Eye no more shall look on me.
Thine Eye shall seek me and—I shall not be.”

Is that nothing to Thee? What then is the object of human life if not that Man may live his little moment happily in the light of Thine Eyes?

“ Am I the sea ; or am I a sea monster
That Thou dost set a watch against me thus ?
What now is Man ?
Is ought in him so great
That Thou dost bend on him the All-seeing Eye ?
Why leavest Thou me not a while alone,
That I may rest and swallow down my spittle ?
Be it I now have sinned
What hurt to Thee Thou Guardian of mankind ?
And wherefore pardonest Thou not my sin ;
Wherefore forgivest not my soul's transgression ?
For now I soon shall lay me in the dust,
And when Thou wakest once again to seek me
Lo ! I shall be no more.”

Forgiveness, pardon, those are the great possibilities of righteousness, but a Righteousness far other than that of which Job's friends speak. Plainly the discussion turns upon the question, What is Righteousness? “ Zedaka,” the Hebrew word for “ righteousness ” indicates the relationship between God and Man. Does it indicate a legal conception under the law of the equivalence of service and reward, guilt and punishment, in the sense of the “ suum cuique ” (“ to each his own ”) of the Roman *Justitia*? Is the God of the Bible the Supreme Guarantor of this law and the Judge according thereto? Now the word “ zedaka ” means in the plural, but also in the singular (and not perhaps first in the Deutero-Isaiah document, Isa. 40-55, but even in the oldest documents, cf. Judges 5, v. 11), God's well doing, God's good will ; and the Law of His Righteousness is the Law of His freedom to be gracious to whom He will, and in His free goodness to attach Himself to those who deserve it not, to whom He owes nought, and whose debt as regards Himself not even His goodness can remove, any more than their service to Him has gained His goodness. And that is the great question of the Book of Job, whether righteousness is the deserved equivalence of being good and having good things, or is the Goodness of God, which, from realms beyond Good and Evil, condescends to His creatures to whom He wills to be good for His own sake.

CHAPTER 8.

While Job appeals to the goodness of God his friends are advocates of the legal righteousness, and can only recognise in Job's words an impious attack against the most holy Law.

“ How long wilt thou speak such things and shall the words of thy mouth have such a proud spirit ? ” asks Bildad.

“ Doth God pervert the Right ?
Or doth the Almighty bend His Righteousness ?
No, never, never !
If thou art good and pure,
Then will He watch o'er thee ;
Thy righteousness He surely will establish.”

The impious fall into calamity while the mouth of the good man is filled with laughter. Bildad ventures to apply this principle to Job's present position. Thy sons must have sinned, else God would not have cast them away. Even if their transgression cannot be proved empirically, it is obvious because of what has happened to them. They *must* have sinned. And that that is the actual case can no longer be questioned as soon as it is recognised that the Divine Righteousness is *absolute*; so that fundamentally even that which seems to us to be righteous, in His eyes can be unrighteous.

CHAPTERS 9, 10.

Job answers: This "absolute righteousness" I know too; only too well do I know it. But I do not dream of arguing with it. How could any dealings be possible with an "absolute" righteousness? If it is absolute how are we to see into its rightness? Absolute righteousness, as far as our knowledge is concerned, is absolute unrighteousness.

"Yea, so it is, I do not question it,
For how could Man be righteous before God.
Should he presume to argue with his Maker,
He could not answer Him one word to a thousand,
For God removeth mountains at a blow,
At His rebuke the solid Earth doth tremble,
The Sun ariseth not if He forbid,
The stars of heaven are sealed at His command:
Who then shall say to Him, What doest Thou?"

That is to say, Who will call to account the Absolute God?

"Speak we of Power? Lo! Power belongs to God;
Or if of Law: who dares to plead with Him?
Though I were true my own mouth would condemn me,
Or were I guiltless He would prove me a rogue.
Guiltless or guilty, alike I stand condemned."

Such is "absolute righteousness." We can observe its existence and its administration in Nature and in History, where guilty and innocent, as far as our knowledge is concerned, are alike struck by pestilences and blows of misfortune, and whole countries and peoples are delivered over to the tyranny of wicked rulers.

"When pestilence destroyeth suddenly,
He mocketh at the trouble of the pure,
Or if a land be given to hand of tyrants
'Tis God Who makes the eyes of rulers blind,
If not Himself who then can do the deed?"

It would be absolute folly if Job were to enter into argument with this absolute righteousness.

"For truly God is not a man like me,
That we should go before a judgment seat,
No arbitrator can decide between us,
Or lay a friendly hand upon us both."

There is simply no law over God, under which Man could take legal proceedings against Him. The friends imagine that that is what Job wants to do whereas, on the contrary, it is *they* who think and speak as if there was this supreme Law which might regulate the relationship between God and Man for both sides. Job in his argument with them reduces the Law of the Absolute Righteousness of God *ad absurdum*.

From the point of view of God's absoluteness a connection of God with Man is simply inconceivable. What does the absolutely righteous God want of Man? What can He do other with him than condemn him? Has the Creator really created Man for that purpose? This mysterious creature in all his sinfulness—has God so fearfully and wonderfully made him in order simply to destroy him with His absolute righteousness?

“What profit is it to Thee that Thou oppressest
And castest off the work of Thine own hands?
Hast Thou then eyes of flesh
And seest Thou even as Man seeth?”

Man is in the depths of his nature perverse. “His dearest ones he bleedeth like a vampire.” Is God like that too?

“Thou, Thou, hast fashioned me, and made me live.
And was it then the purpose of Thine heart
That Thou shouldst be revenged upon my sins
And hunt me to death as though I were a beast?”

Is *that* the “secret” of my life?

CHAPTER II.

The friends do not understand Job's questions. They regard them as a rebellious invasion of the secret Wisdom of God.

“Canst thou discover the deep things of God,
Or search out the perfection of the Almighty?
'Tis higher than the heaven; what canst thou do?
And deeper far than hell; what canst thou know?
Wider than Earth and broader than the sea.”

Humble thyself before the secret of God, before His absolute Wisdom.

CHAPTERS 12 TO 14.

But this is just the great question of Job whether in fact the secret of God consists in the *absoluteness* of His Wisdom.

If so it would be the most frightful thing that we can think of. From the point of view of an absolute Wisdom we can understand nothing at all. Absolute Reason is for our knowledge absolute Unreason. It is obvious that the friends, with their theology of absolute Wisdom, do not think of this. Job replies:

“Forsooth ye are the people,
And Wisdom shall die with you;
Suppose ye that I have no understanding?”

But the victim of their attack is even laughed at by these people who think they hold God in their hands. As to the unfathomableness of the Wisdom of God I do not need the instruction of grey heads. All animals, the wild creature in the wood, the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, preach to me of the incomprehensibility of God. But the comfortless thing about this incomprehensible Wisdom of God is just the fact that no one comprehends it but God Himself.

“Wisdom and Power are His, deep Counsel and true Understanding,
Where His Hand overthroweth all vain are stronghold and fortress,
Where He shutteth the door no mortal power can open.
Lo! He keepeth the rain, and Earth is parchéd and thirsty;
Lo! He sendeth the flood, and Earth is o'erwhelmed by the waters.”

Before the administration of absolute Wisdom the keenest intellects and the most stupid alike stand abashed.

“With Him is Power; He worketh out His Will;
The deceived and the deceiver both are His.”

All those who endeavour to understand a matter and to create a reasoned order of things are made fools. The counsellors of the earth, the judges, the kings, the priests, the wise and experienced men, all who are held in honour, are simply mocked by the actual course which events take.

“The deepest things of darkness He discloses
And brings to light the shadowed land of Death.
A nation He exalteth for a day,
And bringeth it again to low estate.
The hearts of mighty men are made to tremble,
He makes them wander in a devious way
Where no path is; they wander without light
And stagger in their steps like drunken men.”

That is, according to Job's experience and insight, the course of incomprehensible, absolute Reason. His friends cannot more thoroughly misunderstand him than when they imagine that he wants to meddle with this unfathomable Wisdom of God, and to justify himself in the presence of the absolute Righteousness of God.

“Truly ye are false guides,
And ye are all physicians of no value,
Would God ye held your peace; then were ye wise!”

If only they would understand how utterly different the matter is with which he is concerned! If only they would cease now from playing the part of the advocates of absolute Righteousness!

“Will ye indeed speak wicked things for God,
And vindicate His Cause by lying words,
Or take His part in the fight as His bold champions?”

God Himself would be little pleased with such advocacy.

“But as for God I know He would rebuke you,
If you should inwardly espouse His Cause.”

Job is concerned with a totally different kind of "Right," namely the question whether God's relationship to him is a legal one or a relationship of an entirely different kind. Put quite briefly, whether God is his Friend or his Enemy. That is the point at issue, and that must now be decided, Job is prepared to stake everything upon this and to hold fast to the end his faith in God's friendship. Senseless as it seems, he is ready to "take his flesh between his teeth and his soul in his hand," and never to let God go until He gives him the answer.

"What is the cause that Thou dost hide Thy Face?
And wherefore dost Thou treat me as Thy foe?"

The only question there can be between God and himself is that of friendship and enmity, not as to the Law of Absolute Righteousness. In the secret of the friendship of God he has lived hitherto with every drop of his blood; and it must now be decided whether that was really the truth of his life or whether it was a fearful deception. Here in this present life; now, before it is over, it must be decided whether God is *his* God, the Friend and not the Inquisitor.

Or might it perhaps be thinkable that the final decision might be postponed beyond death?

"A tree hath hope,
Although it be cut down the stock can sprout
And by the scent of water it can bud.
Shall then a dead man ever live again?"

Could it be possible that Thou shouldst hide me for a time in the nether world, until Thine indignation might be overpast; that Thou mightest appoint me a set time and then remember me once more? Ah! I would serve all the days of my imprisonment, watching like a sentinel in the grave, until the deliverance should come. Then Thou wouldest call and I would answer: "Here am I!"

"But now the hopes of Mankind are destroyed."

(The cheap objection with which modern readers evade the significance of the Book of Job; that if Job had known anything of a life after death he would have been ready to die without complaining, only shows how feeble is modern thought in comparison with the passion of that old thinker. We should on no account imagine that that comfortable objection accords with New Testament or Christian thought. If the answering of Job's question had been so simple a matter, then God could fitly have spared His Son the Agony in Gethsemane and the Death upon the Cross.)

CHAPTER 15.

The friends have nothing new to say. Eliphaz ill-humouredly declares that Job with these words has condemned himself; for what he has just said is typical speech from the "tongue of the crafty." He rightly deserves to suffer!

CHAPTERS 16, 17.

“ Miserable comforters are ye withal,”

answers Job. How should you be able to help me when you have no idea what my sufferings are ?

“ His anger teareth me and maketh war.
He gnasheth with his teeth like deadly foe,
Whose angry eyes glare at me.”

Instead of the Face of God Job sees with dismay the horrid countenance of Satan glaring at him. With words full of horror he pictures the onset of the “ Fiend.”

“ I lived at ease but he hath broken me,
Hath seized me by the neck and shaken me,
Hath taken me and set me as his mark.
His arrows come like hail from every side,
My reins he cleaveth and he doth not spare.
He poureth out my gall upon the ground ;
With breach on breach he breaketh me again
And chargeth at me like a mighty giant.
I have sewn sackcloth as my covering
And in the dust have I defiled my horn.”

In this terrible struggle there is now but one thing possible ; the appeal against the Enemy-God to God the Friend. It is just as much God's Honour as Job's honour which is now at stake. Job's blood cries to Heaven, as of old did that of the murdered Abel, and, as with his, Earth shall on no account cover it !

“ But now behold my Witness is in heaven,
And He that voucheth for me is on high,
My ‘ Mediator ’ is my real Friend.
My earthly friends may scorn me, but I weep
To God, and pray that He decide between
The man and God, and also judge between
The man and his unsympathising friends.
Be Thou Thyself my Surety with Thyself ;
Who else can stand for me and plead my cause ? ”

Yes, even now, before it is for ever too late. Already I call corruption my father and worms my mother and my sister. My hope is already going with me into the lower world and is there being silenced for ever.

CHAPTER 18.

“ Wilt thou now tear thyself for anger ? ”

cries Bildad at Job's despairing appeal to God.

“ Supposeth thou the verdant Earth will wither,
The rock for thee be moved from out its place ? ”

In real fact, with a Faith that is able to do more than move mountains, Job is calling to the glorious Power of God to win its victory over the hell-deep abyss of his Existence.

And Bildad unfolds with a grim phantasy a picture of the annihilation which exterminates root and branch the man who fights against God.

CHAPTER 19.

If only his friends could see that Job is engaged in a fearful struggle about God! His body is wasted away to the ribs, his head scarce covered now with its skin, already practically a skull.

“Pity me, oh my friends, oh pity me;
The Hand of God hath touched me.”

But alas! the friends do not understand him; they will not hear his complaints, even though his mouth should be silenced in death. And yet his complaints must *not* be silenced. For the sake of all men who have lived and yet shall live, yes for God's sake, they must not be silenced.

“Oh that my words were now written,
That they were inscribed in a book;
Yea graven with an iron tool
And lead in the rocks for ever!”

And even if that could happen it could not give satisfaction to Job. His matter is about himself and God, and about what is deepest and most intimate between him and God. Here is a region into which no stranger can enter for him and no other for God! God must be Himself the Avenger of blood to rescue him from the prison which shuts him out from God!

“For I—I know—that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last shall stand above Earth's dust.
And, though my earthly frame have been dissolved,
I shall—without my flesh—behold my God,
I shall behold Him—I—myself—mine eyes—
And not another——”

Job collapses fainting!

(The exclamation “My reins are consumed in me”! together with the sobbing incoherence of the next two verses, suggests that Job, in the agony of his great declaration of faith, loses his senses for some time—A.E.).

Might not the book have closed here? Is not God's Word of Honour now justified? Has not Job, even when in his despair he has spoken wildly, almost to blasphemy against God, yet held fast to the very end his confidence in God's pure faithfulness; and, even through the bitterest temptation and pain, steadfastly refused to recognise God's relationship to him and his relationship to God as a relationship of payment, of reward and punishment, of advantage and disadvantage?

“Faithfulness is indeed no vain delusion.”—SCHILLER (*Bürgerschaft*).

The reason why the conversation of Job with the “friends” cannot yet be concluded lies in the following considerations. The

original question whether God's confidence in Job's piety was justified has been changed more and more clearly in the speeches into the question whether Job's trust in God's goodness is justified. Is God righteous in Job's sense or in that of the friends? Does the proposition "God is Good" mean that He is absolutely good as the guarantor of the Law of Recompense, or does it mean He is good to me with a goodness which transcends Good and Evil? Job has confessed his faith in God's Faithfulness. His answer to God's question "Art thou true to Me?" has been changed to a counter question addressed to God. Now God must give the answer.

(*To be concluded.*)

THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN NEWTON, RECTOR OF WATH, 1816-1818.
Cambridge University Press. 12s. 6d. net.

This is an exceptionally interesting book. It consists of the diary of Benjamin Newton, Rector of Wath, a country parish four miles north of Ripon, during the three years following the battle of Waterloo. Newton was an "all round" man. He was an excellent scholar. At Cambridge, after taking quite a fair place in the Mathematical Tripos, he became a Chancellor's Medallist, and then a Fellow of his College. He not only kept up his classics, but read widely in after life. He was an expert agriculturist, farming his own glebe and renting much additional land. He was a keen sportsman, enjoying hunting, shooting and fishing. He was also an extremely diligent magistrate. At the same time he was evidently an excellent parochial clergyman: preaching twice each Sunday and diligently visiting his flock. The entries in his diary show that, for a country parish, the numbers of his communicants were regularly large. He also records quite a considerable number of sick communions. He seems to have been on the best of terms with every grade of society—from the nobility to the farm labourers. His accounts of the various parts of England, where he spent his annual summer holidays, are most illuminating as to conditions in those days.

Those who assure us that the Church of England was asleep before the Tractarian Movement should read this book. Men like Newton were an immense asset for good, not only to the Church but also to the State. In their parishes Church and people were not—as too often to-day—living in different worlds. Through their influence the life of each was interwoven with the life of the other, and to the great benefit of both. If there were more "parsons" like Benjamin Newton—men in whom the ecclesiastical has not developed at the cost of the human—the average country congregation would be far larger than it is to-day.

W. E. C.