

CHAPTER VIII

JOB SUMS UP

AN INTERLUDE IN PRAISE OF WISDOM (CH. 28)

SO far as we were able to interpret ch. 27, we heard Job ending his answers to his friends with a fierce and passionate self-vindication:

As God liveth, who hath taken away my right,
and the Almighty, who hath made my life bitter;
as long as my breath is in me,
and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;
my lips shall not speak falsehood,
neither shall my tongue utter deceit.
God forbid that I should justify you:
till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.
My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go;
my heart doth not reproach me for any of my days (27: 2-6).

Note how often "me" and "my" recur in these few verses.

Silence fell on the dunghill, broken only by the call of playing children and the hum of the nearby town. Along the horizon the first hint of thunderclouds showed, while Job's friends looked at one another in terrified anger, and the young man Elihu drew a little nearer.

For twenty-five chapters of thrust and counter-thrust we have heard all the wisdom of the schools and the dogmatism of experience break over Job, only to leave him more unconvinced than at the first and the wisdom of the Wise confounded. To break the tension, to turn our attention from the clash of passion, and to prepare us for God's intervention, the author now introduces a poem on Wisdom. It would seem to be completely false to picture ch. 28 as Job's own words; it would be completely out of character, and 29: 1 should act as a warning against the supposition. We should rather think of a curtain descending for a brief interval at the tensest point of the drama.

SURELY there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold which they
refine.

²Iron is taken out of the earth,
and brass is molten out of the stone.

³Man setteth an end to darkness,
and searcheth out to the furthest
bound

the stones of thick darkness and
of the shadow of death.

⁴He breaketh open a shaft away
from where men sojourn;
they are forgotten of the foot *that*
passeth by;

they hang afar from men, they
swing to and fro.

⁵As for the earth, out of it cometh
bread:
and underneath it is turned up as
it were by fire.

⁶The stones thereof are the place of
sapphires,
and it hath dust of gold.

⁷That path no bird of prey knoweth,
neither hath the falcon's eye seen it:

⁸The proud beasts have not trodden
it,
nor hath the fierce lion passed
thereby.

⁹He putteth forth his hand upon the
flinty rock;
he overturneth the mountains by
the roots.

¹⁰He cutteth out channels among
the rocks;
and his eye seeth every precious
thing.

¹¹He bindeth the streams that they
trickle not;
and the thing that is hid bringeth
he forth to light.

¹²But where shall wisdom be found?
and where is the place of under-
standing?

¹³Man knoweth not the price there-
of;
neither is it found in the land of
the living.

¹⁴The deep saith, It is not in me:

and the sea saith, It is not with me.

¹⁵It cannot be gotten for gold,
neither shall silver be weighed for
the price thereof.

¹⁶It cannot be valued with the gold
of Ophir,
with the precious onyx, or the
sapphire.

¹⁷Gold and glass cannot equal it:
neither shall the exchange thereof
be jewels of fine gold.

¹⁸No mention shall be made of coral
or of crystal:
yea, the price of wisdom is above
rubies.

¹⁹The topaz of Ethiopia shall not
equal it,
neither shall it be valued with pure
gold.

²⁰Whence then cometh wisdom?
and where is the place of under-
standing?

²¹Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all
living,
and kept close from the fowls of
the air.

²²Abaddon and Death say,
We have heard a rumour thereof
with our ears.

²³God understandeth the way there-
of,
and he knoweth the place thereof.

²⁴For he looketh to the ends of the
earth,
and seeth under the whole heaven;

²⁵to make a weight for the wind;
yea, he meteth out the waters by
measure.

²⁶When he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the lightning of the
thunder:

²⁷then did he see it, and declare it;
he established it, yea, and searched
it out.

²⁸And unto man he said,
Behold the fear of the Lord, that
is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is under-
standing.

THE poem divides into three parts: (a) vv. 1-11. The skill of man in discovering the hidden riches of the earth (this portion is almost unintelligible in the A. V.; the translators obviously

did not know what to make of it); (b) vv. 12-22, Wisdom can neither be found nor purchased; (c) vv. 23-28, God is the possessor of Wisdom.

In the first section we have a remarkable picture of mining operations in the author's time. He is fascinated by the thought of the miner deep underground, while corn grows far above him on the surface (v. 5). and the passing traveller has no conception of what is happening under his feet (v. 4). In his pursuit of these hidden treasures neither difficulty nor danger daunts the spirit of man.

When we turn to Wisdom, *man does not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living* (v. 13, R.S.V.). Neither in the depths of the ocean (v. 14) nor in those of Sheol (v. 22) is its home to be found. Even if we could find its abode, all the riches, of the world could not buy it (vv. 15-19).

In poetic imagery God is pictured as knowing Wisdom's dwelling, for the whole world is known to Him (v. 24). In fact He *saw and searched out* Wisdom at the creation (vv. 26f.). *To man, He has told this much, that wisdom is fearing the Lord; here lies discernment, in refusing the evil path* (v. 28, Knox).

For the Wise this is a commonplace and self-evident (cf. Prov. 1: 7, 3: 7, 9: 10, 14: 16, 15: 33, 16: 6, Eccles. 12: 13), but sometimes we are very apt to forget the commonplace and self-evident. Neither Job's friends nor Job had been particularly concerned with *the fear of the Lord*. Self-vindication, the vindication of orthodoxy, yes, but no one had laid "his hand upon his mouth" (40: 2) and listened to what God had to say. In their zeal for orthodoxy, for their conception of God, Job's friends had gone far down the evil path, while they slandered him. Now the curtain goes up on the second part of the drama, and we are to see whether they can find true Wisdom in spite of their disastrous start.

JOB'S CONCLUDING MONOLOGUE (CHS. 29-31)

Job had introduced the whole discussion by his great impassioned "Why?" in ch. 3. Now that his friends had been silenced, he summed up the whole situation in a long and poignant soliloquy. He can hardly be addressing his friends. Though the formal notice of their default is not given till 32:1, it is clear that they had been dragged out of their depth and broken on Job's stubborn refusal to bow to authority. In the second half of the drama

they are reduced to little more than decorative pieces of the background, as they gnaw their fingers in impotent anger and then look on in growing amazement as Job reacts to God's voice, which they could not understand though they heard it. Though Job addresses God directly only in 30: 20-23, it seems clear that ultimately the whole of these chapters is a rehearsal for God's ears.

There is, however, more to be said. Both in 29: 1 and 27: 1 Job is said to take up his *mashal*. A.V. and R.V. render "his parable," on which the kindest comment would be that it is lacking in intelligence, for nothing farther from a parable could well be imagined than these two sections. R.S.V. and I.C.C. have "discourse," which, though rather pompous, is intelligible, though it is no translation of *mashal*. This is used of didactic poems, e.g. Pss. 49, 78, and so we may perhaps render "instruction." If Job's friends, and for that matter we, have ears to hear, they will learn both from Job's defiant challenge and from his solemn recital of his life how inadequate is their superficial judgment based merely on a strictly selective observation of God's ways with men.

THE MEMORY OF HAPPIER DAYS (CH. 29)

AND Job again took up his parable,
and said,

²Oh that I were as in the months of
old,
as in the days when God watched
over me;

³when his lamp shined above my
head,
and by his light I walked through
darkness;

⁴as I was in the ripeness of my days,
when the friendship of God was
upon my tent;

⁵when the Almighty was yet with
me,
and my children were about
me;

⁶when my steps were washed with
butter,
and the rock poured me out rivers
of oil!

⁷When I went forth to the gate
unto the city,
when I prepared my seat in the
broad place,

⁸the young men saw me and hid
themselves,
and the aged rose up and stood;

⁹the princes refrained talking,
and laid their hand on their
mouth;

¹⁰the voice of the nobles was hushed,
and their tongue cleaved to the
roof of their mouth.

¹¹For when the ear heard *me*, then
it blessed me;
and when the eye saw *me*, it gave
witness unto me:

¹²because I delivered the poor that
cried,
the fatherless also, that had none
to help him.

¹³The blessing of him that was ready
to perish came upon me:
and I caused the widow's heart to
sing for joy.

¹⁴I put on righteousness, and it
clothed me:
my justice was as a robe and a
turban.

- ¹⁵I was eyes to the blind,
and feet was I to the lame.
- ¹⁶I was a father to the needy:
and the cause of him that I knew
not I searched out.
- ¹⁷And I brake the jaws of the un-
righteous,
and plucked the prey out of his
teeth.
- ¹⁸Then I said, I shall die in my
nest,
and I shall multiply my days as
the sand:
- ¹⁹my root is spread out to the waters,
and the dew lieth all night upon
my branch:
- ²⁰my glory is fresh in me,
and my bow is renewed in my
hand.
- ²¹Unto me men gave ear, and waited,
and kept silence for my counsel.
- ²²After my words they spake not
again;
and my speech dropped upon
them.
- ²³And they waited for me as for the
rain;
and they opened their mouth wide
as for the latter rain.
- ²⁴I smiled on them when they had
no confidence;
and the light of my countenance
they cast not down.
- ²⁵I chose out their way, and sat as
chief,
and dwelt as a king in the army,
as one that comforteth the mourn-
ers.

JOB began by sketching his former happiness and prosperity. It is most striking that it was his fellowship with God that stood out in his memory; all the rest was derived and received its meaning from this.

He thought of *the days of my ripeness* (v. 4, I.C.C.)—"my autumn days" (R.S.V.) is more literal but misses the point, as does "my prime" (Moffatt). Job did not think back, as do so many, to the dreams and illusive promises of youth and young manhood. By the grace of God Job's life had borne fruit, and he was thinking of this solid reality. God had guarded him (v. 2), He had given him His guidance (v. 3, *above my head*, R.V. mg., is obviously correct) and friendship (v. 4, *when the friendship of God was upon my tent*, R.S.V.); in brief, *the Almighty was . . . with me* (v. 5a).

This had had as its inevitable result family happiness (v. 5b), prosperity (v. 6) and respect (vv. 7-10). But since prosperity will always command superficial respect, Job stressed that there was genuine reason for it (vv. 11-17). Moffatt renders v. 14 interestingly: *I wore the robe of charity and kindness, my justice was a tunic and a turban*. The verse brings together righteousness (*tsedeq*) and justice (*mishpat*, more literally the verdict spoken). But righteousness in the Old Testament, when used of God, refers not merely to His doing right, but to His doing it in the right way with compassion and understanding. Since the earthly judge was God's representative, it was always hoped that he would reflect God's righteousness in his exercise of human righteousness. As

Moffatt has rightly understood it, Job not only held the scales of justice evenly, but also knew how to interpret the rigour of law with love to the oppressed and needy. He found that he became what he practised: *I clothed myself with righteousness, and it clothed itself with me* (v. 14, I.C.C.).

This the real Job, the same through and through, without contradiction between profession and practice, theology and life. Dare we blame him, if he expected that his old age would be the climax of his prime? He would die in the bosom of a happy family, *I shall die with my nestlings* (v. 18, I.C.C.; "among my brood," Moffatt)—in a ripe old age. Does not our own conception of God lead us to expect this, unless indeed the righteous man has become involved in a general catastrophe? Moreover catastrophe in old age is generally far harder to understand and bear.

THE MISERY OF THE PRESENT (CH. 30)

BUT now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.

²Yea, the strength of their hands, whereto should it profit me? men in whom vigour is perished.

³They are gaunt with want and famine;

they gnaw the dry ground, in the gloom of wasteness and desolation.

⁴They pluck salt-wort by the bushes;

and the roots of the broom *are* to warm them.

⁵They are driven forth from the midst of men;

they cry after them as after a thief.

⁶In the clefts of the valleys must they dwell,

in holes of the earth and of the rocks.

⁷Among the bushes they bray; under the nettles they are gathered together.

⁸*They are* children of fools, yea, children of base men;

they were scourged out of the land.

⁹And now I am become their song, yea, I am a byword unto them.

¹⁰They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,

and spare not to spit in my face.

¹¹For he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me,

and they have cast off the bridle before me.

¹²Upon my right hand rise the rabble;

they thrust aside my feet, and they cast up against me their ways of destruction.

¹³They break up my path, they set forward my calamity, *even* men that have no helper.

¹⁴As through a wide breach they come:

in the midst of the ruin they roll themselves *upon* me.

¹⁵Terrors are turned upon me, they chase mine honour as the wind;

and my welfare is passed away as a cloud.

¹⁶And now my soul is poured out within me;

days of affliction have taken hold upon me.

¹⁷In the night season my bones are pierced in me,

and the *pains* that gnaw me take no rest.

¹⁸By *his* great force is my garment disfigured:

- it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
- ¹⁹He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.
- ²⁰I cry unto thee, and thou dost not answer me:
I stand up, and thou lookest at me.
- ²¹Thou art turned to be cruel to me: with the might of thy hand thou persecutest me.
- ²²Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest me to ride *upon it*; and thou dissolvest me in the storm.
- ²³For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.
- ²⁴Surely against a ruinous heap he will not put forth his hand; though *it be* in his destruction, *one may utter a cry* because of these things.
- ²⁵Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?
was not my soul grieved for the needy?
- ²⁶When I looked for good, then evil came;
and when I waited for light, there came darkness.
- ²⁷My bowels boil, and rest not;
days of affliction are come upon me.
- ²⁸I go mourning without the sun:
I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help.
- ²⁹I am a brother to jackals,
and a companion to ostriches.
- ³⁰My skin is black, *and falleth* from me,
and my bones are burned with heat.
- ³¹Therefore is my harp *turned* to mourning,
and my pipe into the voice of them that weep.

THAT the respect paid to money lasts no longer than the money is a constant theme in world literature. Job himself would have expected no less, but he found that respect for true merit does not outlive the prosperity either. Now that he was weighing his sufferings more dispassionately, he felt that this was the greatest evil of all.

Already when considering ch. 19 we saw that, when he found his friends shared in his neighbours' and relatives' scorn and condemnation of him, it drove him to cry for vindication, a cry that led him to trust in God as his Vindicator. How deeply this attitude of scorn had hurt Job we are now allowed to see. In the New Testament we find Paul proclaiming that we find the example of our Lord supremely in the fact that He did not consider His divine glory as a thing to be grasped and held on to, but that He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave (Phil. 2: 5-8), and a slave has no honour.

It is hard enough to forgo the accidental and unmerited prestige of birth, rank and wealth for Christ's sake. It becomes a heavier price than many are prepared to pay when they see that true attainments, nobility of character, and even the gifts of the Spirit remain unrecognized, as often as not, by their fellow Christians.

The context of Paul's description of the apostles,

Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things even until now (1 Cor. 4: 12f.),

is worth pondering. Indeed some of the language in 2 Cor. 10-13 reveals how deeply some of the dishonouring attacks made by the Judaizers had hurt Paul.

In ch. 19 Job was moved by the failure of his nearest to support him, now his thoughts are fixed on the baseness of some of the scum of society who ventured to turn on him. Today we are unfortunately all too familiar with the gutter press and the licence given to muck-raking reporters to hound the man who is down. In the far more rigid social structure of oriental society this was only possible, if the whole of society had turned against Job. What made the attack of the rabble all the more bitter was their lack of gratitude, for it was just they whom he had helped all he could (29: 15ff.).

There are those, e.g. Moffatt, Strahan, Peake, who find too great a contrast between 30: 2-8 in their present setting and the sympathy of 24: 2-12 and especially of 31: 15; hence they move these verses to ch. 24 (cf. Moffatt *ad loc.*), where they become part of the description of the plight of the poor. The suggestion is very attractive, but with our complete lack of knowledge about the transmission of the book it should not be lightly accepted, even though the theory is not impossible. There is, however, a more likely explanation of the apparent contradiction. Job was a very human man under intense stress, and there are many apparent inconsistencies in his words. What is even more important is that Job never fell into the Marxist fallacy of thinking that because some of the proletariat—those “who have nothing to lose but their chains”—are the victims of injustice and oppression they all are. Job knew that some of them had reached the depths because their character had taken them there.

It seems best to interpret v. 11a as a plural: *They have unstrung me and undone me* (Moffatt). Then vv. 9-14 are a consistent description how Job had been treated by base men; the behaviour of others may be inferred from it. In vv. 15-19 Job looks inward. The suggestion that he is thinking particularly of his illness is most doubtful. As the italics suggest, the A.V. and R.V. transla-

tion of v. 18a is unjustified; we should render with R.V. mg., *By His great force is my garment disfigured*, or with R.S.V., *With violence it seizes my garment*. In fact, as we have seen before, his bodily state is merely the outward expression of far greater inner anguish, but it reminds him that men were only persecuting him whom God had first *cast into the mire* (v. 19).

So Job's heart turned once again in appeal to the inscrutable Deity, who seemed to have shut up the fountains of mercy (vv. 20-24), even though Job himself had been merciful (vv. 25f.). It seems likely that Knox has found the meaning of the difficult picture in v. 22: *Didst Thou exalt me, lift me so high in the air, only to hurl me down in ruin?* But there was no voice that answered, and so Job ended the picture of misery by describing his sufferings once again (vv. 26-31).

A closer examination of these verses will suggest once again that Job's disease played little part in his anguish. In v. 27 we have the description of intense emotional suffering; there is no suggestion here of fever; R.S.V., Knox and Moffatt all give the modern idiom by using *heart* instead of "bowels." His appeal in the assembly for help (v. 28) was doubtless because of the wrong that base men had done him. The first half of this verse should probably be rendered with Moffatt and Strahan, *I wail, with none to comfort me*. The meaning of vv. 29f. should be clear enough, when we remember that Job had been cast out of the city, and that his only home was the dunghill outside the gate, where he was exposed to all the powers of the elements.

If we have been tempted to judge Job harshly, it may be that we are being forced to modify our verdict. It had been the presence and blessing of God that had poured radiance on the past; it was the veiling of God's face that had turned the present into night.

With that deep subtle intuition that suffering brings in its train, Job began to sense that his problem must be the problem of many others. As Strahan has written on v. 31: "The parallel phrase 'my harp is turned to mourning' leads one simply to expect 'and my pipe to wailing,' which would leave us thinking of Job in his lonely sorrow. But the poet hears, and lets his reader hear, 'the voice of them that weep,' making Job speak here, as so often elsewhere, not as an individual, but in the name of all who ever shed a bitter tear."

"I AM INNOCENT!" (CH. 31)

- I MADE a covenant with mine eyes;
how then should I look upon a
maid?
- ²For what portion *should I have* of
God from above,
and what heritage of the Almighty
from on high?
- ³Is it not calamity to the unright-
eous,
and disaster to the workers of
iniquity?
- ⁴Doth not he see my ways,
and number all my steps?
- ⁵If I have walked with vanity,
and my foot hath hastened to deceit;
- ⁶(let me be weighed in an even bal-
ance,
that God may know mine in-
tegrity;)
- ⁷if my step hath turned out of the
way,
and mine heart walked after mine
eyes,
and if any spot hath cleaved to
mine hands:
- ⁸then let me sow, and let another
eat:
yea, let the produce of my field be
rooted out.
- ⁹If mine heart have been enticed
unto a woman,
and I have laid wait at my neigh-
bour's door:
- ¹⁰then let my wife grind unto
another,
and let others bow down upon
her.
- ¹¹For that were an heinous crime;
yea, it were an iniquity to be
punished by the judges:
- ¹²for it is a fire that consumeth unto
Destruction,
and would root out all mine in-
crease.
- ¹³If I did despise the cause of my
manservant or of my maid-
servant,
when they contended with me:
- ¹⁴what then shall I do when God
riseth up?
and when he visiteth, what shall I
answer him?
- ¹⁵Did not he that made me in the
womb make him?
and did not one fashion us in the
womb?
- ¹⁶If I have withheld the poor from
their desire,
or have caused the eyes of the
widow to fail;
- ¹⁷or have eaten my morsel alone,
and the fatherless hath not eaten
thereof;
- ¹⁸(nay, from my youth he grew up
with me as with a father,
and I have been her guide from
my mother's womb;)
- ¹⁹if I have seen any perish for want
of clothing,
or that the needy had no covering;
- ²⁰if his loins have not blessed me,
and if he were not warmed with
the fleece of my sheep;
- ²¹if I have lifted up my hand against
the fatherless,
because I saw my help in the
gate:
- ²²then let my shoulder fall from the
shoulder blade,
and mine arm be broken from the
bone.
- ²³For calamity from God was a
terror to me,
and by reason of his excellency I
could do nothing.
- ²⁴If I have made gold my hope,
and have said to the fine gold,
Thou art my confidence;
- ²⁵if I rejoiced because my wealth
was great,
and because mine hand had gotten
much;
- ²⁶if I beheld the sun when it shined,
or the moon walking in brightness;
- ²⁷and my heart hath been secretly
enticed,
and my mouth hath kissed my
hand:
- ²⁸this also were an iniquity to be
punished by the judges:
for I should have lied to God that
is above.
- ²⁹If I rejoiced at the destruction of
him that hated me,

- or lifted up myself when evil found him;
- ³⁰(yea, I suffered not my mouth to sin by asking his life with a curse;)
- ³¹if the men of my tent said not, Who can find one that hath not been satisfied with his flesh?
- ³²the stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller;
- ³³if like Adam I covered my transgressions, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom;
- ³⁴because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and went not out of the door—
- ³⁵Oh that I had one to hear me!
- (lo, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me;)
and the indictment which mine adversary hath written!
- ³⁶Surely I would carry it upon my shoulder;
I would bind it unto me as a crown.
- ³⁷I would declare unto him the number of my steps;
as a prince would I go near unto him.
- ³⁸If my land cry out against me, and the furrows thereof weep together;
- ³⁹if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:
- ⁴⁰let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.
- The words of Job are ended.

IN 13: 13–22 Job had challenged God to argue things out with him in whatever way He wished. Now he stood up and solemnly took the role of the accused. If God would not show Himself, would not bring an accusation, then Job would none the less, according to the court procedure of the time, clear himself with a solemn oath, listing all the conceivable crimes that might be charged against him and calling for dreadful penalties to fall on him, if he were lying.

From one point of view this is the climax of the book. Broken though he may be and an outcast, forsaken by God and despised by man, he will yet clear himself before God and man. Some commentators seek to rearrange the text. While their result is doubtless tidier, I doubt that Job was feeling in a tidy mood. One rearrangement is, however, unavoidable. It is impossible to believe that vv. 38–40 stood originally in their present position, though we cannot suggest with certainty the point in the chapter from which they have been displaced.

Job began (vv. 1–4) by affirming that since he recognized God's knowledge of his life (v. 4) and His punishment of the wicked (v. 3), *I imposed a covenant on my eyes; how then could I [even] look on a virgin?* (v. 1, I.C.C.). In other words, he had brought even his wayward sight under control, and he would not permit it to beguile his thoughts even to the most venial of sins.

The first group of sins he denied are insincerity—*vanity*—and deceit (v. 5), the leaving of the path of God's law, the yielding to covetous wishes, and the staining of his hands with wrong (v. 7). The imprecation (v. 8) is an almost proverbial one (cf. Deut. 28: 30, 33).

From the general Job passed to the particular, from the venial to the gross. In v. 9 he denied the sin of adultery, which weakens the whole foundation of society. The hypercritical have suggested that in v. 10 Job called down punishment on his wife instead of on himself. But there was no greater indignity, no greater confession of impotence, than to be unable to prevent the forcible carrying away of one's wife. Where honour ranked above all else, this dishonour was worse than death. There follow (vv. 13–23) a number of sins against the weak and helpless (cf. Exod. 22: 21–24, 23: 9; Deut. 24: 17, 27: 19). The point is that the weak and helpless were considered to be particularly under God's protection, so to wrong them was to defy God. In v. 13 Job denied that he had ever *rejected* (R.S.V.) any claim of his slaves against him. The slave had few rights before the law, but he did not take advantage of this fact, for both he and his slaves were equally the wonderful work of God (v. 15). The whole modern tendency is to affirm the equality of men; Job on the other hand would have denied this as folly. He stresses that men with all their manifold differences are equally the creation of an all-wise God, and hence all deserve the same respect and justice, which are worth far more than any theoretical equality that so many cannot use to advantage.

From this principle comes the affirmation (vv. 16f., 19f.) that those from whom God had withheld the prosperity He had granted Job had always shared in Job's prosperity. Nor had he used his rank and money to influence the judges (v. 21b—the *gate* was the scene of public justice, cf. Ruth 4) and so permit him to show violence to and oppress *the perfect* or unoffending (this, and not "fatherless," based on a different division of the Hebrew consonants, seems to be correct in v. 21a, see Strahan, I.C.C., Moffatt, etc.).

Job next denied all idolatry, inner and outer, the worship of money (vv. 24f.) and the worship of nature (vv. 26f.). He affirmed that he had been forgiving and hospitable (vv. 31f.—the A.V. has strangely inverted the sense in v. 31b; Job's servants are portrayed as hyperbolically suggesting that all the world had been

feasted at Job's table). If even, like most men (v. 33 mg.—possibly "from men," R.S.V., Moffatt), he had simply and hypocritically hidden his faults out of fear of men, then——

But why should Job continue? He had claimed a standard that many Christians could not honestly pretend to have attained *Oh that I had one [i.e. God] to hear me! Here is my signature!* Job was picturing his protestations and imprecations not merely pronounced, but written down and solemnly signed.

Let the Almighty answer me! Before the accusations could be made, Job had answered them and challenged God to find something else to charge him with.

Oh that I had the scroll of indictment which mine accuser hath written!

Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;

I would bind it on me as a crown—

i.e. he would make it public property and consider it his highest honour, for it would become clear that God had nothing to charge him with.

I would give Him an account of all my steps;

like a ruler of men I would approach Him.

And so the words of Job are ended. His friends are speechless (32: 1), for he has shown himself greater than they had ever imagined. Even if the book were to end here, Job's sufferings would not have been in vain. God had "winnowed out his path" (Psa. 139: 3), and all unknowingly Job was re-echoing the divine word to Satan, *Hast thou considered My servant Job . . . a perfect and an upright man?*