

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF
JOB.

HAS it ever been suggested that Job xxvii., xxix.—xxxii., xxxviii., xxxix., and xl.—xlii. 6 are the remains of an earlier book, which belongs to an older stratum of ideas than is found in iii.—xxvi., xxviii.? These last might be considered as a whole in themselves, the work of a wise man who returned to the story of Job, which had been treated by wise men before him, because he found it the most appropriate vehicle for his own reflections on the problems of his day. More than one writer told the story of the patriarchs, more than one may well have revived the debate between Job and his friends.

There are two details which may be noticed at once, as they bear upon the question. The formula . . . "Took up his parable and said" . . . is not a common narrative formula in the Old Testament; it is found repeatedly before the speeches of Balaam, it is found nowhere else. Something like it is found in the Book of Job: twice (xxvii. 1, xxix. 1) we read Job "added to take up his parable and said." All the other speeches, even Elihu's, which is divided by the author into several parts, are introduced by . . . "Answered and said." Moreover the sacrifice of seven bullocks and seven rams is not common either; it only occurs twice, Balaam requires it of Balak, God requires it of Job's three friends. These coincidences, though they may be called slight and accidental, suggest that the Epilogue is less loosely attached to what goes before than some modern readers have wished to think. In iii.—xxvi. Job repeatedly puts away from him all earthly hope; when his friends press promises of restoration upon him, he calls them mockers and flatterers. He speaks of a "Redeemer" (xix. 25) who will either comfort or avenge him after his death. It is not quite impossible that he says (as in A.V.) xiii. 15: "Though

He slay me yet will I trust in Him"; all this makes it natural to feel that the ideal end of the story would be, that he was taken at his word and died, holding fast his integrity and his trust in God. But as we learn from Ezekiel xiv., Job was one of the greatest and most celebrated of ancient saints; the tradition about him was fixed before one of the wise men sought to find out words, to express the anguish of Job's spirit and of his own. It came down through the hands of men who were more concerned for the honour of God than for the glory of Job, or for the æsthetic approval of posterity. It is clear from the prologue that, when God gave Satan power to try His servant to the uttermost, He reserved to Himself the power to reward him, and that "before the sons of men."

If the prologue and epilogue are organically connected with the speeches, the key to the book must be found in the word spoken to Eliphaz, xlii. 7: "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." When did Job speak the thing that is right of God? When he said, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"? Can any Biblical writer represent this as the one thing that God requires, that a man should afflict his soul and bow down his head as a bulrush? or did Job speak aright when he said, "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked"? or when he said, "The counsel of the wicked be far from me"? or when he said, "My witness is on high"? or, lastly, when in chapter xxvii. he both protested his own integrity, and in the midst of his own distress instructed his friends concerning the judgment that is surely executed against the wicked, though for a time they seem to prosper?

If we take the last answer, we must of course assume that in the first Book of Job he was represented as enforcing truths which his friends either neglected or denied. Per-

haps they were equally sceptical as to human integrity and divine righteousness; perhaps they anticipated the most questionable sayings of the preacher; they warned Job against being righteous overmuch, they hinted that no man is really much better than his neighbours; they told him that time and chance happen to all, that affliction does come forth of the dust, and trouble does spring out of the ground, that one event happeneth to all, and God's judgments are far above, out of our sight. The point of view of ungodly, not unkindly, common sense is never difficult to reach. It is of course certain that if Job replied to them in xxvii. 7 sqq. his friends had not said what they say in iv.-xxv.; we can only guess what they had said. Apart from this enough of the older book is left to enable us to form an idea of its spirit. The writer does his best to make us realise the situation of the Job of the prologue, and enter into his thoughts and feelings. He is the typical Arab chief; the greatest of the children of the East, lord of many flocks and herds which range round the Arab city, of which we may call him as we please, the prince or the leading citizen. He does not appear to be exercised by the problem of human suffering in general, or by the prosperity of sinners, which he accounts for in the orthodox Old Testament fashion. Their downfall is sure, and their present prosperity only makes it more terrible when it comes. His one concern is the contrast between his well-deserved, well-employed prosperity in the past and his abject misery in the present. He complains bitterly of God, Who has given him for a laughing stock to the vagabonds of the wilderness, too low, too good for nothing to be admitted to his service in the days of his bountiful abundance, Who torments him with strange pains, Who is deaf to his complaints, Who coldly watches him as he dies by slow degrees. Yet to the last he protests his innocence; he even seems to delight himself after the inner man in the law which condemns

the sins from which he has kept himself. His one desire is that God, instead of smiting him in silence would accuse him, would bring a charge against him that he could answer, then he is sure beforehand of complete victory.

To this overbold challenge we have a complete answer in the Voice from the Tempest. Job believes that God is a righteous Judge, but his own judgment has been taken away. God, in His dealing, with him, seems not a judge, but a persecutor; in his astonishment at this his soul is filled with bitterness, till he forgets the immense interval between the creature and the Creator. He is put to silence at once when God causes all His glory to pass before him. Part of the lesson of the display is certainly that God is the God of nature as well as of man. The poet who heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty, dwells with special complacency, not only on the clouds and the stars and the seasons, all ruled by a power and wisdom so far beyond man, but on the bountiful provision for wild creatures of all kinds, which have no need of man, and are of no use to him; the wild asses and the wild cattle fare no worse than their tame companions; the ostrich does not suffer for neglect of her brood. The war-horse is almost a wild creature, like the rest; Job had no horses; "the children of the East" are conceived as a peaceful, pastoral race of herdsmen and travelling merchants, to whom the war-horse is a strange, outlandish monster.

When Job has made his submission, his vindication and restoration follow of course. The solution (if we are to speak of a problem) is quite simple and satisfactory. Job is not as yet the representative of suffering humanity; he is simply a righteous, prosperous man, tried, to prove whether he had the spirit of a hireling, and through every trial holding fast to righteousness. There can be no reason why, when he has stood the test, the normal relations be-

tween prosperity and righteousness should not be restored.

We cannot now recover the structure and connection of this old book; xxxi. does not profess like xxvii. or xxix. to contain the beginning of a fresh speech, yet it does not appear as it stands to be the sequel of either xxvii. or xxx. Again, have either xxxi. or xl., xli. reached us as they were first written? Many have thought the singular delicacy of conscience ascribed to the patriarch in xxxi. one of the fruits of the Spirit, which ripen late; the parenthesis in v. 30 stands almost alone in the Old Testament; it is a sin to curse an enemy and to ask his life; in Proverbs xxiv. 27 the reason for not exulting at an enemy's misfortune is that the exultation may displease God and lead Him to spare the enemy; in Proverbs xxv. 21, rendering good for evil is a refined form of vengeance; the nearest approach is 1 Samuel xii. 23, where Samuel, though wounded by the ingratitude of Israel, cannot cease to intercede without sin. Budde and Driver follow Cornill in thinking this passage older than Jeremiah.

The whole chapter is exceedingly impressive; so are many buildings different parts of which were built at different times in different styles. Without irreverence to the "inspiration of selection" which guided the compiler, if there was one, we may ask whether the chapter as it stands is composite or homogeneous? To begin with, is "I made a covenant with mine eyes, why then should I think upon a maid?" quite of a piece with "If my heart hath been deceived by a woman" and the curse which follows? Would not the writer of v. 1 rather have felt with the apostle that such things should not even be named among saints? Is the curse itself of a piece with the reflection in vv. 11, 12? Can we imagine the same poet, who makes Job imprecate upon himself a *providential* punishment, going on to give as a reason that such crimes are justly punished

by human law? It is certainly natural to think that *vv.* 9, 10 belong to one stratum of thought, and *vv.* 11, 12 to another. We have a parallel to the latter in *vv.* 26-28 (if we left out *v.* 28 only, *vv.* 26, 27 would still interrupt the natural connection between 25 and 29). We have parallels to the former in *vv.* 7, 8 (or, according to Dillmann, *vv.* 5, 7, 8); 21, 22, 38, 40; in all the structure is symmetrical, the imprecation follows close on the hypothetical sin; except in *vv.* 7, 8, the imprecation is obviously appropriate, then again in *vv.* 16-20 and 24, 25, 29-34 we have a string of hypothetical clauses with no apodosis except an occasional parenthesis; did the symmetrical imprecations ever belong to one draft of Job's final protest and the hypothetical clauses to another, where perhaps all depended on something like *v.* 6: "Let God know . . . if . . . if?" . Again, when we turn from form to substance, *vv.* 16, 17, 19, 20, and 31, 32 are perplexingly alike; if the whole chapter were written continuously by one poet, why were they not combined? Why were 31, 32 inserted in another context? Of course the compiler may have strung together pearls from more speeches of Job than one; this would still leave the question open, whether *vv.* 1; 11, 12; 26-28 were as old as the rest of the chapter; as *vv.* 26-28 almost certainly refer to the law of Deuteronomy xvii. 3-7, *v.* 11 probably refers to Deuteronomy too.

When we turn to xl.-xlii. 6, difficulties multiply; it is plausible to say with Dillmann, that since Job has challenged God's righteousness God's answer ought not to consist simply in a display of His power, that xl. 7-14 are in a sense required after xxxviii., xxxix. Job (xxix. 12) delivered the poor when he cried; but is he like God, Who smites the wicked all over the world with His thunder? He fed the widow and the fatherless; is he like God, Who feeds all the wild creatures of the wilderness? Again, though to a western reader xl. 1, 2 seem quite superfluous,

perhaps Job could not have presumed to answer God without being expressly called upon; but even so it is utterly inexplicable why, after he has made his submission, he is not allowed to rest in it; why he should be challenged to gird up his loins like a man for another contest; yet it is quite clear that in xl. 6, 7 we have a fresh beginning. Besides, if a special display of the Divine Justice was required, ought it not to have been on the same scale as the display of the Divine Power? xl. 7-14 might easily be by the poet of xxxviii., xxxix., but without deciding the possibly irreverent question, whether the detailed catalogue of the appearance of Behemoth and Leviathan be worthy of him, it is obvious that they are in quite a different style from the rapid and vivid pictures of the earlier speech. On the other hand, if we summarise xl. 7, xli. we get what seems a coherent and adequate framework. Can Job rule and thunder like God? if he can, let him try; then his own right hand may save him; if not, let him look at two of God's creatures, each too mighty for man; as an argument this seems, to a western reader at least, as relevant as that of the earlier speech. Is it possible that xl. 7-xli. are the work of a poet who thought xxxviii., xxxix. rather splendid than convincing? Is it possible that he found the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan ready to his hand and took, with or without change, as much as he wanted, and that a scribe (to whom we ought to be grateful) added the rest? If so, of course the speech of the Almighty ends with xli. 10, 11:—

None is so fierce that dare stir him up:
 Who then is able to contend with Me?
 Who hath first given to me that I should repay?
 Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.

If the description is to be continued, these two verses interrupt it, but they close it impressively. It is quite astounding that any poet should make any god say, "I will

give a detailed description of my own work"; is it conceivable that a Hebrew poet should make the true God say this in *v.* 12? ¹

On the other hand *vv.* 12-34 or 13-34 seem to be part of the original description of Leviathan. "He is the chief of the ways of God," which is said of Behemoth *xl.* 19, is just like "He is a king over all the children of pride," said (*xli.* 34) of Leviathan; the former, like *xli.* 12, is, if we may say so, out of place in the mouth of God; the next half of *xl.* 19 is very difficult. "He that made him provideth him with his sword" is so far fetched as a description of the eye-tusks of the hippopotamus that Studer tries to get the sense of A.V. out of the Hebrew. "Nur sein Schöpfer bringt ihm den Tod." The Septuagint reading is tempting:—

He is the chief of the ways of God,
Which is made for Him to play with.

This is quite unobjectionable in itself: if a psalmist (*iv.* 26) speaks of Leviathan as God's plaything, so may a wise man (though hardly God) speak of Behemoth. It is strange that Hebraists who adopt the reading of LXX. in *v.* 19 do not go on to correct *v.* 20 by Psalm *i.* 10-12: if Behemoth be God's plaything, the mountains may furnish His table,

¹ We do not get rid of our difficulties by rewriting *vv.* 9-12 after LXX. :—

"Behold his hope is belied:
Will he fight against Mine appearing?
He is not so bold as to stir Me up:
Who, indeed, could stand before Me?
Who ever attacks Me in safety?
All beneath the whole heaven is Mine.
I will not take his babbling in silence,
His mighty speech and its comely arrangement";

and placing them before xxxviii. 2. If the critics who propose this arrangement are right, some scribe must have thrown his thoughts of the contrast between Job's challenge and the crushing answer to it into the form of a soliloquy of the Most High, which, if regarded as part of the text, does not fit the situation (for Job has been so bold, xxxi. 35-37, as to stir up God to answer him) while here too *v.* 12 hardly becomes the dignity of the Speaker.

and mountains are not the ordinary haunts of Behemoth. If *v.* 24, as Dillmann supposes, is a description (probably corrupt) of the way the hippopotamus was caught, it will be clear that the description of Behemoth was in the main written for itself, not for its place in the book of Job. No part of Hebrew literature is likely to have suffered greater losses than the words of the wise and their dark sayings. As we see from "the burden of Agur," they were not always orthodox: perhaps what has been lost contained many parallels to the boldest things in Job and the Preacher. If there be anything in the conjecture, which no Hebraist of authority has sanctioned, that the Hebrew text of Job was very greatly enlarged after the original translation of the LXX. was made, the additions were probably made by scribes who added parallel passages from the older literature: the description of the ostrich, xxxix. 13 sqq., is less obviously relevant than that of the wild ass, but both may very well be taken from the same series of poems, though only the latter has been worked into its place.

Whatever changes from the original text we may discern or suspect in these parts of the book of Job, it is still clear that the writer is engaged in working out two correlative ideas of Job's innocence and God's majesty: his conscious innocence leads him to challenge God's justice in afflicting him; then the display of God's majesty convinces him that the challenge is misplaced, and he sinks into submission and is rewarded by complete restoration.

Now it is very remarkable that both these ideas are assumed from beginning to end of iv.-xxvi., xxviii. Job repeatedly insists quite as strongly as the three friends upon God's majesty; their position is not so much that Job's afflictions prove him to be a sinner above others, but that no man can be really righteous before God. Hence Eliphaz, who is probably meant to have more spiritual insight than the others, states at the beginning of his last

speech that Job, if ever so innocent, could have no claim upon God; on the other hand, Bildad (viii. 6, 7) contemplates at least the possibility of Job's being pure and upright, while Job for his own part starts with plaintive submission; the utmost he ventures at first is a wish to **make supplication** unto his judge. This is **exactly** the attitude to which he has been reduced by God's answer. If we read the speeches of Eliphaz apart from Job's replies, he seems to promise Job exactly the issue of his trials which is reached in the Epilogue: ¹ if he will trust in God and humble himself before Him, his prosperity shall be renewed, and he shall be a prevailing intercessor, and Bildad and even Zophar promise the like. This is just what we should expect if a later poet had taken up the high argument at the point to which an earlier had raised it. The theory that it is the main concern of the three friends to justify God by convincing Job that his calamities are deserved may easily be overpressed. Certainly it is part of the intention of the poet to convict the three friends (as representatives of the orthodoxy of his day) of speaking deceitfully for God and accepting His Person, but it is only incidentally that this leads them to be unjust to Job; they begin to slander him when he proves to them that their comfortable optimism is unreal. Certainly too the writer is upon Job's side upon the whole, but (possibly for the very reason that Job is the mouthpiece of the bitterness of his own heart) he distrusts his own sympathies, and takes pains to do full justice to the theodicy he is criticising.

That theodicy is in the main the theodicy of the psalter, with some important differences. The psalmists dwell rightly on the inward delight in God which makes His

¹ The Epilogue seems to be presupposed at vi. 22, where Job asks if he had appealed to his friends to give him money in his trouble, which all of his friends actually do in the Epilogue, as a natural if not indispensable step towards the restoration of his prosperity.

favoured saints independent of circumstances, but they say nothing of the martyr's or ascetic's spiritual joy in the midst of physical anguish; and the former topic would be irrelevant for the consolation of Job, whose flesh and spirit are writhing in the tortures of a loathsome disease. In another matter Zophar (xx. *passim*) seems to go beyond the psalmists: not only is the triumphing of the wicked short, but he has no real enjoyment of it while it lasts. Another contrast is more important: it would be possible to point to not a few psalms, where the feeling, and even the remembrance, of guilt seems to have faded away in the light of the Lord; but, as has been said, it is common ground between Job and his friends that all men are in a very real sense miserable sinners. Hence the question of Job's relative innocence is only a part, and not the most important part, of the question between him and them. In the first cycle of speeches, they really make an honest attempt to comfort him with the promise that God, Who delivers the righteous out of the afflictions which even they deserve, will deliver him, if he takes his trouble in the right spirit. In the second cycle, when he rejects their consolation, they threaten him with the destruction which overtakes the wicked and brings their seeming prosperity to a sudden terrible end.¹ In the third cycle Eliphaz plainly and expressly charges Job with the common sins of rich men, and invites him

¹ In the ordinary view it is very startling that Job does not reply till xxxi. to Eliphaz' indictment in xxii., while it is natural enough that the last speech of Eliphaz, in what we may call the second book of Job should correspond to the last speech of Job in the first. If one compares xxii. 9 with xxxi. 16¹, 21, 22, one or other is certainly derivative, and the last hemistich of xxii. 9, "And the arms of the fatherless have been broken" is more intelligible as an allusion to xxxi. 21, 22, than as the original from which the latter have been expanded. Again in xxix. 25 Job sums up the account of his past prosperity—

"I dwelt as a king in the army,
As one that comforteth the mourners."

Is there not a reference to this in the opening speech of Eliphaz iv. 3, 4, where Job is reproached, not untenderly, for failing to comfort himself as he has comforted others.

(xxii. 24, 25, R.V.) to cast away what remains of his earthly treasure (the prologue leaves Job a beggar) that he may find true and lasting riches in friendship with God.

In the first cycle of speeches Job seems much less concerned to assert that his sufferings are undeserved than that they are irremediable; he returns to this again and again: more than once, especially in xiv., he seems to complain not only of his personal lot but of human life as a whole. Men are miserable sinners in a miserable world; considering what they are and what life is, there is something unfair, he seems to say, in the very notion of a moral government. Is it really worthy of the majesty of the Most High to enter into judgment with such creatures?—to use omniscience to detect their frailties and omnipotence to punish them? As a fact, God's severity, he says, is, so far as we can see, indiscriminate. "If the scourge slay suddenly, He will laugh at the trial of the innocent." "If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet must I not lift up my head." This is not at all the temper of chapters xxvii. and xxxi. There Job is confident both of God's judgment upon the world in general and of his own innocence, though he cannot reconcile the two. Nor again is his complaint in chapters xxix., xxx., so full of despair as it is from chapter iii. onwards. In all Job's speeches up to xxvi. he desires two things—that God will either destroy him at once or leave him alone for a little to rest,—that instead of striking blow after blow out of the darkness He will declare what specially He has against Job. Again and again he prays God not to make him afraid with His terror, which is just what we should expect for a poet who thought the solution in chapters xli. and xlii. inadequate. When Job challenges the Almighty at the end of xxxi., a display of majesty and terror might seem for the moment answer enough. But Job in chapter ix. knows already all that he is taught in xxxviii. sqq.: ix. 4, 12, xxvi. 4, 14, contain praises of the mysterious power of God

quite as sublime as anything uttered by the Voice from the Tempest. Indeed it might be a question whether the words, that the later poet puts into the mouth of Job, and even Bildad, are not deeper in a sense than those which an older poet put into the mouth of the Almighty. Job has heard, "Dominion and fear are with Him; He maketh peace in His high places. Is there any number of His armies, and upon whom doth not His light arise?" He has said "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered, which removeth the mountains and they know not, which overturneth them in His anger, which shaketh the earth in her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; which commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; which alone spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth on the waves of the sea." Again, "Hell is naked before Him and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place and hangeth the earth upon nothing. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. Lo these are the outskirts of His ways, and how small a whisper is heard of Him! But the thunders of His power who can understand?" Is it the same Job who says, after a wider though not more awful panorama has been unrolled in the last chapters, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." When one compares the homage to the Divine majesty in iii.-xxvi. with the display of it in xxxviii.-xli., one is reminded of the contrast between Vergil and Homer: there the earlier poet is vivid and copious; he can abandon himself to his inspiration; the later selects and refines, yet he thrills us as deeply and rises as high.

If we separate iii.-xxvi. from xxvii. and xxix. sqq., we have a very complete criticism of the orthodox Hebrew theodicy. The solution which appears in Psalm lxxiii. as a fresh and satisfactory revelation, something beyond the power of unassisted thought, has been tried and seems to be

found wanting. To die like all men, suddenly, in the midst of a course of insolent prosperity, is no adequate punishment for the wicked; the sight of such a judgment is no compensation to the righteous and the poor for a lifetime of suffering. Again, the idea of family solidarity which we find in the Psalms, *e.g.* xxii. 29, 30, is discarded in Job xxi. 21. "What concern hath he in his house after him when the number of his months is cut off?" xi. 21: "His sons come to honour and he knoweth it not. And they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them."

If we look for a religious element in Job's speeches, probably we should find it in his growing desire to speak to the Almighty and reason with God. At first we may say he seems, like the three friends, to be almost paralysed by his own reverence; he repeats again and again that he, like all men, is a sinner before God; he complains, "Why dost not Thou pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity?" Afterwards, when his friends exasperate him with their unreal descriptions of God's unfailing protection of the righteous and His unfailing destruction of the wicked, the thought seems to force itself upon him that God is true and must know the truth. Hence, though God puts his feet in the stocks, looks narrowly into all his paths; though He has taken him by the neck, and set him up for His mark, though He cleaves his reins asunder and does not spare (here again we may ask, is this the language of one who has only heard by the hearing of the ear, or of one who is actually writhing under the hand of Him Who maketh darkness His secret place?), he can still protest, "Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." He is confident that His Redeemer liveth, that in some sense (it is well known that Hebraists are still divided as to both text and rendering) he will see God. He is quite certain that God will vindicate him against his accusers, even though He allows sinners to prosper. From this point of view, chapter xxviii. seems

the natural sequel of xxvi., and the close of the whole discussion. After the righteous man has faced the facts of human life at their worst and held fast his own integrity, and appealed in every tone for a solution of his perplexity to Him Who hideth Himself, Who giveth no account of any of His matters, what is left but a solemn proclamation that God and God only knows the answer to the riddle? If theodicy breaks down in the presence of facts, it is possible to find some rest in the belief that God knows everything, though man can know nothing but duty. The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be, Who can understand the thunder of God's power? for though man can find his way to the secret treasures of earth, he cannot in life or death find his way to the hiding place of wisdom, which is only known to Him. The Hebrew tragedy, after stirring us to passionate sympathy, like the Greek, leaves us like the Greek in a hush of helpless awestruck calm.

Greek piety did not always find such a close satisfactory. Sometimes it demanded and obtained the intervention of a god from a machine. The speeches of Elihu prove that ordinary Hebrew piety such a close seemed dangerous. If we suppose that Elihu is replying to Job's closing protestation of integrity, it is strange that he ignores it so completely; he is absolutely confident that Job is a sinner, and the worst of sinners, because he denies the penalties of sin: he was bound therefore to take some notice of the speech, in which Job claims in detail to have kept from sin and followed after righteousness, if it was part of the text which the author who speaks in his name intended to supplement. The speeches of Elihu are full of references to iii.-xxvi.; we find no clear references to xxix.-xxxi. If we read the book as a whole, it is hard to see what Elihu has to say that Eliphaz has not said already, or that God is not to say when He speaks from the tempest. If we read the speeches of Elihu as a supplement to iii.-xxvi., xxviii., they cease

to seem superfluous. While he expands the strong topics upon which Eliphaz just touches once or twice, that man can have no claim upon the Divine majesty, and that suffering may be a profitable discipline, he adds to this a not ineffective appeal to the goodness shown in creation, and he drops the questionable contention of the three friends, that men are living under an obviously equitable scheme of rewards and punishments. He does not deal in promises of prosperity. God, according to him, is revealed as One Who brings the poor out of misery, Who preserves the life of man from the pit. The course of the world is what it is, we have no right to ask why; all our wisdom is to know that by turning humbly and trustfully to God when we are smitten, we may pass through its troubles safely and peacefully, in a temper of cheerful penitence. If Elihu does not explain life any better than Bildad and Zophar, at any rate he does not misrepresent it as they do. Very few of us are tried like Job. Have those who are not, any right to question the judgment of a canonical writer, that Elihu is in some ways a better guide to the temper in which to meet ordinary troubles?

A few words may be added on questions of literary chronology. If iii.-xxvi., xxviii., form a whole in themselves, the most probable date for them might be the reign of Zedekiah, if it be assumed with most expositors that Job is the mouthpiece partly of Israel partly of an afflicted saint who writes in his name. The eagerness that the worst should come at once, the impatient rejection of all promises of deliverance as insincere flattery, indeed as cruel mockery, both seem to suit the time when the remnant of Judah was cowering under the shadow of Babylon. Many who heard the prophecies of Jeremiah in the Chaldæan period, must have felt his rare promises even more intolerable than his habitual threatenings; they too may have said in their heart,—

I loathe it : I would not live alway.
Let me alone, for my days are vanity.

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.
He covereth the face of the judges thereof.

God hath delivered me to the ungodly,
And turned me over into the hands of the wicked,

They too may have had to hear :

Shall the earth be forsaken for thee,
And shall the rock be removed out of its place ?—

from those who still could find the familiar order of the world safe and satisfactory, who were still resting in short-sighted security that the overflowing scourge would pass by *them*. Those whose own sorrows open their eyes to the general misery are liable to be reproached for insensate pessimism.

It has often been observed that the praise of Wisdom in xxviii. has many analogies with the opening section of Proverbs: is there any need to regard it as later? It is clear from "the Burden of Agur" that the stage when learned ignorance seems the last word of wisdom was reached before the canon was closed, probably long before the book of the Preacher was written: in fact, these perplexities are already behind the preacher of wisdom, who asks,—Prov. viii. 1, 2 :—

Doth not wisdom cry,
And understanding put forth her voice!
In the top of high places by the way,
In the place where paths meet she taketh her stand.

So are they behind the teacher of the Law, Deut. xxxii. 14 :
" This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who

shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it?" Obviously all three teachers put forward practical duty as the answer to speculative perplexities. According to two of them, the answer is complete; according to the third, it is all that can be given; we have to make the best of it. Two of them speak to the people; the third speaks to the wise.

Elihu in xxxiv. 5 refers unmistakably to xxvii. 2 sqq.; hence it may be inferred that the older and the younger text had been already combined. The younger text was indeed a whole in itself, but there was the strongest inducement to add the magnificent poetry of the Voice from the Tempest, or at any rate to retain the old prologue and epilogue. This last alone made it necessary that Job should say what was right concerning God, and this he does in xxvii.; and though Elihu obviously does not recognise the epilogue, the writer who speaks in his name did not detect that xxvii. belonged to a different text. If we attempt to fix a date for the older text, the latest that presents itself (the parallels to the book of Balaam would tempt us to look further back) is the interval between Josiah's reformation and his death. Then no doubt more than one faithful and upright noble who had seen the worst days of Manasseh felt that his latter end was more blessed than his beginning. The speeches of Elihu were in all probability added in quiet times after the captivity.

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