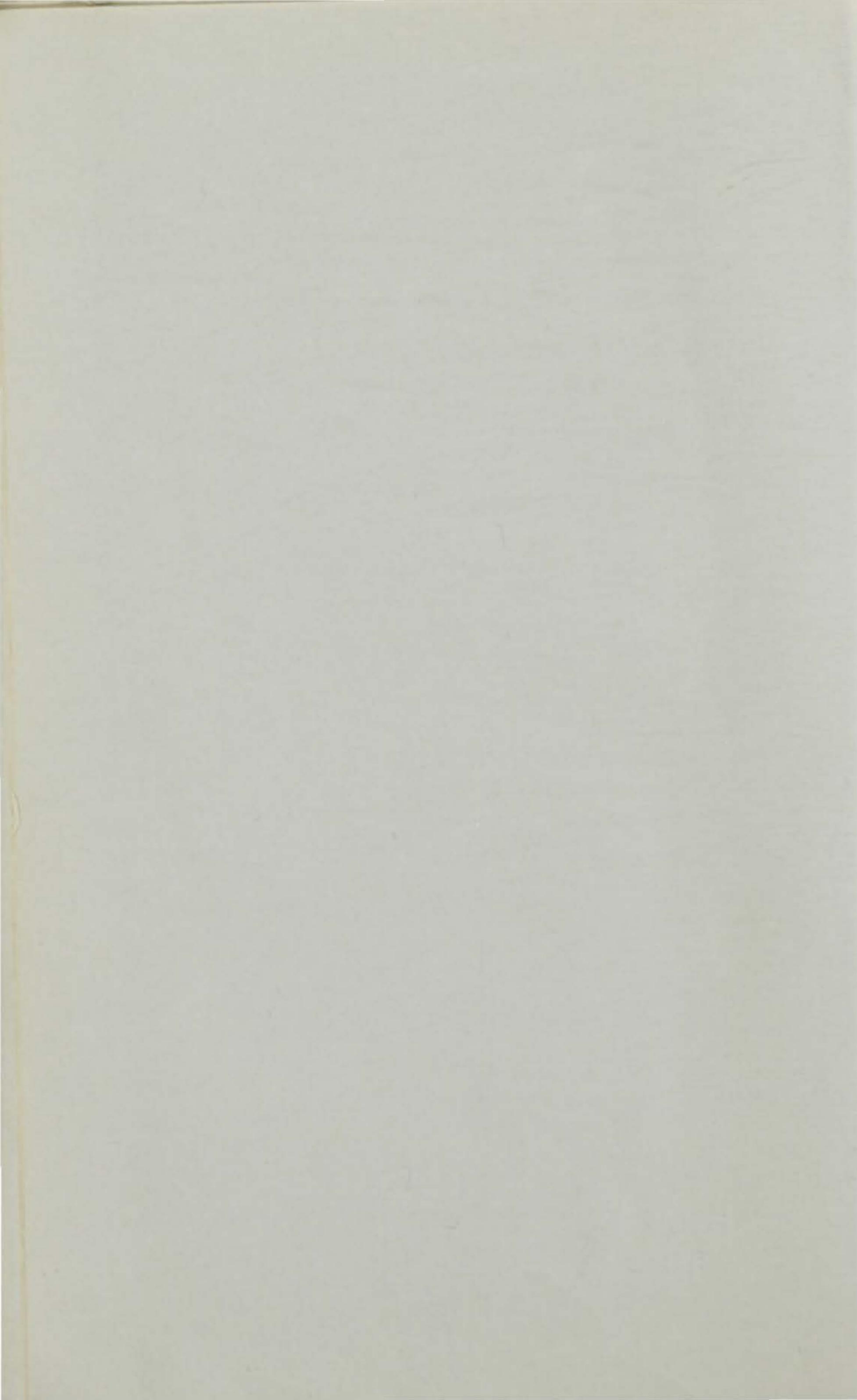


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THE CROSS OF JOB

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THE CROSS OF JOB
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BY

H. WHEELER ROBINSON
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LONDON

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PREFACE

THE contents of this little book have been given at several centres as lectures to non-theological students of the Bible. At the wish of a number of those who have listened to them, they are now published, in the hope that they may serve as a simple introduction to one of the most fascinating books of the Old Testament, a book with a direct message to the suffering and the sorrowing of these years of unprecedented warfare. Perhaps these lectures may also illustrate the fact that critical study brings gain, rather than loss, to the devotional use of Scripture, and that the Old Testament is still the essential path to the true understanding of the New Testament. Some suggestions for the study of the Book of Job have been added at the close by the Rev. L. S. Hunter, the lectures themselves being printed substantially as delivered.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON

SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCTION

Essential features of all great literature : a subject of permanent interest and a living relation to its age ; this exemplified in the Book of Job.

Date and character of the Book ; its form and literary structure.

1. Prologue in prose (i. and ii.).
2. The Debate in poetry (iii.-xxxi.).
(a) iv.-xiv., (b) xv.-xxi., (c) xxii.-xxxi.
3. The (later) Elihu speeches in poetry (xxxii.-xxxvii.)
4. The storm-speeches of Yahweh in poetry (xxxviii.-xlii. 6).
5. Epilogue in prose (xlii. 7-17).

Method of study.

I. THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY JOB

The change from prosperity to adversity.

Emergence of the problem through the attitude of the friends :—

Why do the innocent suffer ?

The development of self-revelation, and the final attitude.

(Contrast the defiance of Prometheus, the fatalism of the Mohammedan and the renunciation of the Buddhist.)

II. THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY HIS FRIENDS

Varieties of one type : moral retribution in divine government.

Job a sinner because a sufferer.

Eliphaz the Mystic.

Bildad the Thinker.

Zophar the Dogmatist.

(The later Elihu also emphasizes suffering as chastening.)

Inadequacy of this doctrine of retribution to explain innocent suffering.

III. THE PROBLEM AS CREATED AND HANDLED BY YAHWEH¹

Epilogue : " double for all his shame."

The storm-speeches ; the wisdom and power of God in nature.

Prologue : the divine purpose, hidden from Job.

IV. THE PROBLEM IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The later belief in immortality.

The Cross of Christ and His insistence on cross-bearing.

Job and the Servant of Yahweh in relation to Christ.

Cosmic Atonement and " complementary " cross-bearing.

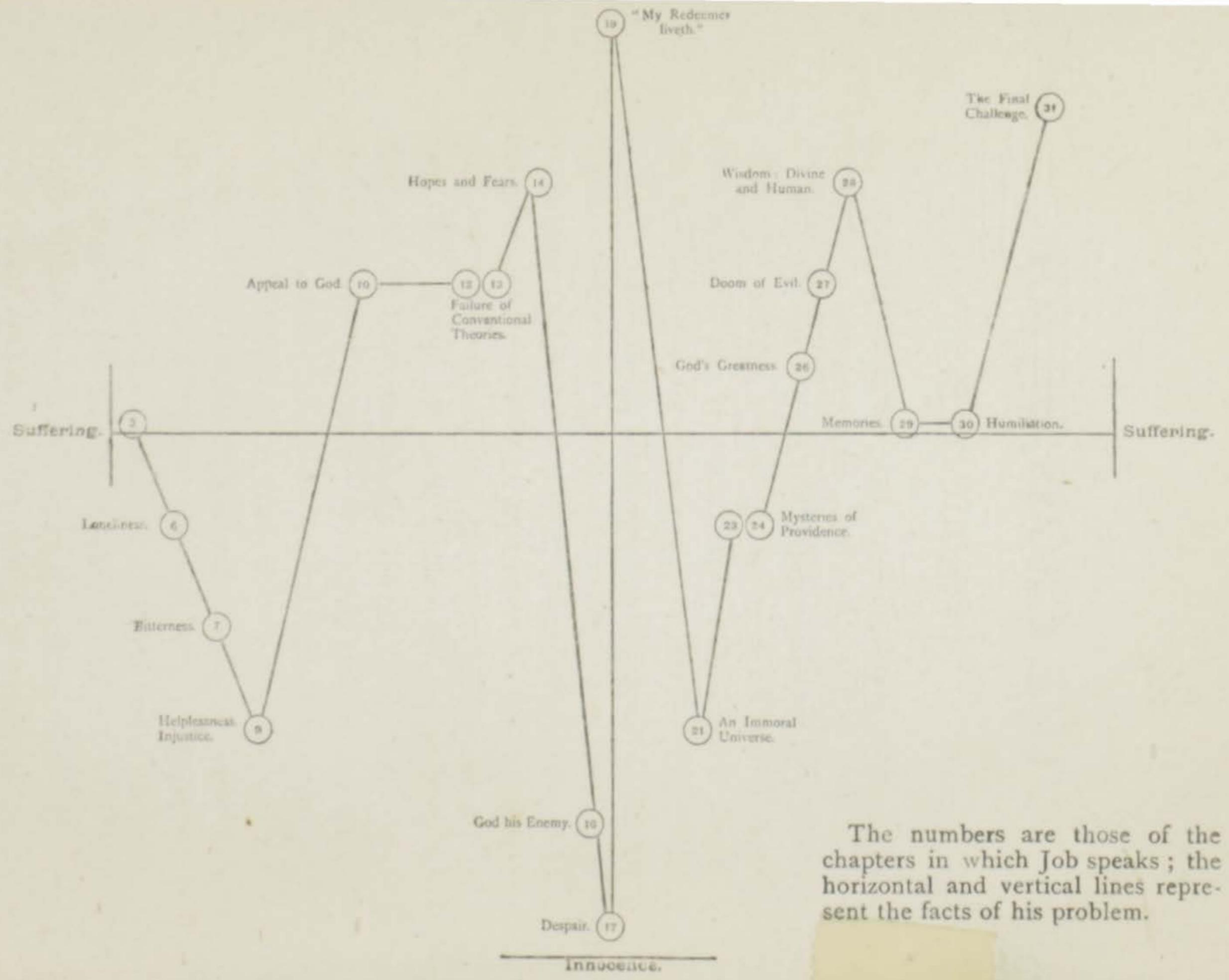
The solidarity of the race.

The permanent value of the Book of Job.

¹ "Yahweh" is used throughout this book as the correct transliteration of the Hebrew name for God, wrongly spelt as "Jehovah," and usually translated in the Bible, "the LORD."

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The numbers are those of the chapters in which Job speaks; the horizontal and vertical lines represent the facts of his problem.

THE CROSS OF JOB

INTRODUCTION

ALL great literature has two essential features. It must deal with some subject of permanent interest, the concern of no single generation but of all the ages ; it must touch the great things of our common humanity, which the changing years cannot touch. On the other hand, great literature is always more or less closely related to the particular age of its production ; it comes to its permanent subject through the transient conditions of that age, and makes them the text of its sermon, or rather, the mould or pattern into which its raw material is shaped. The men who have taught us most have never divorced themselves from the life of their own time ; but they have lived and thought so intensely in that time that they have penetrated through it into the realm of eternal truths. Virgil wrote the "Æneid" because he felt the majesty and dignity of Roman destinies ; his work has long outlived the Empire it celebrated. Dante was an ardent politician in the thirteenth century strife of Pope and Emperor, city and city ; he has compelled the men of all generations to study the insignificant events of his age in order to understand his vision of unseen things. Milton incorporated the ideas of Protestant theology, as Dante did of Catholic ;

yet their poems are much more than theological pamphlets. It is not otherwise with the Book of Job, the noblest production of Hebrew poetry. To understand it marks an epoch in a man's life; but two conditions are necessary for its understanding. Since it deals with one of the enduring mysteries of human life, the unexplained presence of suffering in the world, it has no message for us until we have come to feel something of the pressure and burden of that mystery, in our own or in other lives. But since it is in form a Semitic poem, written in an environment so different from that of modern Western civilization, it can be understood only by patient study of that environment, and, above all, only by putting aside the preconceptions with which many people approach the Bible, preconceptions which rob God of the liberty of speaking to us in His own way.

We do not know who wrote the Book of Job; no information on this point is given us either in the book itself, or elsewhere, in any reliable tradition. The central figure of the Book of Job is named twice elsewhere in the Bible; by Ezekiel (xiv. 14, 20) as a type of righteousness, and by James (v. 11) as a type of endurance. Job appears in Mohammedan legend; he swears to give his wife a hundred stripes when he gets well, but Allah tells him to let her off with one blow from a hundred-leaved palm branch. We cannot tell when Job lived. The scene of the Book of Job is laid in Arabia in the remote patriarchal period. It is probable that the actual Job was a man of great possessions and piety, who suffered un-

exampled misfortunes, his name being handed down from one generation to another until it became proverbial. It is of much more interest to us that somewhere between 500 and 400 B.C., that is, within the fifth century before Christ, an unknown author appropriated the tradition, just as Shakespeare did that of King Lear. But he did not simply use it like Shakespeare to draw a picture of human life in its sorrows and afflictions; this unknown Hebrew writer was not only an artist but also a moralist and theologian, with an explicit philosophy of life to declare. He wanted to protest against the current doctrine that suffering and sin always went together; he wanted to prove that there is a mystery in suffering which cannot be wholly understood by man, a mystery that goes back to God, and results in the fact that the innocent can suffer as well as the guilty. His work was probably done not long after the time of that other unknown writer we call Deutero-Isaiah (Is. xl.-lv.). Both writers, who have many points of contact, are impressed by the misfortunes of Israel in exile, and especially by the suffering of the innocent in the common lot of the nation. But whereas Deutero-Isaiah has centred his thoughts on the figure of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, the personified Israel who accomplishes Yahweh's work through his sorrows, the author of Job has addressed himself rather to the general problem of innocent suffering, which was coming more and more to engage the attention of thoughtful Israelites. He has dealt with this problem in characteristic Hebrew fashion by taking the concrete traditional figure of Job, and by throwing back his own thoughts

into the remote age in which Job was supposed to have lived. We must not, then, mistake the general antiquity of the picture of Job in the book for evidence of a date equally remote; as a matter of fact it would have been as inconceivable a product of that remote age as would be Tennyson's "In Memoriam" as a product of the early Britons. In both cases, the problems discussed arise only in a comparatively late stage of civilization.

The Book of Job itself distinguishes between the traditional story of Job and the discussion of the problem of innocent suffering by putting the former in prose and the latter in verse. The Revised Version shows that the Prologue to the Book (cc. i. and ii.) is in prose, as is also the Epilogue (xlii. 7-17). It is possible that this prose story was already in existence and was appropriated or adapted by the author of the poetry. The rest of the book, apart from merely connecting links, is in Hebrew poetry. The chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry is what is called "parallelism"; for example:—

There the wicked cease from troubling
And there the weary are at rest.

There is no rhyme, as there is in much modern poetry, nor any exact counting of syllables or attention to the quantity or length of the syllables; but there is a sort of loose rhythm, which has its own impressiveness. All through the poem we shall note the Semitic love of the concrete; the argument prefers pictures to abstract statements. The poem is dramatic, without being a drama in the full sense

of the word. The debate between Job and his friends goes on in three cycles (cc. iii.-xxxi.); it is followed by a series of speeches by a certain Elihu, which most scholars regard as a later addition to the book (xxxii.-xxxvii.), and by the speeches of Yahweh out of the storm (xxxviii.-xlii. 6).

The action of this dramatic poem is internal, not external; it centres in the development of Job's own thought in presence of his problem. This suggests the most effective method of studying the book as a whole. We shall try to do what Browning did in "The Ring and the Book." He told us the same story a dozen times over in succession, putting it from different standpoints, and leaving us to draw our own conclusions. The author of the Book of Job has given us a number of different attitudes to the problem of suffering; he, too, has partly left us to draw our own conclusions. We shall therefore begin with the central figure, and, at some length, try to understand the gradual unfolding of his thought. We shall then see how the same problem presents itself to the friends who discuss it with him. Further, the Book shows us an altogether different standpoint, that of Yahweh Himself; in this we must suppose that the author's chief message to us will lie. Finally, we shall see what further light is thrown upon the problem by our Christian faith. It may seem strange that we do not begin with the Prologue, if this is to be regarded as containing the author's ultimate explanation of Job's sufferings. But it should be remembered that the scene of this explanation is laid in heaven; it is hidden from all

those who take part in the dialogue. To understand what *they* say and think, we must try to stand where they do. We shall therefore endeavour in the first place to trace the words and thought of the central person, knowing no more than he is supposed to know.

PART I

THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY JOB

WE are to listen, then, to a single voice, telling out in naked self-revelation the story of a spiritual agony. A man suffering the torment of physical and mental pain does not think logically and progressively. His thoughts are instinctive. They fly out like sparks struck from the iron as it lies between the hammer of God and the anvil of life. At one moment they are bright and fierce, at another dim and dull. We are to mark "the incidents in the development of a soul," of which a great writer once said, "little else is worth study." We shall note the various changes of mood, and find the throbs of anguish becoming the birth-pangs of truth. We shall indeed hear the sound heard in the last century by an English poet and thinker, as he stood on Dover beach—"the melancholy, long withdrawing roar" of the sea of faith. But the ebb of that sea will be followed by the flow; the turn of the tide will come, and all around the island of this lonely but faithful soul, the sea of faith will rise again up "the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world." It is this startling sincerity of utterance, combined with the nature of the subject, that makes the Book of Job so modern in its appeal. For we feel that this is not simply literature. It is life, distilled life.

The utterance can be as fierce and terrible as an awakened volcano, as broad and swift as one of the great rivers, as full of sombre peace in its rarer moments of repose as an autumn sunset.

We must begin, however, with the conditions which give rise to the problem on the rack of which Job is stretched. In the opening verses of the Book, he was introduced to us as a man unvexed by doubt. So far from his life raising any problem at all, it was one of the most convincing arguments to his own age that faith in God was fully warranted. The conditions under which he lived perfectly satisfied the conventional theories of religion. Spiritual health and material wealth were in exact proportion ; in both respects he was " the greatest of all the children of the East." A particular example of his piety is given, in order that we may realize its depth. He is careful concerning the lightest sins of ignorance, not only in himself, but also in his family ; he regularly intercedes for them with God. It is a man of such exemplary religion who suddenly becomes the protagonist in a tragedy. As he walks the stage of life in simple dignity, a fierce glare of limelight beats upon him, to show him reeling under blow upon blow. But the hardest blow of all is the unanswered " Why ? " The real problem is created for Job by the fact that *he* did not stand among the sons of God who discussed his fate. The hiding of God's power was the dazzling light of an unknown divine purpose, a purpose which to Job was purposeless. Everyone is familiar with the vividly drawn series of catastrophes which deprives him of all

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his possessions. They proceed to a climax, the least valuable part of his property being lost first, and his beloved children last ; they are balanced and contrasted with great artistic effect. The first and the third, the loss of the oxen and asses and of the camels, come through human agency, the second and fourth, the loss of sheep and of children, are due to what we should call natural causes also, the lightning and the desert wind, though the Hebrew conceived these as the direct and supernatural activities of God. The fifth and crowning disaster is the hideous disease of leprosy, which was regarded as a peculiar mark of divine displeasure. Its result is to make him not only the sufferer of intense physical pain, but also an outcast from the civilization of his time. Away from the dwelling-place of men, he lies on the dung-heaps which are a familiar feature of the neighbourhood of Oriental villages ; there we must picture him through all the cycles of colloquy, for there his friends find him. Thither comes his wife, with her so natural outburst, womanly in the depth of her sympathy with the sufferer, angry with God because of her love for Job. Blake's fine illustration, as Bradley has pointed out, conceives her to be with him to the very end, the faithful sharer of his sorrows as before of his joys. This has no warrant in the Book, but it has no contradiction. Unlike her sympathy, that of the friends is at first unspoken. It is very real, however much disturbed by the thought that divine retribution must be at work.

It is contact with the silent sympathy of the friends that makes Job break at last his long silence in

the outburst of grief that forms the third chapter. Here the real problem is as yet unrealized by Job. We listen simply to pent-up sorrow breaking out in natural language, a groaning and travailing as of the brute creation, unaccentuated by thought on the mystery behind. "Better never born; better dead at birth; why is death withheld from me now?" The most significant feature here is the picture given of the Under-world (iii. 13-19). For Job and his contemporaries there is practically no thought of life after death. The ghosts of men indeed linger on in Sheol, like the pale and bloodless shades pictured by Homer in Hades; but this is not worth calling life, and counts for nothing in the common thought of men. Good and bad alike go down to its depths when life is over; there they live a sort of dream-life, unless some witch of Endor disturbs them. This dark and gloomy cavern (*cf.* Is. xiv. 3 ff., and Ezek. xxxii. 17 ff.) is all that Job can expect after death, though we shall see gleams of a larger hope play fitfully across the uninviting background. The fact is important, because it deepens the problem when once that has arisen. The vindication of Job's righteousness must come on earth, if it is to come at all.

What is it, then, that brings the real problem before Job? It is the declared attitude of his friends to the fact of his suffering. It had never crossed his mind that his agony could be regarded as the punishment for sin. He had, perhaps, never doubted the conventional theory of retribution, which drew an exact balance of desert and fortune on this side of the grave. But when

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he realizes that his friends are applying the theory to himself, he starts back with horror, as from the brink of some darkness-hidden cliff, whose yawning depth a flash of lightning has revealed. They are saying to him that which Nathan said to David: "Thou art the man." But there is this difference; whereas David suddenly saw himself as others saw him, Job realized that the orthodox doctrine of his age was false, false at least as to himself. He knew in his heart that he was innocent of any sin great enough to explain the magnitude of his sufferings. But if the theory would not fit his own case, how could he go on applying it to others? His creed was destroyed; but the living faith within him persisted in putting forth new shoots. "I am innocent; I do not know why God has sent all this trouble upon me. It looks as if there were no justice, no right or wrong in life at all; and yet, and yet—God *must* somehow right the wrong. It can't be true that I have heard His last word."

It agrees with the way in which the problem rises that the dominant note of the sixth chapter should be that of loneliness. In a graphic Oriental figure, Job makes us see what he had looked for, what he expected to find in the silent sympathy of his friends. He describes a company of travellers through the waterless desert, whose water-skins have failed them. Let an Eastern traveller's words (Richard Burton's) make the figure living to us:—

"Above, through a sky terrible in its stainless beauty, and the splendours of a pitiless, blinding glare, the Samun

caresses you like a lion with flaming breath. Around lie drifted sand-heaps, upon which each puff of wind leaves its trace in solid waves, flayed rocks, the very skeletons of mountains, and hard unbroken plains, over which he who rides is spurred by the idea that the bursting of a water-skin, or the pricking of a camel's hoof would be a certain death of torture—a haggard land infested with wild beasts and wilder men—a region whose very fountains murmur the warning words, 'Drink and away!'

"I turned to you," Job says, "as despairing travellers turn to some remembered wady, some valley in which a plentiful stream supplied refreshment in other days. I turned to you—and lo! my wady was dried up with the drought of summer heat." "To him that is ready to faint kindness should be showed from his friend, even to him that forsaketh the fear of the Almighty."

The natural sequence of the loneliness of chapter vi. is the bitterness of chapter vii.—bitterness against God who is responsible for all this pain and sorrow. You will note the significant difference here from a frequent modern attitude. The instinct of a *modern* Job would be to doubt the very existence of God, and to think himself the sport of cruel circumstance, the mere plaything of natural law. Such an attitude is possible to the doubter of to-day, because science has opened up to us a great world of Nature, which seems to be able to go on by itself, at least to the superficial thinker. But Hebrew thought could not so easily dispense with a very present God, whether or no He was a help in trouble.

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It had to think of God in order to account for the world ; it had not learnt to make the secondary causes of Nature primary, and to deify Nature herself. Thus it is that through all Job's thinking the reality of God's *existence* remains unchallenged. The whole controversy is fought around His alleged *character*. Is God at heart good or bad ? The bitter resentment of Job is expressed in a striking way. After speaking of God's relentless pursuit of him, even in his dreams, he passes to a startling parody of the eighth Psalm, which turns its faith into doubt, and its gratitude into revolt :—

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him,
And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him,
And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
And try him every moment ? (vii. 17, 18).

This bitter mood passes in the ninth chapter into more explicit statement of his own helplessness against the divine injustice. " I admit the power of God," Job says ; " but what is the use of God's power to me, when it is used against me ? " Job can say, " From the first, Power was—I knew " ; but his agony is too great for him yet to say :—

Life has made clear to me,
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

God is unjust ; man, even when innocent, is helpless and hopeless before a God who conforms to no standard of right in the exercise of His power. Is life, then, worth living ?

I despise my life ;
 It is all one ; therefore I say,
 He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.
 If the scourge slay suddenly,
 He will mock at the trial of the innocent (ix. 21-23).

Think what that terrible phrase means—the jeering God. The Hebrew word suggests the stammering, chuckling derision of brutal and half-idiotic mirth. God has become to Job a sort of Gulliver, straddling over Lilliput. Quite in the spirit of such a figure is the reference to the dirty ditch (ix. 30) :—

If I wash myself with snow,
 And make my hands never so clean,
 Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
 And mine own clothes shall abhor me.

No man can hold long to such a belief about God, whilst retaining his sanity. By one of those revulsions of feeling which characterize such a history as this, Job returns to a better spirit, in which we can mark the chastened note of appeal to God. He forgets the wild outbreak of his imagination, and is touched into a moment's hope by a characteristic Hebrew thought—the infinite pains God has taken in weaving together the human body of the unborn child (x. 8, 9) :—

Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me
 Together round about ; yet thou dost destroy me.
 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned me
 as clay :
 And wilt thou bring me into dust again ?

THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY JOB 25

Perhaps Tennyson had those words in his mind when he wrote :—

Thou madest Life in man and brute,
Thou madest Death ; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die ;
And thou hast made him : thou art just.

Job's appeal to God's creative purpose really contradicts his late outburst ; he is not convinced of the charges of injustice which he brings against God. But through all this part of the poem we are moving in the realm of instinctive feeling rather than of reasoned thought. It is to the provocation of the debate that we owe the more intellectual and reasoned treatment of the problem in the 12th and 13th chapters. We need not here consider Job's criticism of those conventional theories of suffering which his friends offer him. Some sentences from the thirteenth chapter set before us the whole situation. "Your memorable sayings," says Job to his friends, "are proverbs of ashes" ; you sit over them, like some shivering wretch over a fire already burnt out. "Your defences are defences of clay" ; the ramparts of war you build that look so solid will crumble like dried clay at the first strong hand that is laid upon them. John Locke called such conventional ideas wealth borrowed from others, which is "like fairy money, [for] though it were gold in the hand from which he received

it, [it] will be but leaves and dust when it comes to use." Leaves and dust—but Job feels that such things are pictures not only of his friends' arguments, but of himself in shattered frame and nerveless spirit:—

Wilt thou harass a driven leaf?
 And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? . . .
 Man is like a rotten thing that consumeth,
 Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

Poor, sad humanity, with no prospect of relief! thinks Job, as he passes from the thought of his own sorrows to those of the world, just as Tennyson passed from his personal loss in Hallam's death to the whole problem of a mourning world. In the next chapter (xiv.) of "Hopes and Fears," we meet with the first of those gleams of light against the darkness of the future, which come but to vanish again. It is not a faith, still less a creed, but a mere flash of personal desire. If God would only let me go away at once into the dark underworld, and let me be there for a time till He had forgotten to be angry! Job wants to hide away, like a little child, till the father's fit of temper is over. "I would wait quite patiently down there in spite of darkness and gloom. One day, God would suddenly remember, and look round, and miss me, and cry, 'Job, Job, where is my child Job?' And then I, waiting in some corner of that dreary darkness for His lightest whisper, would joyfully cry, 'Here, Lord, here—ready in Sheol as was thy servant Isaiah in the temple.' I would put my hand in my Father's, not like the prodigal, for I have never left Him,

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but like a happy son who sees his father's long estrangement pass away" (xiv. 13-15):—

Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol,
That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past,
That thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember
me!

If a man die, shall he live again?
All the days of my warfare would I wait,
Till my release should come.
Thou shouldest call and I would answer thee:
Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thine hands.

It is disappointing to see that splendid hope die away like the glory of sunset, to see Job so near the truth, trembling, as it were, on the very verge of a Christian faith in God and immortality, and then throwing up his hands in despair (xvi.). But that is life; that is you and I and all the generations. The sudden drop is perhaps due to the harsh and untrue line taken by Eliphaz in the intervening chapter. The unkindness and the injustice are too much for Job, and he falls to the depths—deeper depths even than when he thought of God as watching with derisive scorn the suffering of an innocent man. He portrays God as his active enemy, in a succession of terrible pictures.

God is a beast of prey:—

He hath torn me in his wrath and hated me,
He hath gnashed upon me with his teeth:
Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me (xvi. 9).

It is like looking into the face of a tiger, with no iron bars between. Or God is a Giant Despair:—

I was at ease, and he brake me asunder ;
 Yea, he hath taken me by the neck, and dashed me to
 pieces :
 He hath also set me up for his mark.
 His archers compass me round about.
 He cleaveth my reins asunder and doth not spare ;
 He poureth out my gall upon the ground.
 He breaketh me with breach upon breach ;
 He runneth upon me like a giant (xvi. 12-14).

Given such a conception of God, with power to work
 His own angry will upon man, there could be no truer
 courage than that of Job's cry (18) :—

O earth, cover not my blood,
 And let my cry have no resting-place.

It was in this spirit that the Greek hero, Prometheus,
 chained to the rock, defied the unjust Zeus to do his
 worst :—

O Mother venerable !
 O Æther rolling round
 The common light of all,
 See'st thou what wrongs I bear ?

After such thoughts of God, there can be nothing but
 the unrelieved despair of chapter xvii. :—

My days are past, my purposes are broken off . . .
 If I hope, Sheol is mine house ;
 I have spread my couch in the darkness ;
 I have said to corruption, Thou art my father ;
 To the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister ;
 Where then is my hope ?
 And as for my hope, who shall see it ?
 It shall go down to the bars of Sheol,
 When once there is rest in the dust (xvii. 11-16).

THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY JOB 29

The famous 19th chapter also begins with the pedal notes of despair, deep and solemn with a soul's agony. But it soars aloft, like some Abt Vogler at his organ, into the triumphant chord of anticipated victory—the nearest thing in the Old Testament to Paul's "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory." That chord is struck in familiar words of sacred associations: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But it does not mean to Job what its use by many a Christian grave has made it mean to us. He has just made one last appeal to his friends for sympathy: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the Hand of God hath touched me." The appeal is vain, and for a moment Job dreams of an appeal to posterity:—

Oh that my words were now written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
That with an iron pen and lead,
They were graven in the rock for ever!

But straightway he thinks of a better appeal, an appeal to the same God who seems so cruel. In his heart of hearts he *knows* that God Himself must some day right the wrong. God will become his "blood-avenger," for that is what the Hebrew word rendered "redeemer" really means. In old Semitic law, the next of kin received the solemn charge of righting the wrong, and clearing the murdered man's name. So Job's blood will utter its cry to God's ears, and He, of all persons in the universe, He Himself will right the wrong. Job is thus claiming a sort of spiritual kinship with God. God will for His kinsman's sake step down to earth and prove

that Job *was* innocent. Job himself will be dead ; it will be, he says, "after my skin hath been thus destroyed," that "without my flesh shall I see God" (R.V., 25, mar.). Apparently Job believes that he will be brought up from the underworld as a ghost, like the spirit of Samuel brought up before Saul. Thus will Job see for himself the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. In such confidence Job almost saw the Father, without the Son's manifestation of His glory.

A modern book would probably make the words of Job end on this high note, for the sake of the dramatic effect, if for nothing else. He has found again the God of righteousness and mercy whom he honoured and served in earlier and happier days. We may think it, after all, truer to life that he should take up again his weary argument, and that the words of his friends should bring him down from heaven to earth. This is what happens in the 21st chapter, where there is a graphic picture of the wicked man's prosperity. In the 23rd and 24th chapters he thinks of God as hiding Himself in the mysteries of Providence. In the 24th chapter there is a remarkable series of miniature paintings of wickedness. In the 26th we meet again with the often repeated thought of God's greatness and power (14):—

Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways :

And how small a whisper do we hear of Him !

But the thunder of His power who can understand ?

The debate is now concluded, the following chapters (xxvii.-xxxi.) forming a monologue in several clearly marked portions (though it is probable that the

THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY JOB 31

speeches have been wrongly distributed). Chapter xxvii. shows a sounder grasp of facts and a saner view of life. Chapter xxviii. is perhaps a later addition to the book, fully worthy to be added ; its point lies in the last verse, which teaches that, whilst God's wisdom is unsearchable, man's is the wisdom of piety and morality. And then Job seems to gather himself together, this time deliberately and of set purpose, for his final challenge of God. He will fling down the gauntlet before God Himself ; but first he passes in pathetic review the days of unbroken happiness and respect that were once his, and contrasts with them his present humiliation and suffering.

The noble chapter (xxxii.) containing the final challenge of God should be carefully studied by anyone who desires to know what were the ethical ideals of the Hebrews. It is not only a solemn declaration of innocence on the part of Job, but a summary of those duties, social and religious, the performance of which made the "good man" of that age. It has been rightly said that "if we want a summary of moral duties from the Old Testament, it might better be found in Job's soliloquy as he turns away from his friends and reviews his past life, than in the Ten Commandments."

The form of the final challenge employs the metaphor of the law-court (xxxii. 35-37). Job asks for the indictment under which he is being prosecuted and punished. He thinks of God in two capacities at once, that is, as the opponent who is set against him, and as the judge who tries the case. This is an appeal to God against

God with the daring illogicality of faith ; it is a challenge to the over-God, the real God, to declare the right :—

Would that I had a hearer !
Behold, my mark !
Let the Almighty answer me !
Would that I had the document written by my
opponent !
Surely on my shoulder would I carry it,
I would bind it as a crown unto me ;
The number of my steps would I declare to him,
Prince-like would I approach him.

Prince-like—we cannot leave Job with any truer word than that. He has been princely in his despair as well as in his hope. He has won the victory of faith over the world, the flesh and the devil. He has refused the suggestion to doubt his own conviction of innocence ; he has conquered the temptation to conceive God as ultimately unjust, to which for a time he yielded. The problem of Job on its theoretical side is as obscure as ever to him ; he is quite unable to account for the union of suffering and innocence in his own case, and, as he has come to think, in the case of many others. But he has solved it as a practical problem ; he has won through man's theories about God to God Himself. Like some Hebrew prophet, he counts God's love deeper than God's wrath. His challenge is really a prayer, and prayer, as a great scholar has rightly said, is the only adequate confession of faith. No place is given to Job, it is true, among the heroes of faith commemorated by the Epistle to the Hebrews ; he is too unconventional to fit in very

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well with any ordered scheme. But we can put him with the man who said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." On the face of the brave sufferer the tears of agony are yet undried; but, as the light of God falls on that face, every tear builds its own rainbow of hope, God's mercy sign. Hidden in the brightness of that light, God weeps Himself; in all our afflictions He is afflicted. But the heart of God is full of joy, because He has not trusted Job in vain with the witness to a disinterested religion and an enduring faith.

There are, as we shall see, other important interpretations of the problem of suffering made by the Book of Job, from the various different standpoints its actors represent. But we may gather together the elements of the contribution made by Job's personal attitude, with the more confidence because the author has made Yahweh explicitly declare to the friends, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." This must mean that, if we put aside Job's passionate words of protest against his fortunes, and think simply of his final attitude, we have at least part of the truth about our problem. Job was justified in holding to his innocence; suffering is no proof of sin. If that has become to us a commonplace, let us learn from such a book as this what it sometimes costs to reach a commonplace, before it has become common. Job was right in appealing to God against the terrible mystery of circumstance. His appeal is an act of faith; it is not defiance; at least, not that in its underlying significance.

We have only to compare Job with the somewhat similar figure of Prometheus in Greek poetry to realize this great difference. Prometheus, chained to his rock for bringing divine gifts to men, defies Zeus to do his worst ; in that defiance you have the Greek spirit of restless energy, and boundless confidence in human possibilities. But Job, on his dung-heap, torn not by an eagle, but by leprosy, defies the sufferings which almost overwhelm him to rob him of his faith in a hidden God ; in that faith you have the great Hebrew contribution to human history. It may be good to say, heroic to be able to say :—

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

But we fling ourselves upon a nobler and greater issue when we can say of God : “ *He* is the master of my fate, *He* is the captain of my soul.” Job, as we have seen, does not doubt the divine existence ; his bitter struggle relates to the divine character. The victory of his faith here, the conviction that

Nothing can be good in Him,
Which evil is in me,

is essential to any mastery of the problem of suffering that is to be adequate for our Western civilization.

In the great Eastern world there are two attempted solutions of the problem which serve by contrast to illustrate the characteristic contribution of Hebrew thought in the person of Job. Mohammedan fatalism

goes back to an imperfect conception of the character of God. Its final answer to the problem of innocent suffering is "the will of Allah," and the dominant note in the conception of Allah is Power, not Love. Mohammedanism has well been called, in spite of its rigorous monotheism, "the pantheism of force." It has inspired, and can inspire, a sublime disregard of the worst suffering; but for us Westerns it is even less possible to accept Allah than the God of Calvin. The very strength of Job's protest shows the difference of his position from the supreme doctrine of Islam—submission. He is a Semite, like the Arab prophet, and the majesty of God is the fundamental thought of the higher Semitic religion. Doughty, who knows the modern Arabs as hardly any other Western, says of them, "Semites, it is impossible that they should ever blaspheme, in manner of those of our blood, against the Heavenly Providence." But the great Hebrew prophets of the eighth century had taught Israel to see the majesty of Yahweh not in His power so much as in His moral personality; it is to this that the ultimate appeal of Job lies.

Far removed from Mohammedan fatalism is Buddhist renunciation. Here is a religion, originally without a god, built round the very problem of suffering before us. The message of the Buddha was essentially this; if suffering could not be taken out of life, yet life could be taken out of suffering, by true culture now, and by its fruits hereafter. "In the midst of sorrow there is no Nirvana, and in Nirvana there is no sorrow." The Buddhist would have traced

Job's present sufferings to his Karma, his moral desert carried over from a previous life. He would have admitted Job's present innocence, and would have preached to him the renunciation of all desire, the surrender of that passionate individuality already unfolded before us. But Job's problem springs from the very assertion of his individuality; this is the datum of his thought. He can no more surrender himself, and his conviction of integrity, than he can surrender the character of God; in other words, Buddhist renunciation is as impossible to him as Mohammedan fatalism. In this emphasis on individuality, this conviction of the worth of human life to God, the Christian Gospel is with Job. Rightly has Vinet said of individuality: "The glory of the Gospel lies in strengthening it in a few, in awakening it in the many, and in purifying it in all." This uniqueness of human life, this inner experience of living that belongs to each individual and to no one else as to him, has a consequence of profound importance for all religion, and especially for the problem of suffering before us. The great things will have value for us only as they come before us individually; we are not warmed, as Job reminds us, with the ashes of second-hand religion. "I had heard of thee," says Job to God, "with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." That must mean that he has travelled by his own path, the one path that was of any use to him, the path of unflinching sincerity. Thus the Bible has set the stamp of its approval in a marked degree on individual sincerity. Only by sincerity do we reach the intrinsic worth of the values of life, the things

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really worth having. So men may find at last an inner joy within the suffering that robs it of its worst. Robert Louis Stevenson has reminded us, through the memory of a boys' game with lanterns, that there is a secret and incommunicable element in life, a hidden joy that is *the* life, and that if we miss this, we miss all that counts. That is what the friends missed who gazed on Job; they missed the joy at the heart of his sorrow, the joy of his faith in God. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you." We shall find, before we have done, that more than one spiritual tie links Job on his dung-heap with Christ in Gethsemane.

PART II

THE PROBLEM AS VIEWED BY HIS FRIENDS

So far, we have traced the development of the thought of Job, in presence of the problem: "How is it possible, in a world morally governed by a just and powerful God, for an innocent man to suffer as I am suffering?" Since he could not resort to the doctrine of human immortality, with its compensations of another life, he was driven at first to the terrible doctrine of divine immorality. Yet his faith in the character of God was victorious, and we left him appealing with confidence to the God he had denounced.

Around this agonized thinker stand his three friends. They have come to him honestly to sympathize with him, but, because they do not understand his trouble, their presence only brings home to him his loneliness. Their well-meant words, uttered in the three rounds of debate into which the central part of the book is divided, again and again stimulate him to some of his wildest outbreaks. But their arguments are more than part of the machinery of this dramatic poem. They supply the background of conventional religion, which throws him into relief as a daring pioneer, who values truth more than orthodoxy. They are, all three, varieties of one fixed type, the champions of one settled position.

The doctrine for which they stand is that of moral retribution as the supreme principle of divine government, though incidentally there are references to the value of suffering in the discipline of character. They are sure that God is righteous and all-powerful; they believe that He is directly concerned with the individual lives of men. It follows that God must punish evil and reward good. So far there is nothing in their argument to which we can object. But they go on to commit a well-known logical fallacy. They say, in effect:—All evil-doers are sufferers; Job is a sufferer; therefore Job is an evil-doer.

The fallacy lies in supposing that the class of sufferers is exhausted by the class of evil-doers, and that suffering can spring from no other purpose of God than the will to punish evil. But this is the very heart of the problem of Job—that he has to find a place in his scheme of things for suffering which cannot be penalty, and is carried beyond the limits of discipline. Thus, as often happens in debate, *they* never come in sight of the question that racks *his* mind. They go on applying their argument with increasing severity to prove that he must be a sinner because he is a sufferer. But all the time, he, knowing that he is innocent of any sin that can call for such suffering, is beating the wings of his spirit like some imprisoned bird against the narrow limits of their faith. He tries to break through the wall of death into a life beyond, of which they do not even dream. He flutters up against the roof of his little world to seek God's purpose, of which they are so sure; they are as dull to

the meaning of his appeal as men can be to the song of the lark above their heads.

The three friends belong, as I have said, to one fixed type of thought, the prevailing type in the writer's age against which he wishes to protest as being utterly inadequate. But, to a certain extent at least, he has differentiated their characters and points of view, and we can give them names which broadly describe these. The foremost of the three is Eliphaz the Mystic. His character as suggested by the three speeches ascribed to him has grace and dignity. He strikes and emphasizes the note of personal experience; he speaks of what he has learnt through many years of fellowship with God. When he has heard Job pray for death, he answers him (iv. and v.) in gentle and deprecatory words; he recalls the help Job has given to other men in earlier days, and bids Job think of his own religious past. Then he declares the truth for which he stands, the doctrine of retribution.

“Who ever perished being innocent, or where were the upright cut off? According as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow mischief, reap the same.” Then follows the most characteristic thing in the speeches of Eliphaz, which justifies the name “mystic.” In thoughts from the visions of the night he has been caught up into a world of personal experience, which has become the starting-point of his future thought. That which has been brought home to him is the moral majesty of God, and the lowly estate of God's creatures (iv. 12 ff.) :—

Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
 And mine ear received a whisper thereof.
 In thoughts from the visions of the night,
 When deep sleep falleth on men,
 Fear came upon me and trembling,
 Which made all my bones to shake.
 Then a breath passed over my face ;
 The hair of my flesh stood up.
 It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance
 thereof

A form was before mine eyes.
 Silence, and I heard a voice :
 Can man be righteous before God ?
 Can man be pure before his Maker ?
 Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants ;
 And His angels He chargeth with error.
 How much more them that dwell in houses of clay,
 Whose foundation is in the dust,
 Which are crushed like the moth !

Eliphaz speaks of this mystical vision, this rare hour which has become the centre of his spiritual life, in order to teach Job the folly of his complaint. How vain it is for man, in all his impurity, to challenge the awful purity of God ! Man's only thought in God's presence must be humility ; he must think only of God, not of himself, or must think of himself only as utterly dependent on God. Eliphaz warns Job against the thought that his suffering is purposeless torture, some chance product of the earth :—

⌈ Affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
 Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.

Think rather, Eliphaz says, that because of your own

impurity of nature you are born to trouble ; that this is the law of your life, as natural as it is for the sparks to fly up from the fire. He suggests the real cause of Job's sufferings and the remedy for them :—

As for me, I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I commit my cause.

He bids Job to despise not the chastening of the Almighty, and draws a fine picture of Job's latter end—the patriarch going the round of his folds once more, and once more rejoicing in his descendants :—

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age,
Like as a shock of corn cometh in in its season.

The real sympathy and affection of this first speech of Eliphaz ought to remind us that “ Job's comforters ” were not what they are often represented to be. They were not cold-hearted hypocrites ; they were good and sincere men, whose chief defect was that suffering had not unlocked the door for them into the larger world of Job's thoughts. It was natural, if we allow for their standpoint, that their later speeches should be more severe, as they saw Job hardening himself in his conviction of innocence. Thus even Eliphaz, the most sympathetic of the three, later on strongly resents Job's criticism of his friends' faith :—

Yea, thou doest away with fear,
And impairest devotion before God (xv. 4).

Eliphaz speaks as one of “ the gray-headed and the very aged men, much elder than thy father,” and this, he

feels, should entitle him to more respect. Once more Eliphaz returns to his exhortation, the mystic vision of the night:—

What is man that he should be clean ?

And he that is born of woman that he should be righteous ? (xv. 14).

If it be objected to his doctrine of absolutely moral retribution that the wicked apparently prosper, Eliphaz has an answer ready, an answer making a real contribution to the argument he presents. He gives a vivid picture of the spiritual sufferings of the conscience-stricken man, in whose ears is a sound of terrors. In every dark corner he sees a sword uplifted, like Macbeth's dagger, to strike him ; in his prosperity he must contemplate the time when he will need to beg his bread (xv. 20 ff.) All this has its truth, and makes life other than it often seems (though there is atrophy as well as activity of conscience in the sinner). The closing speech of Eliphaz (xxii.) proceeds to draw the last consequence of his doctrine. He directly accuses Job of specific acts of wickedness, since he can account for Job's sufferings in no other way. Yet he urges Job to turn in penitence to God, who will then no longer turn from him (26-28) :—

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Almighty,

And shalt lift up thy face unto God.

Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee ; . . .

And light shall shine upon thy ways.

Much less interest attaches to the figures of Bildad and

Zophar than to that of Eliphaz. Bildad can be called the Thinker in contrast with the devotional temperament of Eliphaz. He dwells on the aspects of divine providence which seem to show God sifting and separating the lives of men. He stands for a rational reliance on the authority of the past (viii. 8 f.) :—

Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
And apply thyself to that which their fathers have
searched out :

(For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,
Because our days upon earth are a shadow :)
Shall they not teach thee and tell thee,
And utter words out of their heart ?

Against the " I " of personal experience in the case of Eliphaz, Bildad sets the " we " of the fellowship of thoughtful men. Perhaps we may conceive him to be an anticipation of Newman, drawn by his reason to reverence authority. Bildad feels himself the heir of the ages ; behind him in the past stands the long line of men, whose treasured sayings are the library of the present. He utters many proverbs and pointed sayings. But he, too, like Eliphaz, is stirred to resentment at Job's attitude, and bids him think of the darkened tent of the wicked, when the last glimmer of the fire is dead, and the lamp has burnt out (xviii. 5, 6).

Zophar is neither mystic nor thinker ; he is what we call to-day the man in the street, and for this reason we may call him the Dogmatist. Of all men, the man in the street is apt to be the most dogmatic ; he repeats confidently what he has neither tested by personal

experience nor criticized by reverent thought. If you point this out to the man in the street, he is apt to get angry, like Zophar, who says the unkindest thing in all this debate (xi. 6) :—

(Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine
iniquity deserveth)

Zophar is silent in the last round ; he could hardly have said anything beyond this.

Elihu, who speaks with much self-confidence throughout chapters xxxii.-xxxvii., appears not to belong to the original scheme of the poem, to which he contributes little. His emphasis falls on affliction as discipline, to a more marked degree than is the case with the others. He urges the sinfulness of Job's attitude, the prospect of restoration through penitence, and the incomprehensible power of God. Most scholars are agreed that these chapters were inserted at some later date, by a poet who wanted these points brought out more clearly. No reference is made to Elihu in either Prologue or Epilogue, and neither Job nor Yahweh notices him.

There can be no doubt that the object of the author, in the speeches of the three friends, was to show the inadequacy of contemporary doctrine to explain all suffering. In the three rounds of speeches, the friends successively point to the character of God, His government of the world, and the flaws in Job's past conduct which they infer from his present suffering. They fail utterly to solve his problem, and their point of view is explicitly condemned by Yahweh in the Epilogue. The

reason for their failure is clear; they overlook some of the data for the solution of the problem, or even for understanding it. This world contains a vast amount of suffering which is unmerited; Job cannot explain it, but he does not wholly cease to believe that there is an explanation which does not dishonour God.

PART III

THE PROBLEM AS CREATED AND HANDLED BY YAHWEH

WHAT, then, is the explanation of innocent suffering which the writer of the Book of Job desired to offer, instead of the falsely applied theory of the friends of Job? Since the author does not speak in his own person, we shall naturally look for this explanation in the utterances of Yahweh. The problem of Job is brought into relation with Yahweh in three ways in this Book. In the Epilogue, we see Job restored to more than his former prosperity. By the speeches delivered out of the storm by Yahweh, His wisdom and power in Nature are exhibited, and Job is brought to humble acknowledgment that he cannot hope to understand all that Yahweh does. Finally, the two incidents from the Council of Heaven given in the Prologue reveal to the reader, though not to Job, the purpose which Job's sufferings serve.

The first of these—the restoration of Job's fortunes—reads like a child's tale. "Yahweh gave Job twice as much as he had before." We can hardly help a smile at the quaint narrative of friendly calls and family festivals and congratulatory gifts—"every man gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold." We could do without his doubled number of sheep and

camels and oxen and she-asses ; they only hide from us the central figure, tragic, majestic, noble in his struggle, but commonplace and comfortable in the last scene of all. We do not want to know about his new daughters, with the graceful names of Dove and Cassia and Horn of Antimony ; our sympathies are with the buried children of the earlier days. We would rather have left Job on his dung-heap, with faith shining the more brightly against the background of misfortune. This is the natural modern attitude, except for those readers who want all tales to end happily, unlike the present tale of life. But this is not the way to understand the Book of Job. We must remember that to the ancient readers of the Book there was no perspective of life beyond the grave, to which Job might look for the vindication of his faith. The ways of Providence must be justified, here in this world, if they are to be justified at all. It may be that this restoration is part of the traditional story of Job, which the writer has been content to reproduce. But he has accepted this vindication as necessary, by reproducing it, and from the point of view of his age he was right. The primary fact is that faith in God such as Job's must be justified ; it is of secondary importance whether the justification come in the visible or in the invisible world. All that faith can demand is that, somewhere and somehow, he who throws himself upon God, whether perplexed or unperplexed, seeking, shall find Him.

Of more interest to us are the speeches of Yahweh

contained in chapters xxxviii.-xli. They have been truly described as "the great poetical ornament of the Book," "the highest attainment of the Hebrew genius in pure poetry." They fall into two distinct parts, the division coming at xxxviii. 38. In the first we have a brilliant description of natural phenomena—the subject matter of the modern sciences of geology, physiography, meteorology and astronomy,—of course from the ancient point of view, and with the ancient limitations of knowledge. The earth is a fixed, immovable building, which rests on solid foundations, and has all around it the sea. The sea is conceived in the spirit of ancient mythology as a giant, wrapped at birth in clouds and darkness for his swaddling-clothes, and growing to strength till Yahweh has to restrain him. Every morning, with wonderful regularity, the dawn takes hold of the ends of the earth, and those who love darkness rather than light are shaken out of the earth's new garments of splendour. The earth, before hidden, stands revealed in all its detail, crisp and clear like the clay stamped by the seal. We are carried to the sources of the sea, the springs that keep up its supply, and down to the gates of the gloomy and cavernous Sheol that waits for all men. Yahweh keeps snow and hail piled in great storehouses above the solid firmament, armouries of his weapons for the day of battle. Light and wind and lightning have mysterious paths; the rain falls through a hole cut for it in the heavenly arch. We are bidden look at some of the familiar constellations, shining over Job as over us—the seven-starred sisterhood of

the Pleiades, Orion the giant bound for his iniquities in heaven, the Great Bear swinging round by his tail. In the second part of Yahweh's utterance we review the animal world. The mighty lion, and the croaking raven, the wild goats and the hinds, the wild ass that scorns the tumult of the city, the unsubdued wild-ox, the ostrich that can outstrip the horse, the horse itself that smelleth the battle afar off, with the thunder of the captains and the shouting, the hawk migrating to the south, the eagle that sees from afar—all these pass before us, as a prelude to the two wonderful creatures described in so much detail, the hippopotamus and the crocodile, or their mythological correlatives.

A single purpose runs through both parts of this panorama of Nature. It is a sermon, all illustrations, on the text of God's wisdom and God's power. The application is to human ignorance and human weakness. If God does all this, how can men dare to criticize His administration of the Universe? The sermon is meant to teach Job humility, the cardinal virtue of religion. To some, perhaps, it seems a poor answer to tell Job that he cannot hope to understand the hidden purpose of God. Yet the limitation in the revelation which Nature affords is a very real one. It has done its part if it teaches us the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom. "What shall I answer Thee?" cries Job. "Thou canst do all things." "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,"—that is according to the conventional theories of the age—"but now mine eye seeth Thee." Thus Job admits the

possibility of a wise, though hidden, purpose in his own sufferings.

We have now been brought as far towards the solution of the problem of innocent suffering as the author of the Book of Job intended his hero to be brought. Job has maintained the conviction that suffering can befall an innocent man, a conviction which gives epoch-making significance to the Book. He has learnt that the tragedy of his life is not due to any neglect or moral imperfection in God, but to a divine purpose which passes beyond his understanding. Providence itself (as seen in the restored prosperity of the Epilogue) ultimately justifies the position for which he stands; for the rest, he has learnt the simple lesson of trust. But the author of the book wants to take his readers a step further in the solution of the problem, beyond the lessons of Nature and the approvals of Providence. He does it by his picture of the Council of Heaven (i. 6-12, ii. 1-6), so strangely remote in form from our present conceptions of God, yet the parable of a truth which will carry us on into some of the deepest pages of the New Testament. Yahweh, like some Sultan of the East, sits on His throne above, surrounded by the angels, those ministers of His that do His pleasure. They come from all quarters, and one of them is the Satan, the Adversary. He is no fallen angel nor is he the Serpent of the Garden of Eden; this Book shows a prior stage in the history of his development. He is a regular member of the heavenly council, a sort of public prosecutor, bound to scrutinize every human claim to piety. It is true that

his hand has been subdued to that it works in, like the dyer's hand ; he is in process of becoming a Mephistopheles, a denying spirit (*cf.* Zech. iii. 1 ff.). Blake has made a fine contrast between the look of malignant joy on his face as he inflicts suffering on Job, and the look of sorrow on the face of Yahweh. But the Adversary's challenge of Job's piety is legitimate in principle. Yahweh has asked, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" The divine hand indicates him, brings him into a perilous prominence, saying, "Here, if anywhere, is true piety." The Adversary fixes attention on the other element in the combination—prosperity. Both the Satan and Yahweh agree in one point—in thinking that piety which depends on prosperity is not genuine. The Adversary alleges, and Yahweh denies, that this particular case of piety depends on prosperity. There can be but one way of settling this issue. The Adversary proposes, and receives permission, to remove all Job's prosperity. Accordingly, he robs Job first of all the externals of life, without effect, and then almost of life itself. This is the relation of the Adversary to Job ; but Yahweh's relation to him is much deeper. We have here no Miltonic war between the Adversary and God. It is God who first calls attention to Job, God who permits the trial of his faith, God who watches the experiment, and assigns its proper limits. *Throughout, it is the will of God that is being done.* The right answer rings up from the earth when Job says : "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" All that comes to Job comes not by blind chance

nor by the compulsion of the Adversary. It is the simple development of God's first word: "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" There is a divine purpose in this innocent suffering, other than retribution or discipline, for there is no hint that Job is in need of either. That divine purpose is to prove to angels and to men that disinterested religion is a reality and that man can hold to God, not for what He gives, but for Himself. This, then, is the fullest solution of the problem of Job which the Book itself suggests to us, without, of course, working out all that is implicit in the suggestion. We hear an echo of its message across the centuries in Christ's answer to the question: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" The answer was, "Neither did this man sin nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." We see the same conception inspiring the Apostle Paul: "I think God hath set forth us the Apostles last of all, as men doomed to death, for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and to men." In like manner, Job, as a gladiator of God, was made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and to men; led down into the arena, as Paul's words suggest, and there bidden to fight for the honour of God and the truth of piety. Some of the spectators who watched his struggle were visible to him; some were not. A great cloud of witnesses for truth compassed him about whilst he ran with patient impatience the race that was set before him. With such a motive, such a purpose, had he but known it, the race was worth running. He who can realize



something of what that purpose means will never say of life :—

We are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Is not this conception a real contribution to the problem of innocent suffering? Whenever a man can say in his heart, This calamity is not anything I have directly deserved, and when he can further say, I have learnt from this suffering all that I am able to learn, and yet it continues—then he is warranted in claiming for his own the great thought of the Book of Job, the thought that his suffering serves some larger purpose of God, such as the vindication of disinterested piety. If we can really believe that, it gives us what we most need; it links our human lives with a divine purpose, just at the point where the purposes of God seem broken off. Pain is transformed into privilege; sorrow becomes the sign of God's approval. God trusts His servant—trusts him with the maintenance of eternal truths, trusts him to stand by them to the last. The trust is itself a reward, the reward of innocence, and the confirmation of piety, as much an honour as the sufferings of Plato's just man crucified. We often speak of trusting God; is there not often a neglected truth in the thought that God is trusting us?

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PART IV

THE PROBLEM IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

THE Book of Job belongs to a great moral and religious development which culminated in the Christian faith. We have, then, finally to ask what is the Christian attitude towards the problem before us, the problem of innocent suffering? With the whole question of suffering we are, of course, not dealing. As penalty and as discipline—the two aspects of suffering urged by the friends of Job—suffering continues to be recognized by the Christian as by the Hebrew, but these aspects need not here concern us. It is clear enough that, in a moral world, evil which defies God and all His holy purposes must ultimately suffer; it is not less clear that a Father so wise as God will not spoil the children He loves by sparing the rod of chastening. But the Book of Job maintains that there is a large residue of unexplained suffering, and has offered an explanation of it, which we may provisionally call the maintenance of God's honour, and the witness to true religion. We have now to turn to the striking development of this idea which we find in the New Testament.

An important change has by this time come over the conditions of the problem. Job had no sure

hope of immortality on which to rest the burden of his problem. All must be solved within this world, if ever. Now, within the period lying between the Old Testament and the New, there grew up in Judaism (partly from such beginnings as those made by Job), a strong faith in life after death, a life in which the arrears of moral retribution left over from this world were balanced up. Men turned from their national misfortunes to the individual hope of immortality, or rather, of resurrection. They endured their undeserved sorrows, because they believed that to them as individuals, if not to them as a nation, Yahweh would return double for all their shame. They could die in this faith, because the perspective of life was lengthened beyond death, and the adjustment would come there if not here. This faith in a future life was current in Judaism when our Lord began His mission; He took it and lifted it to a higher spiritual level, by giving it a richer content. He taught that a man might well fling down his life here, in the prospect of finding it there. The life after death as He set it forth gave scope for the ample working out of such spiritual laws as those of the Beatitudes.

All this, however, simply extends the life man lives; whereas, the Christian faith, apart altogether from immortality, has welcomed innocent suffering into its very heart. It has taken the world's sorrow and given it the possibility of a new meaning, a transfigured purpose. By common consent, at the historic centre of Christianity, there is the Cross, and the Cross means innocent suffering, serving a divine purpose. Men differ in the interpre-

tation of that purpose, as they did in Job's day, and there are views of it no better than those of Job's friends. But in some way that purpose is held to be redemptive and vital to Christianity. It is not the Sermon on the Mount, but the Cross of Calvary which is the centre of our faith, and Jesus would never have become the World-Teacher He is, if He had not been first and foremost a World-Saviour. Does the Cross of Job, then, throw any light on the Cross of Christ, and that which His disciples bear after Him?

First, we have to note that this innocent Sufferer made the endurance of innocent suffering one of the absolutely necessary conditions of discipleship. In the most solemn circumstances, after Peter's declaration of His Messiahship, and His own of His approaching death, He called the multitudes to Him, and said to them and to the disciples: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Here are three requirements, viz., self-renunciation, acceptance of innocent suffering, and obedient imitation. No man is a full disciple of Christ, according to His own statement, unless these three are being fulfilled. The figure of taking up the Cross is drawn from the all too common spectacle of the time—that of the condemned slave going to the place of execution and forced to carry his own gallows. It is a strong figure, purposely chosen to set the truth in its clearest form. It does not include all suffering, but only that suffering which is encountered in the definite way of discipleship. Cross-bearing in Christ's sense does

not mean petty annoyances or the results of our own follies or sins. It means a certain fellowship in innocent suffering with Himself. It supplies a central principle of Christian ethics, the principle of victory through defeat. The Royal Way of the Holy Cross, as à Kempis called it, is the great high-road of the Kingdom on which the King is best proclaimed, and loyalty to the King is formed and tested. Surely William Penn was right in the book written in prison, "No Cross, No Crown," when he said :—

"We must either renounce to believe what the Lord Jesus hath told us, that whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Him cannot be His disciple, or admitting that for truth, conclude that [the] generality of Christendom do miserably deceive and disappoint themselves in the great business of Christianity and their own salvation." The Christian, then, is called to carry the Cross of disinterested piety, like Job and a greater than Job.

But there is an even deeper aspect of both the Cross of Christ and the cross-bearing of His disciples, to which the Book of Job points the way. To understand it, we must recall the purpose for which that Book was written. It was written after the Jewish Exile, when the national spirit was almost broken, and the innocent suffered with the guilty all the sorrows of a forced migration, and of its attendant evils. Israel's proud consciousness of a divine mission was almost destroyed ; the nation could no more hope to tread the path of victory. At that crisis came the great Prophet of the Exile, whom we call Deutero-Isaiah, with his confidence in Israel's

restoration. But instead of the old ideal of national supremacy, he sketched, in the figure of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, a new ministry to the world. Israel was to be a Man of Sorrows—at least all those who entered into Israel's ideal were to be this—acquainted with grief. Israel's sorrows were to be an offering for sin. The righteous Servant of Yahweh bears the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors—even for those who despised and rejected the Sufferer, and hid their faces from Him. Let us think of the companion figure of Job belonging to approximately the same period, though probably somewhat later, and dealing with the same problem, though in a different way. Job, also, was rejected by his friends ; yet Job, too, is bidden to pray for those who shall be accepted for his sake. There are so many parallels between the figure of the Servant of Yahweh and the figure of Job that some have seen in Job's case also a reference to the national fortunes of Israel, and the great problem of Israel's sufferings as a nation. But the innocent suffering which the Prophet of the Exile conceives as an offering for sin, the author of the Book of Job interprets as a vindication of disinterested religion, and of God's honour. It was through such thoughts as these, and along both lines of interpretation, that our Lord entered into the consciousness of His mission. He clearly identified Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth with the Servant of Yahweh. Is it too much to say also that the cup which His Father held to His lips He drank in the attitude of Job—an attitude the more like Job's, because

of the moment of doubt, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

If we come to the Cross of Christ, and to the doctrine of Atonement which gathers round it, from this point of view, we shall escape all those merely transactional ideas of the death of Christ which degrade its holy mystery. Great and wise men have conceived the Atonement in many different ways. Augustine, for example, thought of the death of Christ as a ransom paid to the devil. Anselm conceived it as the payment of a debt we had incurred by our sins and could not possibly pay ourselves. The Reformers thought of it as the penalty for sin, the punishment we ought to have borne, which Christ bore in our stead. Grotius held it to be a manifestation of the righteousness of God's public government, that sin should not be overlooked. I do not want to question the element of truth in even the worst of these figures and metaphors. I believe that the history of religion without, and the demands of conscience within, show the need for a deeper Atonement for sin than the simple change of attitude in the sinful will of God's rebellious children. But I am sure that many, who feel this, are repelled by some of the traditional ways of stating it; whereas the Book of Job might supply a way of approach to the interpretation of the Cross which would remove all such stumbling-blocks. We have seen that the book teaches God's permission of innocent suffering for an end that justifies it, and that Job, by his disinterested piety fulfilled that end. Now let us try to lift our thought to something vaster,

something far more wonderful than those Councils of Heaven which are the key to Job's fortunes. Let us think of the Son of God, the first-born among many brethren, entering this world as Jesus of Nazareth, because God so loved the world, and the Son so loved it for the Father's sake. Let us think of God looking out on the cosmic harvest, the fields white with the souls of men, and seeing that sin was spoiling the result—seeing that even if all men turned at last to Him, there would remain the sinful record, the long story of dishonour to God running through human history. God's honour was at stake as by the Adversary's challenge; His purpose in creating the world would be defeated if the world's worth to Him were not realized, in disinterested piety. God's way of making the world worth while to Himself is a very wonderful one, for it is a double victory over sin. He does not simply send into the world a Prophet who shall turn men from evil to good, He sends a Saviour whose innocent suffering shall atone for that long sinful past. Christ atones by His vindication of disinterested piety, by adding this vindication to the value of this world in God's eyes, by thus giving to the penitent sinner a new assurance of acceptance. In each respect Job was His forerunner. But all these values are lifted to an entirely new level when seen as the outcome of divine grace, when Jesus Christ becomes to us God Himself, incarnate and redemptive. He makes the world with all its sin through this redeeming grace of God a more glorious place than would have been a world of innocence without sin. Christ is like a Rock—we call

Him the Rock of Ages—on which a dark wave breaks, and is broken into countless fragments, bright in the sunshine. The wave of sin breaks on Him, and He conquers it, not only by making it penitent, but also by making that penitence a new occasion of divine grace. He does all this by the suffering He must face in order to bring these realities into a sinful world. The Cross is the price of divine entrance into a world of sin. Christ paid that price (to speak in metaphor), that He might redeem the world and transform its sin into penitence by His grace. His own realization of the supreme values of personality is thus not only a moral influence on man, but also a redemptive offering to God. In prospect it achieves the end of cosmic evolution in the creation of holy personality; in retrospect, it enriches an impoverished world with the worth of God, the utterly disinterested piety of Him who is not less the incarnate God because He is the perfect man.

This approach to the Atonement suggests the close relation of Christ's Cross to the cross-bearing on which He insisted for His disciples. In the apostle's words, they "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in [their] flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church," they are "poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of the faith" of others. These words can only mean that in some real sense the Christian life is always and everywhere an offering to God, which realizes that for which Christ died. Each of us, in whom the Spirit of Christ is, is continuing Christ's work of lifting the world, for it is He who works within us. He has

made Atonement for us all ; we can rest securely in the grace of God displayed in and assured by Christ. But just so far as we are brought into a living union with that grace of Atonement, we must needs experience the energy of a new indwelling Spirit. Within the great solidarity of the race, which makes it impossible for any man to live his life apart, without finding life not worth living, there is the solidarity of the Christian company, sharing in the great two-fold work done by the innocent suffering of Christ. They help to vindicate disinterested piety ; they humbly share in the mystery of the world's redemption. The proof that they share in the benefits of Christ's suffering is that they share its spirit, and are ready to endure it in their own lives. So we find innocent suffering carried on from the animal world, where it seems to be the necessary price of progress, in a vast evolution up to man. But, on the level of human personality, the suffering fulfils a new function, by becoming consciously vicarious, after the pattern and under the influence of Christ's.

The Book of Job is, in this sense, a first draft of the Gospel story, for it shows a man who bore his cross before Christ ; not uncomplaining, for the burden of a mystery was upon him which can never be on us to the same degree since the Cross of Christ, yet bravely and truly, so as by what he suffered, to enrich the world in God's eyes as well as man's. It shows us one who fulfilled a large and divine purpose in thus bearing the Cross, a purpose extending far beyond his horizon, a purpose which appeals to us to-day, as we are made spectators of

the Cross of Job. It proclaims the truth, afterwards to be taken up into the Christian Gospel, that the suffering of the innocent can have a cosmic purpose, nobler than the height of any of our explanations. It supplies a new conception of life, in thus meeting one of its sorest problems. It does all this, because of the courage and sincerity of that unknown author, who gave us what he must first have learnt in suffering before he could teach it in song. It moves us to-day—I know one man, at least, to whom it has been an Old Testament Gospel, opening its message to him first in a time of much trouble—it moves us to-day because it is so loyal to life, with all life's broken ends and tangled skein, so loyal to our highest faith that all broken ends will be re-knit and all entanglements at last unravelled.

APPENDIX A

SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF STUDY CIRCLES

1. The text of the Book of Job is often obscure ; so a good deal of time should be given to clearing up difficulties of meaning (as far as is possible) and commentaries should be freely used.

2. The book deals with one question—innocent suffering. Care should be taken not to discuss the same question at each meeting, and so not to go over the same ground each time.

3. These Studies should not be followed slavishly. More questions are suggested than can be adequately discussed each week. Leaders and their circles should select.

4. Five minutes should be spent at the end of each meeting in planning for the next discussion.

5. In discussion the difficulties should be faced sincerely and frankly and not too impersonally. The problem of the Book is a practical question of life. The concern of the circle should be to understand God's purposes (as far as is humanly possible), and not to exalt a particular theory.

6. Avoid being too abstract and theoretical. Try to realize and to help others to realize the presence of God in your discussion. Think hard, but think prayerfully.

7. The following commentaries and books are suggested :—

COMMENTARIES

- Davidson. (A.V.) *Camb. Bible for Schools*. 3s.
 Driver. (R.V.) *Oxford University Press*. 3s. 6d.
 Moulton, R. G. *The Book of Job*. Modern Reader's Bible. Macmillan. 2s. 6d.
 Peake. (R.V.) *Century Bible*. 2s. 6d.

Peake gives perhaps too many alternative readings for the average reader, but his introduction is very good.

BOOKS

For the Jewish Belief in the Future Life.

- Burney. *Israel's Hope of Immortality*. Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.
 Charles. *Between the Old and New Testaments*, chap. iv. Home University Library, 1s.

For Suffering in the Old Testament.

- Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, collects all the important passages. Kelly. 3s. 6d.
 Wheeler Robinson. *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*. 2s. 6d.

If the circle is only able to meet seven times, the sixth week, devoted to the interpolated passages, is the one which should be omitted.

APPENDIX B

OUTLINE STUDIES FOR EIGHT WEEKS

1ST WEEK

Aim.—To understand Job's condition at the outset of the argument and also to grasp the pre-suppositions of the argument, e.g. Old Testament Doctrines of Retribution and Immortality.

Read.—Chap. iii., and also rapidly through the Prologue and pp. 11-20 of this book.

For future life read also chap. xxvi. 5-6 ; Is. xiv. 3-23 ; Ezek. xxxii. 17 ff. For theory of retribution read chaps. xi. 20, xv. 20-35 ; Ps. i. and xxxvii. ; Ps. xxxix. ; Prov. x. 22 ff., xiv. 11, xxiv. 16 ff.

Questions.—1. What was the Old Testament Doctrine of Retribution? Do you suppose it was influenced by Israel's lack of belief in a real immortality?

2. What was the orthodox view of life after death held by the Hebrews until just before the Christian era?

3. What is the character and attitude of Job as revealed in the Prologue and chapter iii.?

Supplementary Questions.—*a.* Contrast with the Hebrew Sheol the Greek idea of Hades: and with both, the Christian belief in immortality (1 Cor. xv.).

b. If you did not believe in life after death, would that affect your attitude to the presence of pain and suffering in this life?

SECOND WEEK

Aim.—To understand sympathetically the alternating moods and thoughts of the sufferer, especially in their bearing on the conception of God's character and on the problem of suffering.

Read.—Chaps. vi. and vii., ix. and x., xii., xiii., and xiv. (Job's speeches in the first cycle), also pp. 17-37, especially 17-27.

Questions.—1. "The instinct of a *modern* Job would be to doubt the very existence of God" (p. 9). Why is agnosticism an impossible solution for the Job of the Old Testament?

2. Trace the development of Job's thought and feeling in these chapters, noting especially the most self-revealing

passages. What conflicting thoughts about God does he appear to have ?

3. What criticism do these chapters offer of the conventional theory of Retribution ?

4. Is suffering ever unmerited ?

THIRD WEEK

Aim.—Same as previous week.

Read.—Chaps. xvi. and xvii., xix., xxi., xxiii. and xxiv. ; also xxvi. and xxvii. ; pp. 17-37, especially 27-37.

Questions.—1. Trace the progress of Job's thought and feeling in these chapters. How do you explain that his highest hope followed immediately on his deepest despair ? (chap. xix. after chap. xvii.).

2. "Job has lost his creed ; but even when he rails most fiercely, he never ceases to be religious." "Job's agony is the struggle of faith breaking the bonds of a narrow theology." Discuss these statements.

3. Is the universe immoral ? Are chaps. xxi. and xxiv. a fair statement of the facts of life ? How would you answer Job's terrible question in chap. xxi. 7-8 ?

4. What is the meaning of chap. xix. 25-27 ? How far and when are we justified in reading for our own edification a Christian interpretation into Old Testament passages like this ?

FOURTH WEEK

Aim.—To discover what each of the three friends contributes to the debate and the solution of the problem, and to distinguish their characters.

Read.—Their speeches. Eliphaz, chaps. iv.-v., xv.,

xxii. ; Bildad, chaps. viii., xviii., xxv. ; Zophar, chaps. xi. and xx. ; pp. 38-46.

Questions.—1. What contribution do the friends make towards a solution besides reiterating the orthodox theory of retribution? How far does their whole argument seem to you adequate as a theory?

2. In the first cycle, "Job's friends fail to distinguish as he does between God's righteousness and God's omnipotence." Discuss this.

3. "Miserable comforters are ye all." Where did they fail? What should be the ministry of friendship in suffering?

4. "Eliphaz the mystic, Bildad the thinker, Zophar the dogmatic 'man in the street.'" Illustrate their differences in character.

5. Have they and the arguments they use, parallels in the Church to-day? What are these?

FIFTH WEEK

Aim.—To understand Job's character and creed, and especially his own attitude to his own problem.

Read.—Chaps. xxix.-xxxi., and pp. 30 (foot)-37.

Questions.—1. "If we want a summary of moral duties from the Old Testament, it might better be found in Job's soliloquy as he . . . reviews his past life than in the Ten Commandments." Discuss this.

2. What are the motives underlying Job's challenge? Was he justified?

3. What answer do the speeches of Job give to the problem of suffering?

4. What attitude towards suffering do non-Christian religious philosophies propose? (Agree to take two

or three as examples.) Do they seem adequate to you?

SIXTH WEEK

[If the circle is only having seven meetings omit this week.]

Aim.—To discover what the interpolated passages (chaps. xxviii. and xxxii.-xxxvii.) add to the argument, and to appreciate the problems of criticism which confront scholars.

Read.—Chap. xxviii. ; *cf.* Proverbs i.-ix., especially iii. 13-20, viii.-ix. 12 ; chaps. xxxii.-xxxvii., and chaps. xxvi. and xxvii.

Questions.—1. What do you understand by “the wisdom of God” in chap. xxviii. and in Proverbs?

2. What does Elihu contribute to the debate?

3. What is your impression of his character?

4. Are there any verses in chaps. xxvi. and xxvii. which seem to you incompatible with Job’s position? If Job did not speak them, what arguments would you bring forward for supposing one of the friends spoke them? (Discuss this in the circle in the first instance without consulting commentaries.)

5. What do you gather from the nature-passages (especially chaps. xxvi., xxviii. 20 f., xxxvi. 26—xxxvii., xxxviii.-xxxix.) was the Hebrew conception of Nature and the world? (*See pp. 48 (foot)-50.*)

SEVENTH WEEK

Aim.—To discuss the message of the book as a whole and its teaching on the relation of faith to doubt.

Read.—Chaps. xxxviii.-xlii. 6, and chaps. i. and ii. and xlii. 7-17 ; pp. 47-54.

Questions.—1. What does the speech of Yahweh contribute to the solution of the problem of suffering?

2. What does the author mean us to understand from the Prologue and Epilogue?

3. Is it futile to think? What answer does the book as a whole give to this question? (*cf.* xlii. 7).

4. What is the character and function of the Satan? Where did the popular idea of the devil come from, and wherein does it differ from the character of the Satan here?

5. How far is the book historical?

EIGHTH WEEK

Aim.—To discover what further light the Bible, especially the Gospel and Cross of Jesus Christ, throws on the problem of innocent suffering.

Read.—Isaiah xlii. 1-4, xlix. 1-6, l. 4-9, lii. 13—liii.; St Matt. xvi. 21-26; St Luke xxiii. 13-49; St John xii. 23-28, xv. 9-27; 2 Cor. v. 14-21,); Coloss. i. 19-29; 1 John iii. 13-24; pp. 55-64.

Questions.—1. What difference in the treatment of the purpose of suffering do you find in the Isaiah passages compared with Job?

2. How does the Christian revelation alter the problem and throw light on it?

3. How far is it true to say that the Book of Job is "a first draft of the Gospel"?

4. What comfort does the Book of Job interpreted in the light of the Cross of Christ bring to the mourner to-day?

Date Due

OCT 14	DEC 4	DEC 21	
NOV 13	DEC 20	APR 30	
DEC 2	APR 5	MAY 04	
JAN 22	APR 18	MAR 04	
DEC 17		MAY 08	
MAR 2	APR 30	SEP 28	
MAR 16	MAY 14	MAY 15	
APR 8	OCT 10	MAY 23	
APR 22	OCT 24	MAY 01	
MAY 5	NOV 28	DEC 17 93	
DEC 7	DEC 10		
DEC 20	DEC 25		
JAN 17	APR 4		
MAY 20	NOV 13		
DEC 5	NOV 15		
FEB 21	NOV 13		
MAR 5	JUN 15		
MAR 20	APR 13		
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