

# THE EXPOSITOR.

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## *THE BOOK OF JOB.*

### INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Job is admitted, with hardly a dissentient voice, to be the most sublime religious Poem in the literature of the world. Divines and expositors, who have studied it with devotion, find it difficult to express their sense of its beauty, grandeur, and value. Thus, for example, Canon Cook—one of its most recent, sober, and able commentators—writes:—"It combines in a very singular degree various elements of human thought and most opposite characteristics of human genius. Its most striking features are depth and boldness of speculative inquiry, of research, not only into what may be known of the dealings of God with man, but of the principles on which those dealings rest. The characters stand out, each and all, in broad strong outline, with traits of surpassing delicacy and vigour. The historical narrative is clear and rapid, with the simplicity and grace of antique letters; the dialogues full of vehement outbursts, vivid imagery, and sudden alternations of passionate struggles with deep, calm, earnest contemplation of spiritual truth. The reader is irresistibly impressed with the reality of the transactions, with the truth and naturalness of the

feelings brought into play, while he recognizes in the construction of the plot, and the gradual unfolding of the design, the work of a master spirit, guided, whether consciously or with the sure instinct of genius, by those principles in which the highest art and the most perfect nature meet and are reconciled."

Nor is it divines and expositors alone who have been fascinated by the spell of this sublime Poem. It is hardly possible to speak of it to an educated and thoughtful man who does not acknowledge its extraordinary power, its unrivalled excellence; while men of genius, to whom the greatest works of literature in many languages are familiar, are forward to confess that it stands alone, far above the head of all other and similar performance. Thus, Thomas Carlyle, our greatest living author, who can hardly be suspected of any clerical bias or prepossessions, says of this Book:<sup>1</sup> "I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or noble sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending Problem,—man's destiny, and God's way with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So *true* every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual. . . . Such

<sup>1</sup> "Lectures on Heroes"—"The Hero as Prophet."

living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation ; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind :—so soft and great ; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars ! *There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.*"

And yet this grand Poem is comparatively little read, and, even where it is read, it is but very imperfectly grasped and understood. Nor is it easy to read it with intelligence and a clear vigorous conception of its meaning. It abounds in allusions to ancient modes of thought and speculation ; its long sequences of thought and its quick cogent dialectic are disguised and obscured, in part, by the limitations of the proverbial form in which it is composed, and, in part, by the inevitable imperfections which cleave to translations of any and every kind, even the best. And while there are many able commentaries on it addressed to scholars, I know of only one—Canon Cook's in "The Speaker's Commentary"—from which the ordinary reader would be likely to derive much help ; while even that, owing to the conditions under which it was written, leaves much to be desired. Yet there is no reason, in the Poem itself, why it should not be as well and intimately known, even to readers of the most limited education, as any one of Shakespeare's plays, and no reason why it should not become far more precious and instructive. That it is difficult to translate is true ; but Renan has rendered it into the most exquisite French with admirable felicity and force. That every Chapter of it is studded with allusions which need to be explained, and that the argument of the

Book needs to be "exposed" and emphasized, is also true; but both these services have been rendered to scholars by a crowd of commentators, in the front rank of which stand such men as Schultens, Ewald, Schlottmann, Delitzsch, Dillmann, Merx, Renan, Godet, and Professor A. B. Davidson; and it surely cannot be impossible that the results of their labours, and of labours similar to theirs, should be given to the public in a popular and convenient form.

To achieve some such task as this—to make the Book of Job readable, intelligible, enjoyable to all who care to acquaint themselves with it, even though they should be familiar with none but our noble mother-tongue—has long been a cherished aim with me. Three times during the last ten years I have revised my translation of the Poem, seeking to make it less and less unworthy of the Original; and at intervals, during those years, I have sought to acquaint myself with the best expositions of it published in Germany, England, France, and America. Thus equipped and prepared, I venture to offer the results of my reading and labour to the readers of THE EXPOSITOR.

What I have aimed and tried to do is simply this: (1) To give a translation of the Poem somewhat more clear and accurate than that of our Authorized Version, and, in especial, a translation which should render the Poet's long lines, or sweeps, of consecutive thought more apparent. The Book belongs, as we shall see, to that class of Hebrew literature which is collectively designated the *Chokmah*, and is therefore composed in one of the most inflexible of literary forms,—the *proverbial*. At first sight it

would seem utterly incredible that a mere succession of proverbs should prove an adequate instrument for expressing any of the grander and more harmonious conceptions of the human mind, above all for expressing linked sequences of thought long drawn out. But there is absolutely no literary form which does not prove flexible and elastic in the hands of genius. In the very "Book of Proverbs" itself the famous description of "Wisdom"<sup>1</sup> shews what even the proverb is capable of in the hands of a master.<sup>2</sup> And the Book of Job is written by a hand more free and masterly than that of Solomon himself. At times, no doubt, the contracting influence of the inferior form is obvious, breaking up the train of thought into brief pictorial sentences, each of which has a certain rounded completeness in itself; but at other times, and even as a rule I think,

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs viii.

<sup>2</sup> It should not be forgotten that our Lord, adopting the style of his age and of the teachers of his native land, spake in proverbs, and in parables, which are but expanded proverbs. The ease with which He speaks hides from us his immense intellectual force, and a certain reverence, not always wise in the forms it assumes, often makes us shrink from discussing the intellectual claims of One whom we confess to be God as well as man. But if we would form an adequate and complete conception of Him, we must, with whatever modesty and reverence, reflect on his enormous, his immeasurable, superiority to all other Teachers in mental power. That He should use so inflexible an instrument of expression as the proverb and make it flexible is no slight proof of his wisdom and intellectual force. But it is only as we compare his "sayings," and especially his paradoxes, which are usually in the gnomic form, with the sayings of the masters of human wisdom that we are sufficiently impressed with the range and grasp of his mind. A foot-note is not the place for a dissertation, or it would be easy to institute a comparison between the proverbial and parabolic utterances of our Lord and those of the wisest of the ancients and moderns. Take only one or two suggestive illustrations. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" has won a secure place as a masterpiece of allegory by the suffrages of the best literary judges; but if our Lord

the thought triumphs over the form, subdues it to its own more imperious necessities, gnome is linked to gnome by connections more or less subtle, so that protracted and noble sequences of argument or description are fairly wrought out. This characteristic feature of the style of the Poem I have endeavoured to preserve.

(2) Another aim has been to supply such explanations, or illustrations, of the innumerable allusions to the physical phenomena of the East, to Oriental modes of thought and philosophy, to the customs and manners of human life in the antique world, with which the Poem abounds, as a modern reader of the Western world may require; in short, so to annotate the Poem as that an Englishman of ordinary intelligence and culture may be able, not only to read it without difficulty, but to enter into and enjoy the large and crowded picture of a by-gone age which it presents.

had taken up the allegory, would He not have compressed it into a few sentences, without omitting any point of real value? and, beautiful as Bunyan's work is, will it for a moment compare with any one of the Parables considered even as a mere work of literary genius and art? Or, to come from parables to mere sayings, or guesses. Lord Bacon has many fine "sentences." Schiller's saying, "Death is an universal, and *therefore* cannot be an evil," has won much applause. Of the merit of Goethe's, "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee," Carlyle is never weary of insisting; and Carlyle himself has many compressed and noble sentences charged with a weight of meaning. But if we compare with these any of our Lord's sayings, such as, for example, "If a man will save his life, let him lose it;" or, "Let him that would be greatest among you serve,"—who does not feel that we rise at once into an immeasurably larger and deeper world of thought? The very way in which He quotes might be adduced as another proof of his extraordinary and unparalleled intellectual force; as when, for example, He takes the answer to the question, "Which is the first and best commandment?" from the lips of the Rabbis, and resolves it at once, from the correct answer of a legal puzzle, into a practical moral code which covers the whole of human life.

(3) And, above all, it has been my aim to lift the reader to the height of the great argument of the Poem, to articulate the processes of thought veiled, or half veiled, by its proverbial forms, to trace out the infinite variety of fluctuating spiritual moods which pulse through and animate it. There is far more logic, as also far more of dramatic power, in the colloquies of the Book than we are apt to see in them, in the speeches of the Friends and the replies of Job. To bring out its logical connections, to expound *the argument* of the Poem, to follow it through all its windings to their several issues and to shew how they all contribute to its triumphant close, has been my main endeavour.

On the other hand while I am not conscious of having shirked a single difficulty, while I have tried to escape the censure which Young pronounced on those commentators who—

“ each dark passage shun,  
And hold a farthing candle to the sun,”

I have not enumerated the readings, renderings, explanations of all who have gone before me, though I have considered most of them before arriving at my own conclusions. It is the vice of recent commentators, especially in Germany, that they comment on each other rather than on the Sacred Text, and so produce works too tedious for mortal patience to endure. Moreover, by piling up commentary on commentary, they are apt more and more to get off the perpendicular, to draw apart from and perilously lean over the real facts of human life and experience, till there is much danger that the whole structure will come toppling to the

ground. If, when we have them in our hands, any should ask us what we read, we should have to reply, with Hamlet, "Words, words, words!" and little but words. What we want in these busy and over-busy days are expositions in which each man will give us his own conclusions based on his own study of the Word, and not his refutation of the conclusions at which his predecessors or rivals have arrived. And if any credit be conceded me, I hope it will not be that I have compiled a catena of opinions, or shewn how great a variety of meanings may be extracted from a single passage by scholars who seek to raise their own reputation on the torn and tarnished reputations of the scholars who preceded them, or by proving that they too can—

"Torture one poor word ten thousand ways ;"

but that I have tried to bring the words of Scripture straight to the facts of human experience, and sought to interpret the former by the latter. As a rule I have simply given my own reading and my own interpretation—for which, however, I have often been indebted to the labours of others : only when the passage was exceptionally difficult, or important, have I asked the reader to consider the best readings or interpretations which differ from my own, that he might have the means of judging and determining the question for himself.

I do not propose to open my exposition with a long and elaborate Introduction ; valuable essays and dissertations on the Book are easily accessible, and may be found in the works of any of the commentators named on a previous page : but a few words

on the date and origin, the scene, and, above all, the problem of the Book are indispensable.

As to the *Date* and *Origin* of the Poem nothing can be safely inferred—though on this point some scholars lay great stress—from the Aramæan words which are frequently employed in it; and that, not simply because the Aramæisms occur chiefly in the speech of Elihu, and are appropriate in his mouth, since he himself was an Aramæan; nor simply because all Hebrew poetry, of whatever age, is more or less Aramaic: but also and mainly because the presence of Aramæan words in any Scripture may indicate either its extreme antiquity or its comparatively modern date. For these Aramæisms—as “Rabbi” Duncan tersely puts the conclusion of all competent scholars—are either “(1) late words borrowed from intercourse with the Syrians, or (2) early ones common to both dialects.” Any argument, therefore, which is based on the use of these words cuts both ways.

Nor, I think, do the other arguments commonly adduced on this point carry much weight, with the exception of one, which is so weighty as to be conclusive. Both the pervading tone of the Book and its literary style point steadily and unmistakably to the age of Solomon as the period in which it, at least, assumed the form in which it has come down to us. That which first impresses a thoughtful reader of the Poem is the noble universality which Carlyle found in it, “as if it were not Hebrew.” Although it is part of the Hebrew Bible, it is catholic in its tone and spirit. The persons who figure in it are not Jews; the scene

is laid beyond the borders of Palestine ; the worship we see practised in it is that of the patriarchal age : it does not contain a single allusion to the Mosaic laws or customs, or to the characteristic belief of the Jews, or to the recorded events of their national history. Hence many have concluded that it was written in the patriarchal age ; by Moses, perhaps, before he was called to be the redeemer and law-giver of his people, or by some Temanite or Idumean poet, whose work was afterwards translated into the Hebrew tongue. But to this conclusion there is, I think, at least one fatal objection—the literary form of the Poem, the *proverbial* form, decisively marks it out as one of the Chokmah books, and forbids us to ascribe it to any age earlier than that of Solomon.

It is beyond dispute that in his age, and under the influence of his commanding genius, a new kind of literature—new in spirit, new in form—came into vogue ; of which we have some noble samples in the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, many of the Psalms, and several of the Apocryphal Books. They are characterized by a catholic and universal spirit new in Hebrew literature, and might, one thinks, have been written by the sages and poets of almost any of the leading Oriental races. This non-Hebraic catholic tone, which differentiates them from the other Hebrew Scriptures, was doubtless but one out of many results of the enlarged commerce with the great heathen world which commenced in the reign of David. During his reign the Hebrew Commonwealth entered into new and wider relations—political, mercantile, literary—

with many of the nobler and more cultivated races of antiquity, which bore fruit in the reign of his son. In the court of Solomon there grew up, as Godet has pointed out, a school of *wisdom*, or of moral philosophy, which set itself to search more deeply into the knowledge of things human and divine. "Beneath the Israelite they tried to find the man; beneath the Mosaic system, that universal principle of the moral law of which it is an expression. Thus they reached to that idea of *wisdom* which is the common feature of the three books, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes; of the wisdom whose delight is not in the Jews only, but in the *children of men*." This endeavour to humanize Judaism, to spiritualize the precepts of Moses, "to reach that fundamental stratum of moral being in which the Jewish law and the human conscience find their unity," is the distinctive "note" of the Chokmah literature.

And if the spirit, the ruling moral tone, of this literature is novel and original, so also is the form which its noblest productions assumed, viz., the proverbial, or parabolic. To utter ethical wisdom in portable and picturesque sentences, the wise saying often being wrought out into a little parable or poem complete in itself, was the task in which the leading minds of the Solomonic era took delight. We have only to compare their peculiar mode of expression--its weighty sententiousness, its conscious elaboration of metaphor, its devotion to literary feats and dexterities, and, in singular combination with these, its thoughtful handling of the moral problems which tax and oppress the thoughts of men, with "the lyrical cry" of many of the Psalmists of Israel, in

order to become aware of the marked and immense difference between the two.

Job belongs to the *Chokmah* both in spirit and in form. Its noble and catholic tone of thought finds admirable expression in the graphic yet weighty gnomes of which it is for the most part composed. And as it is beyond all comparison the most perfect and original specimen of the *Chokmah* school, we can hardly refer it to any age but that of Solomon, in which that school arose and in which it also achieved its most signal triumphs. This conclusion is confirmed by the admitted fact that "the Book of Job bears a far closer affinity in style and in modes of thought" to the Book of Proverbs than to any other portion of the Old Testament Scriptures.

It does not follow, however, that the Book of Job is a mere poem, a mere work of imagination, produced in the age to which the genius of Solomon gave its special character and form. If, on the one hand, it is impossible to take the Book as a literal story of events which transpired in the patriarchal age, if we must admit that the Story has passed through the shaping imagination of some unknown poet; on the other hand, it is, as Renan remarks, quite as impossible to believe that any poet of Solomon's age should have thrown himself back into an age so distant, and have maintained the tone of it throughout. Such a feat has never been achieved; such a feat was wholly foreign to the spirit of the time. We must admit, therefore, that the Poem had an historical basis; that it embalms a veritable chronicle; that a man named Job really lived and suffered—lived and suffered, moreover, in the times of the

Patriarchs, since all the allusions of the Poem point to that age.

The most probable hypothesis of the date and origin of the Book, and that to which nearly all competent judges lend the weight of their authority, is, in short, that the story of Job, of his sufferings and his patience, was handed down by tradition from patriarchal times, through every succeeding generation, till, in the age of Solomon, at once the most catholic and the most literary period of Hebrew history, a gifted and inspired poet threw the tradition into the splendid dramatic form in which we now possess it. Just as the heroic deeds of the wandering Ulysses were recited by and preserved in the memories of the trained bards, or rhapsodists, of Greece for centuries, and at last took shape on the lips of the man called Homer or of the *gens* called Homêrids, but were only reduced to their present form and written down in the age of Pisistratus; so, I suspect, the story of Job was passed from lip to lip among the Abrahamides, and from memory to memory, growing in volume and in beauty as it went, till, in the literary age of Solomon, the Poet arose who gave it its final and most perfect form, and wrote it down for the edification and delight of all who should come after him.

As for the *Scene* of the Story, history and tradition combine with all the indications contained in the Poem itself to place it in the *Hauran*. On the east of the Jordan, in that strange, lovely, and fertile volcanic region which stretches down from Syria to Idumea, there is every reason to believe

that Job dwelt, and suffered, and died; and in the upper part of it, north of Edom, north even of Moab, within easy reach of Damascus itself. The Arabs who live in this district to-day claim it as "the land of Job." The whole district, moreover, is full of sites and ruins which Tradition connects with his name. And it fulfils all the conditions of the Poem. The personages of the Story, for example, are admitted to be without exception descendants of Abraham—not through Isaac and Jacob, but through Ishmael, or Esau, or the sons of Keturah; and it was in this great belt of volcanic land, stretching down from Damascus to Idumea, that most of these Abrahamides found their homes. On the east, too, the Hauran is bordered by "the desert," out of which came the great wind which smote the four corners of the house of Job's first-born. To this day it is rich in the very kinds of wealth of which Job was possessed, and is exposed to raids similar to those which deprived him of his wealth as in a moment. It presents, moreover, both the same natural features, being especially "for miles together a complete network of deep gorges,"—the wadys or valleys, whose treacherous streams the Poet describes, and the same singular combination of civic and rural life which is assumed throughout the Book. Even the fact that the robber-bands, which fell upon the ploughing oxen of Job and smote the ploughmen with the edge of the sword, came from the distant rocks of Petra, and that the bands which carried off his camels came from the distant plains of Chaldea, point to the same conclusion. For, probably, Job had entered into compacts with the

nearer tribes of the marauders, as the chiefs of the Hauran do to this day, paying them an annual tax, or mail, to buy off their raids, and was surprised by those remote freebooters just as to this day the Hauranites are often pillaged by freebooting tribes from the neighbourhood of Babylon.

I take it, then, that we may with much reason conceive of Job as living, during the remote patriarchal age, amid the fertile plains of the Hauran—so fertile that even now its wheat (“Batanæan wheat,” as it is called) “is always at least twenty-five per cent. higher in price than other kinds,”—with its deep wadys and perfidious streams, the volcanic mountains rising on the horizon, and the wide sandy desert lying beyond them.

The *Problem* of the Book is not one, but manifold, and is not, therefore, easy to determine. No doubt, the Poet intended to vindicate the ways of God with men. No doubt, therefore, he had passed through and beyond that early stage of religious faith in which the heart simply and calmly assumes the perfect goodness of God, and had become aware that some justification of the Divine ways was demanded by the doubt and anguish of the human heart. The heavy and the weary weight of the mystery which shrouds the providence of God, the burden of this unintelligible world, was obviously making itself profoundly felt. There are many indications in the Poem itself that the age in which it took form was one of transition, one of growing scepticism; that the current beliefs were being called in question, that men could no longer be content

with the moral and theological conceptions which had satisfied the world's grey fathers. More than once, when he is passionately challenging the orthodox assertions of the Friends, Job seems to be giving utterance to misgivings which had struck coldly into his heart even while he still sunned himself in the unclouded favour of God. From the attitude assumed by Elihu, moreover, we may infer that the younger men of the time had already thought out for themselves a broader and more generous theology than that of their elders, and were not a little puzzled how to state it without giving them offence. And yet, though it proceeds on the lines just indicated, the popular conception of the Problem of this Book is not an adequate one; it fails to satisfy some of the leading conditions of the Story. That conception, which Mr. Froude, in his "Essay on Job," has eloquently expressed, is that both Job and his Friends had assumed prosperity to be the invariable concomitant, or result, of righteousness, and adversity to be the no less invariable consequence of sin; and that Job was afflicted, although his righteousness was attested by God Himself, in order to shew that this interpretation of Providence was inadequate and partial, that it did not cover, and could not be stretched to cover, all the facts of human life. Those who have read Mr. Froude's charming Essay will not easily forget the force and humour with which he describes the endeavour of the Friends to stretch the old formula and make it cover the new fact, until it cracked and broke in their hands, and, in its rebound, smote them to the earth.<sup>1</sup> And there is

<sup>1</sup> I must not be understood to imply, however, that Mr. Froude adopts the popular conception. He is far too acute a critic to miss the true Problem of this great Poem.

much truth in this conception, though not the whole truth. Unquestionably the Book of Job does shew, in the most tragic and pathetic way, that good, no less than wicked, men lie open to the most cruel losses and sorrows; that these losses and sorrows are not always signs of the Divine anger against sin; that they are intended to correct and perfect the righteousness of the righteous,—or, in our Lord's figure, that they are designed to purge the trees which already bear good fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit.

But, after all, can it be the main and ruling intention of the Book to teach us that noble lesson? When we follow the Story to its close, do we not see that "the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before"? And, might we not fairly infer from the Story, as a whole, that the formula of Job's Friends was not so much too narrow as it is commonly held to be? that it might very easily be stretched till it covered the new fact? that where they were wrong was in assuming that happy outward conditions are the *immediate* result of obeying the Divine Law, and miserable outward conditions the *immediate* result of violating that Law? that, had they only affirmed that *in the long run* righteousness always conducts a man to prosperity and sin to adversity, they would have been sufficiently near the mark?

Even in our own day, Mr. Matthew Arnold—not a bigot surely, nor at all disposed to stand up for theological dogmas against verified facts—has affirmed and argued for this very conception: he has affirmed and re-affirmed it to be well-nigh impossible to escape the conviction that "the stream of tendency" is in

favour of those who do well and adverse to those who do ill. And though some of us might word the proposition differently, yet he would betray a singular dulness or hardihood who should venture to question the main tenour and drift of it. The facts of history, experience, consciousness, compel us to believe that, *in the long run*,—though we may admit that the run is often very long, and that we do not see the end of it here—happy and auspicious conditions are vouchsafed to men, or to nations, who follow after righteousness, while those who walk in unrighteousness are overtaken by miserable and inauspicious conditions. Job was righteous. Did he suffer for his righteousness? Nay, but rather he suffered that he might be made more righteous; that he might learn to trust in God when all things were against him, when even God Himself seemed to be against him, as well as when all things went to his mind; he suffered in order that he might learn *that his very righteousness was not his own* in any sense which would warrant him in claiming it and in taking his stand upon it as against God: and, when he was thus established and perfected in righteousness, the stream of prosperity flowed back upon him in double tide.

We cannot, therefore, accept the popular conception of the meaning and intention of this great Poem as adequate and satisfactory. There is a higher and a far more gracious meaning in it, which rules and over-rules this lower meaning: and this higher intention is expressly stated in the Prologue. When the Poem opens Job stands before us “perfect,” *i.e.* single-hearted and sincere, without duplicity or hypocrisy—and “upright,” fearing God and eschewing

evil. He is an Arab sheikh, or chieftain, of immense wealth, the richest as well as the best and wisest man of his race :

“ A creature such  
As to seek through the regions of the earth  
For one his like, there would be something failing  
In him that should compare. I do not think  
So fair an outward and such stuff within  
Endows a man but he.”

He is the priest of his family, if not of his clan. Unconscious of iniquity in himself, fearing nothing for his sons but that in the gaiety of their hearts they may have momentarily forgotten God, he nevertheless offers a weekly sacrifice in atonement of their possible sins. Over and around this good man, standing full in the sunshine, the dark clouds gather and roll ; the lightnings leap out and strike down all that he has, all that he loves : for many days neither sun nor stars appear, the tempest beats him down till all hope that he will be saved seems taken away ; but, at last, the clouds clear off, the sun shines forth with redoubled splendour, and we leave him a wealthier, better, wiser man than he was even at the first.

Now if we could see nothing but the earth on which he stood, and the sky which alternately frowned and smiled above his head, we might be unable to seize the moral and intention of the scene ; we might reasonably doubt whether the Poem was designed to teach us more than that, as righteousness conducts men to prosperity, so a tried and constant righteousness conducts them to a more stable and a more ample prosperity. But a door is opened into Heaven, and we are

permitted to enter and "assist" at a celestial divan, a council to which God summons all the ministers of his kingly state. The King sits on the throne; his ministers gather round him and sit in session: among them appears a spirit, here simply named the "Adversary," or the "Accuser," whose function is to scrutinize the actions of men, to present them in their worst aspect, that they may be thoroughly sifted and explored. He himself has sunk into an evil condition, for he delights in making even good men seem bad, in fitting good deeds with evil motives. Self is his centre, not God; and he suspects all the world of a selfishness like his own. He cannot, or will not, believe in an unselfish, a disinterested goodness. When Jehovah challenges him to find a fault in Job, he boldly challenges Jehovah to put Job to the proof, and avows beforehand his conviction that it will be found that Job has served God only for what he could gain thereby. This challenge, as Godet has been quick to observe, does not merely affect the character of man: it touches the very honour of God Himself: "for if the most pious of mankind is incapable of loving God gratuitously—that is, really, it follows that God is incapable of making Himself loved." And, "*as no one is honoured except in so far as he is loved,*" by this malignant aspersion the Adversary really assails the very heart and crown of the Master of the universe. Jehovah, therefore, takes up the challenge, and Himself enters the lists against the Adversary: Jehovah undertaking to prove that man is capable of a real and disinterested goodness, Satan undertaking to prove

that the goodness of man is but a veiled selfishness ; and the heart of Job is to be the arena of the strife.

Now it is not necessary that we should believe that such a scene as this actually took place, that such a Celestial Divan was held, that such a challenge was given and accepted. All this *may be* only the dramatic form in which the Poet clothed certain spiritual facts and convictions ; though, on the other hand, we know too little of the spiritual world to deny that a transaction occurred in it which can only be rendered to human thought by such words and figures as the Poet employs. But we should miss the very intention of this inspired Teacher if we did not infer from his "scene in heaven" some such spiritual verities as these : that there is a Good and Supreme Spirit, who is ever seeking to promote the true welfare of men ; that there is an evil spirit, who is ever seeking to deprave men and dishonour them ; that even this evil spirit is under law to God, and is used by God to promote the ultimate welfare of men, and that, "somehow, good is to be the end of ill." Such a conception of the function of the spirit of all ill runs right in the teeth of the modern sceptical suggestion, which, admitting that the plan of the great Architect of the universe may have been divinely wise, contends that somehow the devil—an independent spirit well-nigh as powerful as the Creator Himself—"contrived to become clerk of the works, and has put in a good deal which was not included in the original specification:" even as it also runs straight in the teeth of those who deny the existence of an evil spirit, and of those who fear that evil is too strong to be utterly overcome by good.

But I do not see how it can be denied that our Poet firmly believed both that such a spirit is actively at work in the universe, and that his evil activity will, in the end, be seen only to have contributed to larger good.

We may lay much or little stress on the dramatic drapery of this vital scene, as the bent of our minds may determine, but we must all lay great stress on the design announced in it on pain of misapprehending the main scope of the Poem. For here the ruling intention of the Poem is clearly and distinctly set forth. That intention is to prove, and to prove to the whole hierarchy of heaven, that God is capable of winning, and that man is capable of cherishing, an unselfish and disinterested goodness; that he can serve God for nought, that he can hold fast his confidence in God even when that supreme Friend seems to be turned into his Foe.

This is the higher intention of the Poem, this the heavenward intention. But Job does not, and can not, know of the great issue to be fought out in his own soul. Had he known what Jehovah was proving in and by him, the trial would have been no trial to him, but an honour to be accepted with impassioned gratitude and devotion. He would have cheerfully borne any calamities, any heart-searching miseries, by which the love of God and man was to be demonstrated. He would have rejoiced—as surely *we* may well rejoice—in the goodness of God in undertaking to prove the goodness of man. Of all this, however, he was necessarily unconscious. And, therefore, the Poem must have a second intention, subservient to the

first and highest. The Problem must be, and is, a double one, having an earthward as well as a heavenward, face. And, on its earthly side, the Problem is not stated for us in the Poem itself; we have to think it out for ourselves. Apparently, it is much more complicated than the other, and cannot be so simply stated. But so far as I can gather it, it may be stated thus: that the dark mystery of human life is capable of a happy solution; that the afflictions of the righteous are designed for correction, not for punishment: and that the inequalities of this life are to be redressed in the life to come.

This, then, I take to be the double intention, or purpose, of the Poem. On the one hand it was designed to demonstrate to the spiritual powers in heavenly places that God is capable of inspiring disinterested love, by proving that man is capable of a real, an unselfish goodness; and, on the other hand, it was designed to relieve the mystery of human life by shewing that its miseries are corrective, and by strengthening the hope of a future life in which all the wrongs of time are to be redressed.

The first intention is speedily and obviously carried out. Jehovah baffles and silences the Adversary, who, indeed, seems to have made but a sorry stand. He vanishes from the scene before the conflict has well begun. As, when Job is robbed of goods, children, health, he does not fulfil the prediction of the Adversary by renouncing God, Satan is at once overcome. So complete is his overthrow that the Poet does not deign even to mention it, but lets him silently drop out from the list of his *dramatis personæ*. But, for other and nobler ends than the defeat of

him "who was a liar from the beginning," the conflict is permitted to rage on in the heart of Job. He is tried in all ways—not only by the loss of wealth, children, health, though even these losses were so contrived as to mark him out for a man "smitten by God and afflicted"—but also by the despair of his wife, by the condolences and rebukes of his Friends, by the scorn of his tribe, by the insolence of the very outcasts whom he had once disdained to rank with the dogs of his flocks, by the laughter and mockery of the little children who played about the ash-heap on which he lay: tried, most of all, by having his good conscience enlisted against the goodness of God, by the temptation to deem Him inequitable, tyrannical, pitiless. But amid all his trials he constantly and passionately refused to part with his integrity, or to confess sins of which he believed himself to be innocent: nor would he, under any pressure, renounce God or let go, for more than a moment, his confidence in Him. Like a loving child chastized for an unknown fault, or for no fault at all, he turned *toward*, not *from*, his Father in heaven; the deepest and most abiding emotion of his heart being, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." In the paroxysms of his anguish and despair he might speak wildly; he might impugn the equity of God: nevertheless, it is always to *God* that he appeals; and, at the close of the Story, God Himself, with the magnanimity constantly attributed to Him in Holy Writ, admits that in his wildest upbraidings Job had not been guilty of wilful wrong, nay, He affirms even that Job had kept his very lips in righteousness; to the three humbled and amazed Friends, who

thought that they had stood up for God against Job, He says, "Go to my servant, and ask him to intercede for you : *for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.*"

Nor is it less clear that the second and subsidiary intention of the Poem is also carried out ; though I must not now attempt to point out how, through the whole course of the Book, we are shewn that the afflictions of the righteous are signs not of wrath but of love ; that the dark mystery which hangs over human life is capable of a happy solution : and that the inequalities of this life are to be redressed in the life to come. There will be many opportunities of recurring to these points as the Exposition proceeds. For the present it will be enough to say that, even when we reach the end of Job's First Colloquy with the Friends, when, therefore, his spirit was smarting with the keenest anguish, the darkness of his despair is broken by some faint rays of hope ; that even then he could argue that as there is a chance for a tree that, even when it is felled, it will sprout again at the scent of water, so for man there may be a hope that, though he die, he will live again. When we reach the end of the Second Colloquy, and his spirit is gaining some measure of composure, this hope has risen into the assurance that his Redeemer lives, and that "without," *i.e.* apart from, "his mortal flesh," he shall see God : while at the close of the Third Colloquy, when he has triumphed over the Friends he affirms that, whatever appearances may say to the contrary, God is and must be just, and that the fear of the Lord, this is wisdom, and to turn from evil this is understanding.

Thus both ends are gained, God is vindicated and man is reconciled to God.

A new polemical value has been given to the Book of Job by the attitude and tone modern scepticism has assumed, or reassumed.<sup>1</sup> The whole school represented by the Author of "Supernatural Religion"—and it is a large one, and has many disciples among the unlearned—sets, or affects to set, great value on the ethical element of the Christian Faith. They affirm<sup>2</sup> that Christ "carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity." But they are very anxious to divorce the ethical from the supernatural element, although in the New Testament the two are interwoven into one piece, so that it is impossible to detach the one from the other without utterly destroying the whole fabric. And, hence, they also affirm both that the morality of Christ was the offspring of a merely human brain, uncharged by any Divine energy or inspiration; and that this morality will never take its due place or exert its due influence until we accept it simply as "the perfect development" and expression of the moral faculties natural to man. So long as we cleave to the belief in a *revelation* of the will of God rather than to a discovery of that high will by mortal powers, we place ourselves, it appears, at a serious disadvantage, and shall be the richer and the better for giving it up. "We gain infinitely more than we lose in abandoning belief in the reality of Divine

<sup>1</sup> This point has been more fully argued in vol. i. page 470-484 of THE EXPOSITOR. I here give only a brief abstract or summary of the argument there developed.

<sup>2</sup> "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. part. iii. chap. iii.

Revelation. While we retain pure and unimpaired the treasure of Christian morality, we relinquish nothing but the debasing elements added to it by human superstition.”<sup>1</sup>

Now it would be hard to find a more cogent and complete answer to this argument for the sufficiency of Morality apart from Revelation than that supplied by the Book of Job. For, obviously, Job had no miraculous and supernatural revelation of the will of God. He moved and lived and had his being outside the charmed and sacred circle in which such revelations were, or were supposed to be, vouchsafed. His one importunate complaint throughout the book is that he cannot see God, nor hear his voice, nor learn what his will and intention are. There is not a single reference in the Poem to the Hebrew law, to the Sacred Writings accredited by the Jews, or to the forms of life and worship which obtained among them. He is indebted for all that he knows of God to the great primitive Tradition, to the inherited and developed conceptions of the human mind. And, on the other hand, it is equally obvious that he had a pure and noble morality, hardly inferior to that taught by Christ Himself. The tumultuous agitation and excitement of his spirit under the trials to which he was exposed, prove him to be very man; and his own description of the temptations which he had successfully encountered (cf. Chap. xxxi.) shews that he was open to the very influences by which men in all ages have been turned from righteousness. And yet no one can read the Poem without feeling throughout that he is brought into

<sup>1</sup> “Supernatural Religion,” vol. ii. part iii. chap. iii.

contact with a man of a singularly pure, high, and noble soul; his own delineation of himself (Chaps. xxix. and xxxi.) shew him to have been a masterpiece of human goodness, with "a daily beauty in his life" up to the level of most men's exceptional and heroic moments: and Jehovah Himself is represented as pronouncing him what we feel him to be, "a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil."

In his case, then, the conditions on which modern scepticism builds its hopes for the race were fulfilled: without a supernatural revelation, he was nevertheless possessed of a morality as pure and high as can well be conceived. He ought, therefore, on this hypothesis, not only to have been content, but to have felt that he was infinitely better off than if a Divine Revelation had been added to the pure and unimpaired treasure of his morality. *Was* he content with his treasure, then? did he feel that it met and satisfied every craving of his spirit? On the contrary, his whole soul goes forth in a piercing cry for the very Revelation which our modern sceptics pronounce utterly superfluous. What they would contemptuously "abandon" he passionately craves and insists upon. He is tortured by the very longing which they assure us it was impossible he should ever experience, and knew no rest until he saw for himself the God of whom he had heard with the hearing of the ear, and in the light of that great Revelation learned how "vile" he was.

For purposes of study the Poem is most conveniently divided into nine parts: (1) The Proem,

or Prologue, in which the Problem about to be discussed is stated: Chapters i. and ii. (2) The Curse pronounced by Job on his Day—the occasion from which the discussion springs up: Chapter iii. (3) The First Colloquy of the great Argument: Chapters iv.—xiv. (4) The Second Colloquy: Chapters xv.—xxi. (5) The Third Colloquy: Chapters xxii.—xxvi. (6) The Soliloquy of Job: Chapters xxvii.—xxxi. (7) The Intervention of Elihu: Chapters xxxii.—xxxvii. (8) The Theophany, or the Intervention of Jehovah: Chapters xxxviii.—xli. And, (9) The Epilogue, in which the issue of this great controversy is recorded: Chapter xlii.

S. COX.

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*ON THE USE OF CERTAIN SLANG WORDS IN  
THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

I AM afraid that the heading of this paper will sound startling, and even irreverent. But I know of no more elegant synonym to express what I mean by slang, although I feel that it is too strong a word, as generally used, for the application I wish to make of it. In all cultivated languages certain words come to be used in familiar conversation in a sense very different from the original and proper sense, although often forcible and expressive enough. Presently this derivative use of the word (founded probably on some striking, perhaps absurd, analogy) creeps into written documents, at first under protest, always with a more or less startling effect. To mention words thus used in English slang is clearly unnecessary. What I propose to do is to point out three Greek words thus used in the New Testament,