as the writer already quoted says, "a very difficult thing to serve the times; they change so frequently, so suddenly, and sometimes so violently from one extreme to another. The times under Diocletian were Pagan, under Constantine, Christian, under Constantius, Arian, under Julian, apostate, under Jovian Christian again; and all within the age of man, the term of seventy years. And would it not have wrenched and sprained his soul with short-turning who in all these should have been of the religion for the time being?"[1]

ALEX. B. BRUCE.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

III.—THE FIRST COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS IV.—XIV.)

(4.) JOB TO ZOPHAR. (CHAPTERS XII.–XIV.)

At last Job has nerved himself to contend with the Almighty! He has challenged God, "in desperate manner daring the event to the teeth," either to accuse him and listen to his defence, or to reply to his impeachment of the Divine justice and compassion. He has prepared his pleas, drawn out his Declaration, or Defence; and he now enters the presence of the Judge of all the earth, trembling and afraid because his integrity to Heaven is all he dare call his own, and yet strong in the assurance that nothing but integrity could possibly avail him. He has but little hope of a happy issue to the trial, since he believes that, for some inscrutable reason, God has determined to hold him for a foe; but he is resolved, eager, to put his fate to the touch, to learn

[1] "The Holy State." Book iii. chap. 19.

whether or not he has rightly divined the purpose of his Adversary and Judge. His feeling is:

> If my offence be of such mortal kind
> That nor my service past, nor present sorrows,
> Nor purposed merit in futurity,
> Can ransom me into his love again,
> *But to know so must be my benefit.*

He enters the Presence, then, and waits to hear what God has to allege against him. But there is no voice to accuse, nor, indeed, any to answer him. As God sits silent in this "session of the soul," and brings no charge against him, Job himself (Chap. xiii. *Verse* 23) breaks the silence with the demand, "How many are my iniquities and my sins? Shew me my sin and my transgression!" That is, he demands, generally, what and how many are the charges he will have to meet; and, in particular, what is that special and heinous offence which has been so terribly visited upon him. He does not deny, therefore, but admits, that he is guilty of such sins as are common to man; for

> who has a breast so pure
> But some uncleanly apprehensions
> Keep leets and law-days, and in session sit
> With meditations lawful?

but he implies that, to justify such a punishment as his, his sins should have been both many and heinous, and that he is wholly unconscious of such sins as these.

Having advanced his demand, he pauses for a reply, expecting that, now that he has spoken, God will respond. But no response, no answer, is vouchsafed him.

And hence, in *Verse* 24, he expostulates with his

Judge. Why does God hide his face from him? why reject his appeal? Does He still hold to his resolve, to refuse all intercourse with him, to treat as an open and convicted enemy one who is really his lover and friend? That is not like God, not worthy of Him; Job's very frailty might plead for him. He is weak (*Verse* 25) as a sere and fallen leaf, frail and unsubstantial as withered stubble. A mere breath would suffice to puff him away: why should God break and terrify him by pouring out the full tempest of his anger against him? Moreover, his nature is peccable and sinful as well as frail. He has inherited taints of blood and defects of will such as are inherent in all men, such therefore as should move the compassion of God, and not provoke Him to anger. He does not claim (*Verse* 26) to have been free from such "usual slips" as are common to man, but he has long since repented and renounced the sins of his youth. Has not God forgiven them? Where, then, is the mercy, where the justice even, of now exacting from him an accumulated and usurious interest for his youthful debts, debts which he had thought were forgiven and expunged long ago? The frailty of human nature, and its native tendency to evil—a tendency which shews itself most clearly in the young and immature, with whom sin has not yet become a habit—are arguments for compassion, especially when the sins of youth and liberty have been mastered and corrected in maturer years. And yet, in place of shewing any compassion, God has condemned him for them, and inflicted the most terrible punishment upon him. At this very moment he is like a prisoner (*Verses* 27, 28), whose feet have

been thrust into the *nervus*, or stocks, into the holes of the hateful clog, or block, in which the feet of a convicted criminal were at once fastened and tortured, and who is exposed to the most watchful and jealous inspection, lest he should stray a single step beyond the narrow limits assigned him. Thus a line, or a circle, has been drawn round the soles of his feet, beyond which he cannot pass; and *that* although he is too weak and emaciated to stir, although he lies on the *mezbele*, rotting away under the gnawing pangs of his foul disease like a garment consumed by moths.

But here, as we enter on Chapter xiv., his thoughts take a nobler turn. It is for humanity, for the whole race, that he pleads, and not for himself alone; for in all men he finds the same frail and sinful nature of which he is conscious in himself, and in their lot the same exposure to a disproportioned and excessive punishment as in his own. In the familiar, but most impressive and pathetic words and images of *Verses* 1 and 2, he sets forth the *physical* frailty of human life,—its brevity, "short of days;" its sorrowfulness, "satiated with trouble;" it is fragile and evanescent as a flower of the field, fleeting and cold and dark as a shadow which momentarily obscures the light and warmth of the sun. Can it be right, then (*Verse* 3), that a creature so frail, so evanescent, so laden with sorrow, should be dogged with a suspicious and incessant vigilance, and called to a stern judicial account? In *Verse* 4 the *moral* frailty of man, which had been glanced at in the words (*Verse* 1), "Man, *born of woman*," is set forth in an affirma-

tion which is also a covert protest. Woman, according to the Eastern mode of thought, is the frailer section of humanity; and man, since he is "born of woman," inherits her frailty. According to the Hebrew law, moreover, which in this does but formulate a general Oriental conception, woman is impure during and long after childbirth with an impurity which requires a special expiation, and her offspring necessarily partake in that impurity. The very child of frailty, contaminated from, and even by, his very birth, sinlessness is impossible to man: but if it be impossible, what right has God to expect it? Cleanness cannot come forth from uncleanness. Would that it could! sighs Job: would that purity were possible to man! but, with such an origin, how can it be? Shakespeare tells us that

> That nature which contemns its origin
> Cannot be bordered certain in itself.

How much more indubitable is it, then, that that nature which derives its origin from an impure and errant source cannot be always kept within its proper boundaries, nor flow on in a pure and limpid stream?

Verses 5 and 6. Man being what he is, not by his own election and fault simply, but, in part at least, by the formative influence of his blood and conditions, if he must not hope to be fully and freely absolved from all his guilt, may at least expect a little pity from God; so much pity as this, perhaps, he may even claim—that God should "turn from him," not be strict to mark and punish the sins for which he is not wholly responsible, but grant him such poor enjoyment as that of a hireling, who must

toil on in sorrow and fatigue, but need not be lashed to his labour with a scourge, nor terrified by a fearful looking-for of judgment. If it be God who has made his days on earth so few and miserable, if it be God who has confined him within such narrow moral limits that he can never hope to achieve an unsullied righteousness, it is surely no immodest nor unreasonable demand on God that He should leave man to bear the inevitable miseries of his lot, and not harass and destroy him by adding intolerable exactions and immedicable stripes to the burden under which he groans.

As Job meditates on the miserable estate of man, even the inanimate world of Nature seems more happily conditioned than "the paragon of animals," the very master-piece of God. There is more hope of a tree than of man. The tree may be cut down (*Verse* 7), or it may moulder in the ground (*Verse* 8); but, though it die, it will live again: if it only *smell* water, only feel "the breath" of it, it will revive: it will not "cease" as man ceases: if it has been lopped, yet it will shoot forth new branches; if it has died down, yet it will send up new suckers from its root. Possibly, the allusion may be to the palm-tree, of which Shaw,[1] the Eastern traveller, says, "When the old trunk dies, there is never wanting one of these offspring to succeed it." More probably, the allusion is more general; for Consul Wetzstein[2] tells us that a common operation of arboriculture in the vicinity of Damascus (of which the Hauran is a close neighbour) is to hew down old trees — such as the vine, the fig-tree, the pome-

[1] Quoted by Delitzsch *in loco.* [2] Ibid.

granate, the citron, the mulberry, the walnut, and the ash—when they have become hollow and decayed; and that, if they are then plentifully supplied with water, the old stumps throw out branches or the old roots suckers within a year, which grow vigorously and luxuriantly, and soon bear fruit. But, continues Job, though there is hope of a tree, there is none for man. Once cut down, once dead, he never revives, never more yields fruit. The pathetic contrast is a familiar one, and is to be found in the literature of all nations. Thus in the *Jagur Weda* we read: "While the tree that has fallen sprouts again from the root fresher than before, from what root does mortal man spring forth when he has fallen by the hand of death?" So, again, in the somewhat hackneyed, but pretty and tender, verses of Moschus we read:

> Alas, alas, the mallows when they wither in the border,
> Or the green parsley, or the thick thriving dill,
> Live again hereafter, and spring up in other years:
> But we men, the great, the brave, the wise,
> When once we die, lie senseless in the bosom of the earth,
> And sleep a long, an endless, an eternal sleep.

Having turned from the Friends, with their irritating maxims and reproaches, to speak with God, it is quite obvious that Job, even though he has still to address himself to a God who has hidden his face and will make no clear response, has fallen into a more thoughtful, calm, and meditative mood. The bitter irony has left his tone, the storm of passion has subsided. And though there is still a tone of profound sadness and despair in his thoughts, we feel that he is capable of pursuing an even and sequent train of thought; that he is brooding over the great

problems of human life undisturbed, absorbed in them, feeling his way towards a solution of them,—so preoccupied with them as to sit withdrawn from the influence of things external to himself. Now it is in such moods that we receive the thoughts that *come* to us we know not how, that the intuitions, on which all our mental conceptions are based, flash up through our customary forms of "mentation," irradiate them with a new and intenser light, recombine them in new relations, so that they point to other issues —thus raising us to heights of contemplation from which we can see farther into the meaning and end of life than at less auspicious moments. Such a moment had arrived for Job. Brooding in awe and wonder over the fate of man, in his recoil from the very conviction to which he had felt his way, that a tree is more vital than a man, his mind springs aloft in disdain of so base a conclusion, and at least for an instant he catches a glimpse of life and immortality. "Man die, while the tree lives on, or bursts into a new life, another and yet the same? Impossible! A man is of more value than many trees. May it not be, then, that as the tree sinks to the earth and moulders in the ground, until at the breath of water it rises into new and fairer forms of fruitfulness, so man may sink into Hades, only to find there a quiet shelter and repose, until, touched by the Divine 'breath,' he too rise and expand into a new and happier life?"

Such seems to have been the process of thought—if we should not rather call it the process of emotion —by which Job reached the hope that yearns and struggles up through his words in *Verses* 13–15. It

is no certainty, no assurance, of a life to come that he gains, but only a peradventure; and on this peradventure he soon relaxes his hold for a time. It is no clear and steadfast insight, but only a bright prophetic glimpse, which is soon lost in the climbing mists of his sorrow and despair. Faith and reason are at strife within him (mark the parenthesis of *Verse* 14), as he looks for a moment across the dark and populous region of Hades to the country that is very far off, so that he cannot be sure for a single moment that there is a path of life even in that dim region and a land of life beyond it. It is little more than a wish that he utters, a yearning; but it is the yearning of a prophetic soul, musing on things to come: and, moreover, this yearning rests on a solid basis, for it is based on the very justice and love of God. His revulsion against the apparent doom of man breeds the longing (*Verse* 13), "O that thou wouldest hide me in Hades," *i. e.*, as the verb implies, hide me with loving care, as a treasure too precious to be left to the mere accidents of time; "that thou wouldest conceal me till thy wrath be past," *i.e.*, screen me in Hades till this tempest of calamity has blown by, make it what the Egyptians called it, "the Shelter of the Weary:" "that thou wouldest appoint me a set time,"—a *terminus ad quem*—and then "remember me!" But he cannot so much as complete his wish without interruption. The parenthesis which opens the 14th *Verse* shews that the forces of reason and doubt were at work within him, trying to shatter "the beautiful dream and presentiment" of a life beyond the grave, warning him that he was indulging in fancies which it was impossible to sus-

tain by logic or verify by experience. Even while the momentary fervours of hope are hot within him, he hears a cool sceptical voice sounding through them: "But if a man die"—really die, you know—"can he live again?" is not that incredible? But he is not to be diverted from his course; he will not pause to question and argue: he treads down the rising doubt, and pursues his way the more eagerly. He *will* speak out the yearning of his heart. And so he goes on: If only such a hope of the future were before me, I would stand to my post on earth with an immoveable fidelity till I fell at it; even in Hades I would still stand at it like a sentinel on watch, however long and hard the term of my service, till my discharge, till my relief, came. And surely, he argues to himself (in *Verse* 15), such a hope *must* be before me: for if I have such a yearning for God, must not He who implanted it have a corresponding yearning for me? if I long for Him who made me, must not He long for the work of his own hands?

Thus Job bases his presentiment of a future state both on the justice and on the love of God. It is incredible to his reason that this tangled skein of life is not to be ravelled out beyond the grave; and it is incredible to his heart that he should love his Maker more than his Maker loves him. And on what safer ground of reason and speculation can even *we* build the hope that, when we die, we shall live again? It was a wonderful advance for Job to have made, and might well have compensated him for all his sufferings, that the mere wish to escape extinction should have grown into a presentiment, a persuasion, of a life

in death and beyond it. To this persuasion we shall find him returning with clearer insight and an added strength of conviction in the next Colloquy. But for the present, as was natural, the contrast between what he yearns to be and what he *is* almost immediately occurs to his mind, and the bright light of his presentiment expires in the settled gloom of his grief and despair. What he shall be, he can only conjecture and hope; what he is, his sorrows only too feelingly persuade him. He is a criminal—for here (*Verse* 16) he reverts to the ruling image of this noble passage—at the bar of an incensed and powerful Judge, who dogs his every step and maintains a keen and incessant watch for every sin. All the documents (*Verse* 17) that go to prove his guilt are stored up in the scrip, or pouch which hangs from the Judge's belt, ready to be produced against him at the most opportune moment; and the proofs of his iniquity, *i. e.*, of his most heinous offence, are even sewed up in an interior scrip, so anxious is the Judge not by any mischance to lose them, so bent on finding him guilty.

Some authorities—Delitzsch, for example—read the last line of the verse, "Thou sewest *on* mine iniquity;" and take it to mean, "Thou devisest additions to mine iniquity," tacking on invented and still heavier crimes to the prisoner's real misdeeds. But the construction is a little forced, I think, and quite unnecessary; nor is Job at present in a mood with which so terrible an insinuation against the rectitude of God would be in keeping. He is not now recklessly charging God with injustice, but mournfully complaining of his severity.

The results of that incessant and unsparing severity he proceeds (*Verses* 18 and 19) to set forth in several analogies taken from the natural phenomena of the Hauran,—the crumbling mountain, the shattered rock, the water-worn stones, the surface of the land carried away by floods. With us mountains do not "fall;" but in volcanic regions, such as the Hauran, a mountain, undermined by subterraneous fires, often falls in and crumbles away. In such regions, too, earthquakes are frequent, and so violent as to shake and shatter the solid rocks. In the fertile wadys, moreover, with their rushing streams, now dried up, and again overflowing their banks as the heavy rains fall on the neighbouring hills and plateaus, great stones fantastically hollowed out by the water, and floods that swept away the cultivated land on the borders of the stream, must have been too common to attract much notice. These, therefore, were fit and natural emblems of the instability of human life and fortune, of the sudden adversities by which man's prosperity is swept away, of the subtle forces by which it is sapped, of the succession of calamities which wear and waste it down. Viewed as part of his plea, or Defence, Job probably meant to convey by these emblems that, instead of visiting men with an unsparing and excessive severity, God should rather take pity on them and forbear; since if even the great mountains crumble, and the solid rocks are shattered, and the hard stones are scooped out, and the firm earth is washed away, in what constant and imminent peril must frail man be, should he be exposed to the untempered blasts of the Divine anger? But, instead of restraining his anger, God

gives it free scope—destroying the hope of man, prevailing over him evermore, changing his aspect, and sending him away to that dim and remote region where he no longer has any portion in, or any knowledge of, aught that is done under the sun; where all his thoughts are centered on himself, and he feels nothing but his own pain and loss; where the very prosperity of his children brings him no relief, and their adversities trouble him not, since he has reached a bourn beyond which no tidings travel, and breathes an air, if he breathe at all, in which all earthly interests expire.

Here, then, the First Colloquy closes, and we have only to ask, What is the upshot of it all? Whither has it conducted Job? At what point has this "strong swimmer in his agony" arrived? What has he gained by his fidelity to his convictions in the teeth of so bitter an opposition from his Friends, and of so many facts of experience and consciousness which he found it impossible to reconcile with them?

1. It is the least of his gains that he has won a logical victory over the Friends. They had little to urge except that the Heavens are just, "and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us:" they had little to reproach him with save that by his despair he was shewing

> a will most incorrect to Heaven,
> A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
> An understanding simple and unschool'd;

and even these points they had pressed on him,—Zophar excepted perhaps,—with consideration and gentleness, rather as inciting him to penitence and

meekness than as censuring him for his sins. Such arguments and reproaches could have but slight effect on one who was conscious that he was innocent of the secret vices of which they suspected him, and that in his misery and perplexity—and, above all, in their unfounded suspicions—he had an ample apology for his impatience. To refute their arguments, and to bear down their reproaches with reproaches that were true, and still more keen and weighty than their own, was a comparatively easy task.

2. But he had won a far more difficult and honourable victory than this: he had refuted and conquered the great adversary—Satan, the accuser. Darkened and agitated and confused as his soul was, Job had *not* renounced God; he had shewn that he could serve Him for nought, nay, continue to trust and serve Him even when, from a manifest and bountiful Friend, he had turned to be a stern and silent Adversary. Never was man more fiercely tried; never was man more faithful under the fiercest trial. Othello finely complains:

> Had it pleased Heaven
> To try me with affliction; had it rained
> All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
> Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
> Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
> I should have found in some place of my soul
> A drop of patience: but, alas, to make me
> A fixed figure for the scorn of Time
> To point his slow unmoving finger at!
> Yet could I bear that too; well, very well:
> But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
> Where either I must live or bear no life,
> The fountain from which my current runs
> Or else dries up,—to be discarded thence!

But Job had borne both the trials which Othello affirms that he could have borne with patience, and the very trial, only raised to an indefinitely higher power, which he avows himself incapable of bearing. For Job had been brought down from the very summit of prosperity to be steeped in poverty to the very lips. All kinds of sores and shames had been rained down on his bare head. He and his utmost hopes had been given to captivity. He had become as a fixed figure for the scorn of Time to point his slow unmoving finger at. And in the very degree in which the Maker of all stands above the level of his fairest creature, in that incalculably higher degree it was true of him that he had been discarded from the very shrine where he had garnered up his heart, where he must live or bear no life, that he had been cut off from the fountain from which his current ran or else dried up. He had set his heart on *God;* apart from God he had no life: God was the very source and fountain of his being and his happiness. And God had renounced him, discarded him, turned against him. Still Job would not renounce God! True, we have heard him break out into passionate and mutinous charges against God, reproaching Him for his severity, for his injustice, and even for taking pleasure in the discomfiture of the righteous. But the God whom he thus assailed was the God of his Friends—that conception of God to which they clave, and from which as yet he could not wholly shake himself free. And no man who has studied this Poem can doubt that, while Job was being gradually compelled to renounce this Phantom of the current creed, he was also seeking, and gradually finding,

a new God—another, and yet the same, gradually framing a more worthy conception of his Divine Lord and King; cleaving passionately, meanwhile, to that true and living God who stands high above all our poor and imperfect conceptions of Him. Assuredly, at least, no man who has himself been constrained to resign an earlier and baser conception of the Divine Character, that he might win his way to a nobler and more satisfying conception, and is conscious that through the whole process of doubt and change he has never really let God go, never wholly lost touch with Him, will be perplexed at finding in this poem a God whom Job renounces side by side with the God to whom he cleaves with a noble and pathetic fidelity. It was not God Himself, but that dark misleading shadow of God projected on the thought and imagination of his age, from which Job revolted. And hence his victory over the Adversary was complete. So far from renouncing the God who no longer loaded him with benefits, he was led, by his very deprivations and miseries, to a clearer knowledge of Him, a more assured and triumphant faith in Him.

3. Besides his victory over the Friends, and his far greater victory over the Adversary, Job carries off, as the spoils of victory, at least an inkling of two of the greatest truths even now revealed to man, truths of which it is doubtful whether any other man of his age had so much as a glimpse. He gained, as we have seen, a presentiment both of the Incarnation and of the Resurrection from the dead. Wordsworth describes a memorable, though not infrequent, experience in the well-known lines:

And, when the stream
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,
A consciousness remained that it had left,
Deposited upon the silent shore
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.

Job's soul had been submerged by a flood of sorrows and doubts till it had well nigh been overwhelmed; but when that flood passed away, among the precious and imperishable thoughts it left behind it were these;—that an Arbiter, a Mediator, between God and man, might be looked for, who should lay his hands on them both and bring them together in judgment; and that though man must die, he may live again when touched by the quickening breath of God. And to win such gains as these, who would not be content to wade through a very sea of sorrow?

S. COX.[1]

THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

WE have already seen that the first-founded Churches, to which St. Paul addressed his Epistles, must have known concerning Jesus Christ that He claimed not only to be man, but at the same time the Son of God, and that those who became his followers must prove themselves fit to be such by a firm belief in this claim to Divinity. They must have also known (as we have shewn) that in his life on earth his teaching

[1] And now I must make way for my betters. I have so many papers in hand, and so many more are faithfully promised me by faithful men, that for a season I must intermit my Commentary on Job, in order to find room for these contributions. In the course of a few months I may be able to resume it. EDITOR.