

Job and His Friends.

C. H. Mackintosh.

The book of Job occupies a very peculiar place in the volume of God. It possesses character entirely its own, and teaches lessons which are not to be learnt in any other section of inspiration. It is not by any means our purpose to enter upon a line of argument to prove the genuineness, or establish the fact of the Divine inspiration, of this precious book. We take these things for granted; being fully persuaded of them as established facts, we leave the proofs to abler hands. We receive the book of Job as part of the Holy Scriptures given of God for the profit and blessing of His people. We need no proofs of this for ourselves, nor do we attempt to offer any to our reader.

And we may further add, that we have no thought of entering upon the field of inquiry as to the authorship of this book. This, how interesting soever it may be in itself, is to us entirely secondary. We receive the book from God. This is enough for us. We heartily own it to be an inspired document, and we do not feel it to be our province to discuss the question as to where, when, or by whom it was penned. In short, we purpose, with the Lord's help, to offer a few plain and practical remarks on a book which we consider needs to be more closely studied, that it may be more fully understood. May the Eternal Spirit, who indited the book, expound and apply it to our souls!

The opening page of this remarkable book furnishes us with a view of the patriarch Job, surrounded by everything that could make the world agreeable to him, and make him of importance in the world. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Thus much as to what *he was*. Let us now see *what he had*.

"And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them." Then, to complete the picture, we have the record of *what he did*.

"And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Here, then, we have a very rare specimen of a man. He was perfect, upright, God-fearing, and eschewed evil. Moreover, the hand of God had hedged him round about on every side, and strewed his path with richest mercies. He had all that heart could wish, — children and wealth in abundance, — honour and distinction from all around. In short, we may almost say his cup of earthly bliss was full.

But Job needed to be tested. There was a deep moral root in his heart which had to be laid bare. There was self-righteousness which had to be brought to the surface and judged. Indeed, we may discern this root in the very words which we have just quoted. He says, "It may be that my sons have sinned." He does not seem to contemplate the possibility of sinning himself. A soul really self-judged, thoroughly broken before God, truly sensible of its own state, tendencies, and capabilities, would think of his own sins, and his own need of a burnt-offering.

Now, let the reader distinctly understand that Job was a real saint of God, — a Divinely

quicken soul, — a possessor of Divine and eternal life. We cannot too strongly insist upon this. He was just as truly a man of God in the first chapter as he was in the forty-second. If we do not see this, we shall miss one of the grand lessons of the book. Job 1: 8 establishes this point beyond all question. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?"

But, with all this, Job had never sounded the depths of his own heart. He did not know himself: He had never really grasped the truth of his own utter ruin and total depravity. He had never learnt to say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This point must be seized, or the book of Job will not be understood. We shall not see the specific object of all those deep and painful exercises through which Job was called to pass, unless we lay hold of the solemn fact that his conscience had never been really in the Divine presence, — that he had never seen himself in the light, — never measured himself by a Divine standard, — never weighed himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

If the reader will turn for a moment to Job 29, he will find a striking proof of what we assert. He will there see distinctly what a strong and deep root of self-complacency there was in the heart of this dear and valued servant of God; and how this root was nourished by the very tokens of Divine favour with which he was surrounded. This chapter is a pathetic lament over the faded light of other days; and the very tone and character of the lament prove how necessary it was that Job should be stripped of everything, in order that he might learn himself in the searching light of the Divine presence.

Let us hearken to his words.

"Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; when I went out to the gate through the city; when I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock."

This, truly, is a most remarkable utterance. We look in vain for any breathings of a broken and a contrite spirit here. There are no evidences of self-loathing, or even of self-distrust. We cannot find so much as a single expression of conscious weakness and nothingness. In the course of this single

chapter, Job refers to himself more than forty times, while the references to God are but five. It reminds us of the seventh of Romans, by the predominance of "I;" but there is this immense difference, that, in the seventh of Romans, "I" is a poor, weak, good-for-nothing, wretched creature in the presence of the holy law of God; whereas, in Job 29, "I" is a most important, influential personage admired and almost worshipped by his fellows.

Now Job had to be stripped of all this; and when we compare Job 29 with Job 30 we can form some idea of how painful the process of stripping must have been. There is peculiar emphasis in the words, "*But now.*" Job draws a most striking contrast between his past and his present. In Job 30 he is still occupied with himself. It is still "I;" but ah! how changed. The very men who flattered him in the day of his prosperity, treat him with contempt in the day of his adversity. Thus it is ever in this poor, false, deceitful world, and it is well to be made to prove it. All must, sooner or later, find out the hollowness of the world, — the fickleness of those who are ready to cry out "hosanna" today, and "crucify Him" tomorrow. Man is not to be trusted. It is all very well while the sun shines; but wait till the nipping blasts of winter come, and then you will see how far nature's fair promises and professions can be trusted. When the prodigal had plenty to spend, he found plenty to share his portion; but when he began to be in want, "no man gave unto him."

Thus it was with Job in Job 30. But be it well remembered, that there is very much more needed than the stripping of self, and the discovery of the hollowness and deceitfulness of the world. One may go through all these, and the result be merely chagrin and disappointment. Indeed it can be nothing more if God be not reached. If the heart be not brought to find its all-satisfying, portion in God, then a reverse of fortune leaves it desolate; and the discovery of the fickleness and hollowness of men fills it with bitterness. This will account for Job's language in Job 30. "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." Was this the spirit of Christ? Would Job have spoken thus at the close of the book? He would not. Ah! no, reader; when once Job got into God's presence, there was an end to the egotism of Job 29 and the bitterness of Job 30.

{The reader will bear in mind that, while it is the Holy Ghost who records what Job and his friends said, yet we are not to suppose that they spoke by inspiration.}

But hear Job's further outpourings. "They were children of fools, yea, children of base men; they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because He hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me."

Now all this, we may truly say, is very far short of the mark. Lamentations over departed greatness, and bitter invectives against our fellowmen, will not do the heart much good; neither do they display aught of the spirit and mind of Christ, nor bring glory to His holy name. When we turn our eyes toward the blessed Lord Jesus we see something wholly different. That meek and lowly One met all the rebuffs of this world, all the disappointments in the midst of His people Israel, all the unbelief and folly of His disciples, with an, "Even so, Father." He was able to retire from the rebuffs of men into His resources in God, and then to come forth with those balmy words, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest." No chagrin, no bitterness, no harsh invectives, nothing rough or unkind, from that gracious Saviour who came down into this cold and heartless world to manifest the perfect love of God, and

who pursued His path of service spite Or all man's perfect hatred.

But the fairest and best of men must retire into the shade when tested by the perfect standard of the life of Christ. The light of His moral glory makes manifest the defects and blemishes of even the most perfect of the sons of men. "In all things He must have the pre-eminence." He stands out in vivid contrast with even a Job or a Jeremiah in the matter of patient submission to all that He was called upon to endure. Job completely breaks down under his heavy trials. He not only pours forth a torrent of bitter invective upon his fellows, but actually curses the day of his birth. "After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day. And Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a manchild conceived" (Job 3: 1-3).

We notice the self-same thing in Jeremiah — that blessed man of God. He, too, gave way beneath the heavy pressure of his varied and accumulated sorrows, and gave vent to his feelings in the following bitter accents: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide. *Because he slew me not from the womb*; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (Jer. 20: 14-18)

What language is here! Only think of cursing the man that brought tidings of his birth! cursing him because he had not slain him! All this, both in the prophet and the patriarch, contrasts strong]y with the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth. That spotless One passed through deeper sorrows and more in number than all His servants put together; but not one murmuring word ever escaped His lips. He patiently submitted to all; and met the darkest hour with such words as these, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Blessed Lord Jesus, Son of the Father, we adore Thee! We bow down at Thy feet, lost in wonder, love, and praise, and own Thee Lord of all! — the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

There is no more fruitful field of study than that which is opened before us in the history of God's dealings with souls. It is full of interest, and abounds in instruction and profit. One grand object in those dealings is to produce real brokenness and humility — to strip us of all false righteousness, empty us of all self-confidence, and teach us to lean wholly upon Christ. All have to pass through what may be called the process of stripping and emptying. With some this process precedes, with others it follows, conversion or the new birth. Many are brought to Christ through deep ploughings and painful exercises of heart and conscience — exercises extending over years, often over the whole lifetime. Others, on the contrary, are brought with comparatively little exercise of soul. They lay hold, speedily, of the glad tidings of forgiveness of sins through the atoning death of Christ, and are made happy at once. But the stripping and emptying come afterwards, and, in many cases, cause the soul to totter on its foundation, and almost to doubt its conversion.

This is very painful, but very needful. The fact is, self must be learnt and judged, sooner or later. If it be not learnt in communion with God, it must be learnt by bitter experience in failures and falls. "No flesh shall glory in God's presence;" and we must all learn our utter powerlessness, in every respect, in order that we may taste the sweetness and comfort of the truth, that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. God will have *broken material*. Let us remember this. It is a solemn and necessary truth "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and

humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And again, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 57: 15; Isa. 66: 1, 2).

These are reasonable words for all of us. One special want of the present moment is brokenness of Spirit. Nine-tenths of our trouble and difficulty may be traced to this want. It is marvellous how we get on from day to day, — in the family, in the assembly, in the world, in our entire practical life, when *self* is subdued and mortified. A thousand things which else would prove more than a match for our hearts are esteemed as nothing, when our souls are in a truly contrite state. We are enabled to bear reproach and insult, to overlook slights and affronts, to trample upon our crotchets, predilections, and prejudices, to yield to others where weighty principle is not involved, to be ready to every good work, to exhibit a genial large-heartedness in all our dealings, and an elasticity in all our moral movements which so greatly tend to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. How often, alas! it is otherwise with us. We exhibit a stiff, unyielding temper; we stand up for our rights; we maintain our interests; we look after our own things; we contend for our own notions. All this proves, very clearly, that self is not habitually measured and judged in the presence of God.

But, we repeat — and with emphasis — God will have broken material. He loves us too well to leave us in hardness and unsubduedness; and hence it is that He sees fit to pass us through all sorts of exercises in order to bring us into a condition of soul in which He can use us for His own glory. The will must be broken; self-confidence, self-complacency, and self-importance must be cut up by the roots. God will make use of the scenes and circumstances through which we have to pass, the people with whom we are associated in daily life, to discipline the heart and subdue the will. And, further, He will deal with us directly Himself, in order to bring about these great practical results.

All this comes out with great distinctness in the book of Job, and gives a wonderful interest and charm to its pages. It is very evident that Job needed a severe sifting. Had he not needed it, we may rest assured the gracious, loving Lord would not have passed him through it. It was not for nothing that He let Satan loose upon His dear servant. We may say, with fullest confidence, that nothing but the most stern necessity would have led Him to adopt such a line of action. God loved Job with a perfect love; but it was a wise and faithful love; a love that could take account of everything, and, looking below the surface, could see the deep moral roots in the heart of His servant — roots which Job had never seen, and, therefore, never judged. What a mercy to have to do with such a God! to be in the hands of One who will spare no pains in order to subdue everything in us which is contrary to Himself, and to bring out in us His own blessed image!

But, beloved reader, is there not something profoundly interesting in the fact that God can even make use of Satan as an instrument in the discipline of His people? We see this in the case of the apostle Peter, as well as in that of the patriarch Job. Peter had to be sifted, and Satan was used to do the work." Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Here, too, there was a stern necessity. There was a deep root to be reached in Peter's heart — the root of self-confidence; and his faithful Lord saw it absolutely needful to pass him through a most severe and painful process in order that this root should be exposed and judged; and therefore Satan was permitted to sift him thoroughly, so that he might never again trust his own heart, but walk softly all his days. God will have broken material, whether it be in a patriarch or a apostle. All must be mellowed and subdued in order that the Divine glory may shine forth with an ever-brightening lustre.

Had Job understood this great principle — had he apprehended the Divine object, — how differently he would have carried himself! But, like ourselves, he had to learn his lesson; and the Holy Ghost has furnished us with the record of the mode in which the lesson was learnt, so that we may profit by it also.

Let us pursue the narrative.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." What a view we have here of Satan's malignity! What a striking proof of the way in which he watches and considers the ways and works of God's people! What insight into human character! What an intimate knowledge of man's mental and moral constitution! What a terrible thing to fall into his hands! He is ever on the watch; ever ready, if permitted of God, to put forth all his malignant energy against the Christian.

The thought of this is most solemn, and should lead us to walk humbly and watchfully through a scene where Satan rules. He has no power whatever over a soul who abides in the place of dependence and obedience; and, blessed be God! he cannot, in any case, go one hair's breadth beyond the limit prescribed by Divine command. Thus, in Job's case, "The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

Here Satan was permitted to lay his hand on Job's possessions — to bereave him of his children, and despoil him of all his wealth. And truly he lost no time in despatching his business. With marvellous rapidity he executed his commission. Blow after blow fell, in quick succession, on the devoted head of the patriarch. Hardly had one messenger told his melancholy tale, ere another arrived with still heavier tidings, until, at length, the afflicted servant of God "arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1: 20-22).

All this is deeply touching. To speak after the manner of men, it was enough to make reason totter to be thus, in a moment, bereft of his ten children, and reduced from princely wealth to absolute penury. What a striking contrast between the opening and the closing lines of our first Job! In the former we see Job surrounded by a numerous family, and in the enjoyment of vast possessions; in the latter, we see him left alone, in poverty and nakedness. And to think of Satan's being allowed — yea, commissioned of God — to bring about all this! And for what? For the deep and permanent profit of Job's precious soul. God saw that His servant needed to be taught a lesson; and, moreover, that, in no other way, by no other means, could this lesson be taught, than by passing him through an ordeal the bare record of which fills the mind with solemn awe. God *will* teach His children, even though it be by stripping them of all that the heart clings to in this world.

But we must follow our patriarch into still deeper waters.

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From

whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, All that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2: 1-10). This is a very remarkable passage. It instructs us as to the place which Satan occupies in respect to God's government. He is a mere instrument, and, though ever ready to accuse the Lord's people, can do nothing save as he is allowed of God. So far as Job was concerned, the efforts of Satan proved abortive — and having done his utmost he goes away, and we hear nothing more of his actings, whatever may have been his inward temptations. Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity; and, had matters ended here, his patient endurance would only have strengthened the platform of his righteousness, and ministered to his self-complacency. "Ye have heard," says James, "of the patience of Job." And what then? "Ye have seen *the end of the Lord*; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Had it been simply a question of Job's patience, it would have proved an additional ground of self-confidence, and thus "the end of the Lord" would not have been reached. For, be it ever remembered, the Lord's pity and tender mercy can only be tasted by those who are truly penitent and broken-hearted. Now Job was not this, even when he lay amid the ashes. He was not yet thoroughly broken down before God. He was still the great man — great in his misfortunes as he had been in his prosperity — great beneath the keen and withering blasts of adversity as he had been in the sunshine of brighter and better days. Job's heart was still unreached. He was not yet prepared to cry out, "Behold, I am vile." he had not yet learnt to "abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes."

We are anxious that the reader should distinctly seize this point. It is, to a very great extent, the key to the entire book of Job. The Divine object was to expose to Job's view the depths of his own heart, in order that he might learn to delight in the grace and mercy of God and not in his own goodness, which was as a morning cloud and the early dew, that passeth away. Job was a true saint of God; and all Satan's accusations were flung back in his face; but, all the while, Job was unbroken material, and therefore unprepared for "the end of the Lord" — that blessed end for every contrite heart — that end which is marked by "pity and tender mercy." God, blessed and praised be His name! will not suffer Satan to accuse us; but He will expose us to ourselves, so that we may judge ourselves, and thus learn to mistrust our own hearts, and rest in the eternal stability of his grace.

Thus far, then, we see Job "holding fast his integrity." He meets with calmness all the heavy afflictions which Satan is allowed to bring upon him; and, moreover, he refuses the foolish counsel of his wife. In a word, he accepts all as from the hand of God, and bows his head in the presence of His mysterious dispensations.

All this is well. But the arrival of Job's three friends produces a marked change. Their very presence — the bare fact of their being eye witnesses of his trouble — affects him in a very remarkable manner. "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for

they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voices and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2: 11-13)

Now, we can fully believe that those three men were governed, in the main, by kindly feelings toward Job; and it was no small sacrifice, on their part, to leave their homes and come to condole with their bereaved and afflicted friend. All this we can easily believe. But it is very evident that their presence had the effect of stirring up feelings and thoughts in his heart and mind which had hitherto lain dormant. He had borne submissively the loss of children, property, and of bodily health. Satan had been dismissed, and the wife's counsel rejected; but the presence of his friends caused Job to break down completely. "After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day."

This is very remarkable. It does not appear that the friends had spoken a single sentence. They sat in total silence, with rent garments and covered with dust, gazing on a grief too profound for them to reach. It was Job himself, who first broke silence: and the whole of the third chapter is an outpouring of the most bitter lamentation, affording melancholy evidence of an unsubdued spirit. It is, we may confidently assert, impossible that any one who had learnt in any little measure, to say "Thy will be done," could ever curse his day, or use the language contained in Job 3. It may, doubtless, be said, "It is easy for those to speak who have never been called to endure Job's heavy trials." This is quite true; and it may further be added, that no other man would have done one whit better under the circumstances. All this we can fully understand; but it in nowise touches the great moral of the book of Job — a moral which it is our privilege to seize. Job was a true saint of God; but he needed to learn himself, as we all do. He needed to have the roots of his moral being laid bare in his own sight, so that he might really abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes. And, furthermore, he needed a truer and deeper sense of what God was, so that he might trust Him and justify Him under all circumstances.

But we look in vain for aught of this in Job's opening address. "Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived. . . . Why died I not from the womb?" These are not the accents of a broken and contrite spirit, or of one who had learnt to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." It is a grand point in the soul's history when one is enabled to bow with meekness to all the dispensations of our Father's hand. A broken will is a rich and rare endowment. It is a high attainment in the school of Christ to be able to say, "I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4: 11). Paul had to *learn* this. It was not natural to him; and, most surely, he never learnt it at the feet of Gamaliel. Saul of Tarsus would never have been content with the very highest attainments in this world. He had to be thoroughly broken down at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth, ere he could say from his heart, "I am content." He had to ponder the meaning of those words, "My grace is sufficient for thee" ere he could "take pleasure in infirmities." The man who could use such language was standing at the very antipodes of the man who could curse his day, and say, "Why died I not from the womb?" Only think of a saint of God, an heir of glory, saying, "Why died I not from the womb?" Ah! if Job had been in the presence of God he never could have uttered such words. He would have known full well why he had not died. He would have had a soul-satisfying sense of what God had in store for him. He would have justified God in all things. But Job was not in the presence of God, but in the presence of his friends; who proved, very distinctly, that they understood little or nothing of the character of God or the real object of His dealings with His dear servant Job.

It is not, by any means, our purpose to enter minutely into the lengthened discussion between Job

and his friends — a discussion extending over twenty-nine chapters. We shall merely quote a few sentences from the opening address of each of the friends which will enable the reader to form an idea of the real ground occupied by these mistaken men.

Eliphaz was the first speaker. "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we essay to commune with thee wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking? Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? *Even as I have seen*, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4: 1-8). And again, "*I have seen* the foolish taking root; but suddenly I cursed his habitation" (Job 5: 3; see also Job 15: 17).

From these sentences it seems very evident that Eliphaz belonged to that class of people who argue very much from their own *experience*. His motto was, "As I have seen." Now, what we have seen may be all true enough, so far as we are concerned. But it is a total mistake to found a general rule upon individual experience, and yet it is a mistake to which thousands are prone. What, for instance, had the experience of Eliphaz to do with Job? It may be he had never met a case exactly similar; and if there should happen to be a single feature of dissimilarity between the two cases, then the whole argument based on experience must go for nothing. And that it went for nothing in Job's case is evident, for no sooner had Eliphaz ceased speaking, than, without the slightest attention to his words, Job proceeded with the tale of his own sorrows, intermingled with much self-vindication and bitter complaints against the Divine dealings (Job 6: 7).

Bildad is the next speaker. He takes quite different ground from that occupied by Eliphaz. He never once refers to his own experience, or to what had come under his own observation. He appeals to antiquity. "Inquire, I pray thee, of *the former age*, and prepare thyself to the search of their *fathers*. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.) Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?" (Job 8: 10)

Now, it must be admitted that Bildad conducts us into a much wider field than that of Eliphaz. The authority of a number of "fathers" has much more weight and respectability than the experience of a single individual. Moreover, it would argue much more modesty to be guided by the voice of a number of wise and learned men than by the light of one's own experience. But the fact is that neither experience nor tradition will do. The former may be true, so far as it goes, but you can hardly get two men whose experience will exactly correspond; and as to the latter, it is a mass of confusion, — for one father differs from another; and nothing can be more slippery or uncertain than the voice of tradition — the authority of the fathers.

Hence, as might be expected, Bildad's words had no more weight with Job than those of Eliphaz. The one was as far from the truth as the other. Had they appealed to Divine revelation, it would have been a different matter altogether. The *truth of God* is the only standard — the one grand authority. By that all must be measured; to that all must, sooner or later, bow down. No man has any right to lay down his own experience as a rule for his fellows; and if no man has a right, neither have any number of men. In other words, it is not the voice of man but the voice of God which must govern us all. It is not experience or tradition which shall judge at the last day, but the word of God. Solemn and weighty fact! May we consider it! Had Bildad and Eliphaz understood it, their words would have had much more weight with their afflicted friend.

Let us now very briefly refer to the opening address of Zophar the Naamathite.

He says, "Oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee, and that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." And again: "*If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot: yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear*" (Job 11: 5, 6, 13-15).

These words savour strongly of *legality*. They prove very distinctly that Zophar had no right sense of the Divine character. He did not know God. No one possessing a true knowledge of God could speak of Him as opening His lips against a poor afflicted sinner, or as exacting aught from a needy, helpless creature. God is not against us, but for us, blessed for ever be His Name! He is not a legal exactor, but a liberal giver. Then again, Zophar says, "If thou prepare thine heart." But if not, what then? No doubt a man ought to prepare his heart, and if he were right he would. But then he is not right, and hence, when he sets about preparing his heart, he finds nothing there but evil. He finds himself perfectly powerless. What is he to do? Zophar cannot tell. No; nor can any of his school. How can they? They only know God as a stern exactor — as One who, if He opens His lips, can only speak against the sinner.

Need we marvel, therefore, that Zophar was as far from convincing Job as either of his two companions? They were all wrong. Legality, tradition, experience, were alike defective, one-sided, false. Not any one of them, or all of them put together, could meet Job's case. They only darkened counsel by words without knowledge. Not one of the three friends understood Job: and what is more, they did not know God's character or His object in dealing with His dear servant. They were wholly mistaken. They knew not how to present God to Job; and, as a consequence, they knew not how to lead Job's conscience into the presence of God. In place of leading him to self-judgment, they only ministered to a spirit of self-vindication. They did not introduce God into the scene. They said some *true things*; but they had not the *truth*. They brought in experience, tradition, legality, but not the truth.

Hence the three friends failed to convince Job. Their ministry was one-sided, and instead of silencing Job, they only led him forth into a field of discussion which seemed almost boundless. He gives them word for word, and far more. "No doubt," he says, "but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But *I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you*: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? "What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior to you." "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom." "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you." "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times have ye reproached me; ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me." "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

All these utterances prove how far Job was from that true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind which ever flow from being in the Divine presence. No doubt the friends were wrong, quite wrong, — wrong in their notions about God, wrong in their method of dealing with Job. But their being wrong did not make him right. Had Job's conscience been in the presence of God, he would have made no reply to his friends, even though they had been a thousand times more mistaken and severe in their treatment. He would have meekly bowed his head, and allowed the tide of reproof and accusation to

roll over him. He would have turned the very severity of his friends to profitable account, by viewing it as a wholesome moral discipline for his heart. But no; Job had not yet reached the end of himself. He was full of self-vindication, full of invective against his fellows, full of mistaken thoughts about God. It needed another ministry to bring him into a right attitude of soul.

The more closely we study the lengthened discussion between Job and his three friends, the more clearly we must see the utter impossibility of their ever coming to an understanding. He was bent upon vindicating himself; and they were bent upon the very reverse. He was unbroken and unsubdued, and their mistaken course of treatment only tended to render him more so. Had they changed sides, they would have reached a different issue altogether. If Job had condemned himself; had he taken a low place, had he owned himself nothing and nobody, he would have left his friends nothing to say. And, on the other hand, had they spoken softly, tenderly, and soothingly to him, they would have been far more likely to melt him down. As it was, the case was hopeless. He could see nothing wrong in himself; and they could see nothing right. He was determined to maintain his integrity; and they were quite as determined to pick holes and find out flaws. There was no point of contact whatever — no common ground of understanding. He had no penitential breathings for them, and they had no tender compassions for him. They were travelling in entirely opposite directions, and never could meet. In a word, there was a demand for another kind of ministry altogether, and that ministry is introduced in the person of Elihu.

"So these three men ceased to answer Job [high time they should], because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job" (Job 32: 1-3).

Here Elihu, with remarkable force and clearness, seizes upon the very root of the matter on each side. He condenses, in two brief sentences, the whole of the elaborate discussion contained in twenty-nine chapters. Job justified himself instead of justifying God: and they had condemned Job instead of leading him to condemn himself.

It is of the very last moral importance to see that, whenever we justify ourselves, we condemn God; and on the other hand, when we condemn ourselves, we justify God. "Wisdom is justified of all her children." This is a grand point. The truly broken and contrite heart will vindicate God at all cost. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. 3: 4) God must have the upper hand in the end; and it is the path of true wisdom to give Him the upper hand now. The very moment the soul is broken down in true self-judgment, God rises before it in all the majesty of His grace as a Justifier. But so long as we are ruled by a spirit of self-vindication or self-complacency, we must be total strangers to the deep blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works. The greatest folly that any one can be guilty of is to justify himself; inasmuch as God must then impute sin. But the truest wisdom is to condemn oneself utterly; for in that case God becomes the Justifier.

But Job had not yet learnt to tread this marvellously blessed path. He was still built up in his own goodness, still clothed in his own righteousness, still full of self-complacency. Hence the wrath of Elihu was kindled against him. Wrath must assuredly fall upon self-righteousness. It cannot be otherwise. The only true ground for a sinner to occupy is the ground of genuine repentance. Here there is nought but that pure and precious grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus it stands ever. There is nothing but wrath for the self-righteous — nothing but grace for the self-judged.

Reader, remember this. Pause for a moment and consider it. On what ground dost thou, at this moment, stand? Hast thou bowed before God in true repentance? Hast thou ever really measured thyself in His holy presence? Or, art thou on the ground of self-righteousness, self-vindication, and self-complacency? Do, we entreat you, weigh these solemn questions. Do not put them aside. We are most anxious to deal with the heart and conscience of the reader. We do not write merely for the understanding for the mind, for the intelligence. No doubt, it is well to seek to enlighten the understanding, by the word of God, but we should exceedingly regret if our work were to end here. There is far more than this. God wants to deal with the heart, with the moral being, with the inward man. He will have us real before Him. It is of no possible use to build ourselves up in self-opinionativeness; for nothing is surer than that everything of that kind must be broken up. The day of the Lord will be against everything high and lifted up; and hence it is our wisdom now to be low and broken down; for it is from the low place that we get the very best view of God and His salvation. May the reader be led by God's Spirit into the reality of all this! May we all remember that God delights in a broken and contrite spirit — that He ever finds His abode with such; but the proud He knoweth afar off.

Thus, then, we may understand why Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job. He was entirely on God's side. Job was not. We hear nothing of Elihu until Job 32, though it is very evident that he had been an attentive listener to the whole discussion. He had given a patient hearing to both sides, and he found that both were wrong. Job was wrong in seeking to defend himself; and the friends were wrong in seeking to condemn him.

How often is this the case in our discussions and controversies! And oh, what sorrowful work it is! In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in the which persons are at issue, it will be found to be very much as it was with Job and his friends. A little brokenness on one side, or a little softness on the other, would go a great way towards settling the question. We speak not, of course, of cases in which the truth of God is concerned. There, one must be bold, decided, and unyielding. To yield where the truth of God or the glory of Christ is concerned, would be disloyalty to the One to whom we owe everything. Plain decision and unflinching firmness alone become us in all cases in which it is a question of the claims of that blessed One who, when our interests were concerned, surrendered everything, even life itself, in order to secure them. God forbid we should drop a sentence or pen a line which might have the effect of releasing our grasp of truth, or abating our ardour in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Ah! no, reader; this is not the moment for ungirding the loins, laying aside the harness, or lowering the standard. Quite the reverse. Never was there more urgent need of having the loins girt about with truth, of having firm footing, and of maintaining the standard of Divine principle in all its integrity. We say this advisedly. We say it in view of all the efforts of the enemy to drive us off the platform of pure truth by referring us to those who have failed in the maintenance of pure morals. Alas! alas! there is failure — sad, humiliating failure. We do not deny it. Who could? It is too patent — too flagrant — too gross. The heart bleeds as we think of it. Man fails always and everywhere. His history, from Eden to the present hour, is stamped with failure.

All this is undeniable. But, blessed be God! His foundation standeth sure, nor can human failure ever touch it. God is faithful. He knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. We have yet to learn that the way to improve our morals is to lower God's standard. We do not and cannot believe it. Let us humble ourselves in view of our failure; but never surrender the precious truth of God.

But all this is a digression into which we have allowed ourselves to be drawn in order to guard against the thought that, in urging upon the reader the importance of cultivating a broken, yielding spirit, we would have him to yield a single jot or tittle of Divine revelation. We must now return to our

subject.

There is something peculiarly marked and striking in the ministry of Elihu. He stands in vivid contrast with the three friends. His name signifies "God is he;" and, no doubt, we may view him as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He brings God into the scene, and puts a complete stop to the weary strife and contention between Job and his friends. Elihu argues not on the ground of experience; he appeals not to tradition; he breathes not the accents of legality; he brings in God. This is the only way of putting a stop to controversy, of hushing strife, of ending a war of words. Let us hearken to the words of this remarkable personage.

"Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled." Note this, "There was no answer." In all their reasonings, in all their arguments, in all their references to experience, tradition, and legality, there was "no answer." This is very instructive. Job's friends had travelled over a very wide range, had said many true things, had attempted many replies; but, be it carefully noted, they found "no answer." It is not in the range of earth or of nature to find an answer for a self-righteous heart God alone can answer it, as we shall see in the sequel. To all else but God the unbroken heart can find a ready reply. This is most strikingly proved in the history now before us. Job's three friends found no answer. "And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show my opinion. I said, days should speak [but alas! they either do not speak at all, or they speak a quantity of error and folly], and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Here Divine light, the light of inspiration, begins to stream in upon the scene, and to roll away the thick clouds of dust raised by the strife of tongues. We are conscious of moral power and weight the very moment this blessed servant opens his lips. We feel we are listening to a man who speaks as the oracles of God — a man who is sensibly standing in the Divine presence. It is not a man drawing from the meagre store of his own narrow and one-sided experience; nor yet a man appealing to a hoary antiquity, or to a bewildering tradition, or the ever conflicting voices of the fathers. No; we have before us now a man who introduces us at once into the very presence of "the inspiration of the Almighty."

This is the only sure authority — the only unerring standard. "Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment.

[What would Elihu have said to the recent dogma of the infallibility of a man — a dogma accepted by over five hundred rational beings sitting in solemn conclave? And this is to be henceforth part and parcel of the faith of Christians! Not long since men were called upon to believe in *an immaculate woman*, now they are called upon to believe in *an infallible man*! What is to come next? Surely the "strong delusion" must soon set in, when men will be compelled, by God's judicial dealings, to believe a lie, because they would not believe the truth. May the eternal Spirit put forth His mighty energy in the conversion of precious souls ere the day of vengeance sets in!]

Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show my opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words: lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man. Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches. They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking." Experience, tradition, and legality are all swept off the platform to leave room for the "inspiration of the Almighty" — for the direct and powerful ministry of the Spirit of God.

The ministry of Elihu breaks upon the soul with peculiar power and fulness. It stands in vivid contrast with the one-sided and most defective ministry of the three friends. Indeed it is quite a relief to reach the close of a controversy which seemed likely to prove interminable — a controversy between intense egotism on the one hand, and experience, tradition, and legality on the other — a controversy barren of any good, so far as Job was concerned, and leaving all parties at the close very much where they were at the beginning.

Still, however, the controversy is not without its value and interest to us. It teaches us, very distinctly, that when two parties join issue, they never can reach an understanding unless there be a little brokenness and subduedness on one side or the other. This is a valuable lesson, and one to which we all need to give attention. There is a vast amount of headiness and high-mindedness abroad, not only in the world but in the Church. There is a great deal of self-occupation — a quantity of "I, I, I" — and that, too, even where we least suspect it, and where it is, most of all, unsightly, namely, in connection with the holy service of Christ. Never, we may safely assert, is egotism more truly detestable than when it shows itself in the service of that blessed One who made Himself of no reputation - whose whole course was one of perfect self-surrender, from first to last — who never sought His own glory in anything, never maintained His own interest, never pleased Himself.

And yet, for all that, reader, is there not a most deplorable amount of hateful, unsubdued self displayed on the platform of Christian profession and Christian service? Alas! we cannot deny it. We are disposed to marvel, as the eye scans the record of the remarkable discussion between Job and his friends; we are amazed to find close upon a hundred references to himself in Job 29-31 alone. In short, it is all "I" from beginning to end.

But, let us look to ourselves. Let us judge our own hearts in their deeper workings. Let us review our ways in the light of the Divine presence. Let us bring all our work and service, and have it weighed in the holy balances of the sanctuary of God. Then shall we discover how much of hateful self is insinuated, like a dark and defiling tissue, into the whole web of our Christian life and service. How, for example, comes it to pass that we are so ready to mount the high horse when self is touched, even in the most remote degree? Why are we so impatient of reproof, be it clothed in language ever so refined and gentle? Why so ready to take offence at the slightest disparagement of self? And, further, why is it that we find our sympathies and our regards and our predilections going out, with special energy, after those who think well of us — who value our ministry, agree with our opinions, and adopt our *cue*?

Do not all these things tell a tale? Do they not prove to us that, ere we condemn the egotism of our ancient patriarch, we should seek to get rid of a vast amount of our own? It is not, surely, that he was right: but we are far more wrong. It is far less to be wondered at that a man, amid the dim twilight of the far-back patriarchal age, was entangled in the snare of self-occupation, than that we, in the full blaze of Christianity, should fall thereinto. Christ had not come. No prophetic voice had fallen on the ear. Even the law had not been given, when Job lived, and spoke, and thought. We can form a very poor conception indeed of the tiny ray of light by which men had to walk in the days of Job. But to us pertain the high privilege and holy responsibility of walking in the very meridian light of a full-orbed Christianity. Christ has come. He has lived, died, risen, and gone back to heaven. He has sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in our hearts, as the witness of His glory, the seal of accomplished redemption, and the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. The canon of Scripture is closed. The circle of revelation is complete. The word of God is filled up. We have before us the Divine record of the self-emptied One who went about doing good — the marvellous story of what He did, and how He did it, of what He said, and how He said it, of who He was, and what He was. We know that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He condemned sin and put it away;

that our old nature — that odious thing called self, sin, the flesh — has been crucified and buried out of God's sight — made an end of for ever, so far as its power over us is concerned. Moreover we are made partakers of the Divine nature; we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; we are members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones; we are called to walk even as He walked; we are heirs of glory - heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

What did Job know of all this? Nothing. How could he know what was not revealed till fifteen centuries after his time? The full extent of Job's knowledge is poured upon us in those few glowing and impassioned words at the close of Job 19. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

This was Job's knowledge — this was his creed. There was a great deal in it, in one sense; but very little indeed, when compared with the mighty circle of truths in the midst of which we are privileged to move. Job looked forward, through the dim twilight, to something that was to be done in the far-off future. We look back, from amid the full flood-tide of Divine revelation, to something that has been done. Job could say of his Redeemer that "He *shall* stand in the latter day upon the *earth*." We know that our Redeemer sitteth on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, after having lived and laboured and died on the earth.

In short, the measure of Job's light and privilege admits of no comparison with that which we enjoy; and for this reason it is the less excusable in us to indulge in the varied forms of egotism and self-occupation. Our self-abnegation should be in proportion to the measure of our spiritual privilege. But alas! it is not so. We profess the very highest truths; but our character is not formed, nor is our conduct governed, by them. We speak of the heavenly calling; but our ways are earthly, sometimes sensual, or worse. We profess to enjoy the very highest standing; but our state does not comport therewith. Our real condition does not answer to our assumed position. We are high-minded, touchy, tenacious, and easily provoked. We are quite as ready to embark in the business of self vindication as was our patriarch Job.

And then, on the other hand, when we feel called upon to approach another in the attitude and tone of reproof, with what rudeness, coarseness, and harshness we discharge the necessary work! How little softness of tone or delicacy of touch! How little of the tender and the soothing! How little of the "excellent oil!" How little of the broken heart and weeping eye! What slender ability to bring our erring brother down into the dust! Why is this? Simply because we are not habitually in the dust ourselves. If, on the one hand, we fail quite as much as Job in the matter of egotism and self-vindication, so, on the other, we prove ourselves fully as incompetent as Job's friends to produce self-judgment in our brother. For example, how often do we parade our own experience, like Eliphaz; or indulge in a legal spirit, like Zophar; or introduce human authority, like Bildad! How little of the spirit and mind of Christ! How little of the power of the Holy Ghost, or the authority of the word of God!

It is not pleasant to write thus. Quite the contrary. But it is pressed upon us, and we must write. We feel, most solemnly, the growing laxity and indifference of the day in which we live. There is something perfectly appalling in the disproportion between our profession and practice. The highest truths are professed in immediate connection with gross worldliness and self-indulgence. Indeed, it would appear as though, in some cases, the higher the doctrines professed, the lower the walk. There is a wide diffusion of truth in our midst; but where is its formative power? Floods of light are poured

upon the intelligence; but where are the profound exercises of heart and conscience in the presence of God? The rigid rule of precise and accurate statement is attended to; but where is the true practical result? Sound doctrine is unfolded in the letter; but where is the spirit? There is the form of words; but where is the living exponent?

Is it that we do not prize sound doctrine and accurate statement? Is it that we undervalue the wide diffusion of precious truth, in its very highest forms? Far, far away be the thought! Human language would utterly fail to set forth our estimate of these things. God forbid we should pen a line which might tend, in any wise, to lower, in the mind of the reader, the sense of the unspeakable value and importance of a lofty — yea, the very loftiest — standard of truth and sound doctrine. We are most thoroughly convinced that we shall never improve our morals by lowering, the breadth of a hair, the standard of principle.

But, Christian reader, we would lovingly and solemnly ask you, Does it not strike you that there is, in our very midst, a most melancholy lack of the tender conscience and the exercised heart? Does our practical piety keep pace with our profession of principle? Is the standard of morals at all up to the standard of doctrine?

Ah! we anticipate the reply of the grave and thoughtful reader. We know too well the terms in which that reply must be couched. It is but too plain that the truth does not act on the conscience — that the doctrine does not shine in the life — that the practice does not correspond with the profession.

We speak for ourselves. As God is our witness, we pen these lines, in His presence, in a spirit of self-judgment. It is our hearty desire that the knife should enter into our own soul, and reach the deep roots of things there. The Lord knows how much we should prefer laying the axe to the root of self and there leave it to do its work. But we feel we have a sacred duty to discharge to the individual reader and to the Church of God; and, moreover, we feel that that duty would not be discharged were we merely to set forth the precious, and the beautiful, and the true. We are convinced that God would have us not only to be exercised in heart and conscience ourselves, but also to seek to exercise the hearts and consciences of all with whom we have to do.

True it is — a truth often stated and proved - that worldliness, and carnality, and self-indulgence in all its phases, in the wardrobe, the library, the equipage, and the table — that fashion and style, folly and vanity, pride of *caste*, of intellect, and of purse — none of these things can be talked down, written, lectured, or scolded down. This we fully believe. But must not conscience be addressed? Must not the voice of holy exhortation fall on the ear? Shall we suffer laxity, indifferentism, and Laodicean lukewarmness to pave the way for a universal scepticism, infidelity, and practical atheism, and not be roused in conscience ourselves, and seek to rouse others? God forbid! No doubt, the higher and the better way is to have the evil expelled by the good; to have the flesh subdued by the Spirit; to have self displaced by Christ; to have the love of the world supplanted by the love of the Father. All this we fully feel and freely admit; but, while feeling and admitting all this, we must still press upon our own conscience, and that of the reader, the urgent demand for solemn and searching review — for deep searchings of heart in the secret of the presence of God — for profound self-judgment, in reference to our whole career. Blessed be God! we can carry on these exercises before the throne of grace, the precious mercy-seat. "Grace reigns." Precious consoling sentence! Should it prevent exercise of soul? Nay, it should only impart the right tone and character thereto. We have to do with victorious grace, not that we may indulge self, but mortify it all the more thoroughly.

May the Lord make us really humble, earnest, and devoted! May the deep utterance of the heart, both of the writer and the reader, be, "Lord, I am Thine — Thine only, Thine wholly, Thine for ever!"

This may seem to some a digression from our special theme; but we trust the digression may not be in vain; but that, by the grace of God, it will yield something for the heart and conscience of both the writer and the reader; and thus we shall be better prepared to understand and appreciate the powerful ministry of Elihu, to which we shall now turn our attention, in dependence upon Divine guidance.

The reader cannot fail to notice the double bearing of this remarkable ministry — its bearing upon our patriarch, and its bearing upon his friends. This is only what we might expect. Elihu, as we have already remarked, had patiently listened to the arguments on both sides. He had, as we say, heard both parties out. He had allowed them to exhaust themselves — to say all they had to say: "Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he." This was in lovely moral order. It was, most surely, the way of the Spirit of God. Modesty, in a young man, is most graceful. Would there were more of it in our midst! Nothing is more attractive, in the young, than a quiet, retiring spirit. When real worth lies concealed beneath a modest and humble exterior, it is sure to draw the heart with irresistible power. But, on the other hand, nothing is more repulsive than the bold self-confidence — the pushing forwardness, and self-conceit of many of the young men of the present day. All such persons would do well to study the opening words of Elihu, and to imitate his example.

"And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old: wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." This is the natural order. We expect hoary heads to contain wisdom; and, hence, it is but right and comely for young men to be swift to hear, slow to speak, in the presence of their elders. We may set it down as an almost fixed principle, that a forward young man is not led by the Spirit of God — that he has never measured himself in the Divine presence — that he has never been thoroughly broken down before God.

No doubt, it may often happen, as in the case of Job and his friends, that old men give utterance to very foolish things. Grey hairs and wisdom do not always go together; and it not infrequently happens that aged men, relying upon the mere fact of their years, assume a place for which they have no sort of power, either moral, intellectual, or spiritual. All this is perfectly true, and it has to be considered by those whom it may concern. But it leaves wholly untouched the fine moral sentiment contained in Elihu's opening address: "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion." This is always right. It is always comely for a young man to be afraid to show his opinion. We may rest assured that a man who possesses inward moral power — who, as we say, *has it in him* — is never in haste to push himself forward; but yet, when he does come forward, he is sure to be heard with respect and attention. The union of modesty and moral power imparts an irresistible charm to the character; but the most splendid abilities are marred by a self-confident style

"But," continues Elihu, "there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This introduces another element altogether. The moment the Spirit of God enters the scene, it ceases to be a question of youth or old age, inasmuch as He can speak by old or young. "Not by might or by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This holds good always. It was true for the patriarchs; true for the prophets; true for apostles; true for us; true for all. It is not by human might or power, but by the eternal Spirit.

Here lay the deep secret of Elihu's quiet power. He was filled with the Spirit, and hence we forget his youth, while hearkening to the words of spiritual weight and heavenly wisdom that proceed out of his mouth, and we are reminded of Him who spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes. There is a striking difference between a man who speaks as an oracle of God, and one who speaks in

mere official routine — between one who speaks from the heart, by the Spirit's holy unction, and one who speaks from the intellect by human authority. Who can duly estimate the difference between these two? None but those who possess and exercise the mind of Christ.

But let us proceed with Elihu's address. "Great men," he tells us, "are not always wise." How true! "Neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show mine opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words."

Let us specially note this. "There was none of you that convinced Job." This was clear enough. Job was just as far from being convinced at the close of the discussion as he was at the commencement. Indeed we may say that each fresh argument drawn from the treasury of experience, tradition, and legality, only served to stir some fresh and deeper depth of Job's unjudged, unsubdued, unmortified nature. This is a grand moral truth, illustrated on every page of the book which lies open before us.

But how instructive the reason for all this! "Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man." No flesh shall glory in the presence of God. It may boast itself outside. It may put forth its pretensions, and glory in its resources, and be proud of its undertakings, so long as God is not thought of. But only introduce Him, and all the vauntings, the boastings, the vain-gloryings, the lofty pretensions, the self-complacency, and the self-conceit will be withered up in a moment.

Reader, let us remember this. "Boasting is excluded." Yes; all boasting — the boasting of Job, the boasting of his friends. If Job had succeeded in establishing his cause, he would have boasted. If, on the other hand, his friends had succeeded in silencing him, they might have boasted. But no; "God thrusteth him down, not man."

Thus it was; thus it is; and thus it must ever be. God knows how to humble the proud heart and subdue the stubborn will. It is utterly vain for any one to set himself up; for we may rest assured that every one who is set up must, sooner or later, be up-set. The moral government of God has so ordered and enacted that all that is high and lifted up must come down. This is a salutary truth for us all; but especially for the young, the ardent, and the aspiring. It is well to keep in the shade, for there it is we most enjoy the sunshine. This may seem a paradox, but, to faith, it is plain. The humble, retired, shady path is, unquestionably, the safest, the happiest, and the best. May we ever be found treading it, until we reach that bright and blessed scene where pride and ambition are unknown!

The effect of Elihu's opening words upon Job's three friends was most striking. "They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking. When I had waited — for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more — I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion." And then, lest any should suppose that he was speaking his own words, he adds, "For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me." This is the true spring and power of all ministry, in all ages. It must be "the inspiration of the Almighty," or it is worth absolutely nothing.

We repeat, this is the only true source of ministry, at all times and in all places. And, in saying this, we do not forget that a mighty change took place when our Lord Christ ascended to heaven and took His seat at the right hand of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption. To this glorious truth we have often referred the readers of our magazine, *Things New and Old*; and, hence, we shall not now permit ourselves to dwell upon it. We merely touch upon it in this place, lest the reader might imagine that, when we speak of the true source of ministry in all ages, we were forgetting what is marked and distinctive in the Church of God now, in consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the individual believer, and in the Church, which is the

body of Christ on earth. Far from it. Thanks and praise be to God! we have too deep a sense of the value, importance, and practical weight of that grand and glorious truth ever to lose sight of it for a moment. Indeed it is just this deep sense, together with the remembrance of Satan's ceaseless effort to ignore the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, that leads us to pen this cautionary paragraph.

Still, Elihu's principle must ever hold good. If any man is to speak with power and practical effect, he must be able, in some measure, to say, "I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me.* Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer." Thus it must ever be, in measure at least, with all who will speak, with real power and effect, to the hearts and consciences of their fellows. We are forcibly reminded, by Elihu's glowing words, of that memorable passage in the seventh of John, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." True it is that Elihu knew not the glorious truth set forth in these words of our Lord, inasmuch as they were not made good till fifteen centuries after his time. But then he knew the principle — he possessed the germ of what was afterwards to come out in full flow and rich mellow fruit. He knew that a man, if he is to speak with point, pungency, and power, must speak by the inspiration of the Almighty. He had listened till he was tired, to men talking a quantity of powerless matter — saying some truisms — drawing from their own experience, or from the musty stores of human tradition. He was well-nigh wearied out with all this, and he rises, in the mighty energy of the Spirit, to address his hearers as one fitted to speak like an oracle of God.

{*Let the reader distinctly understand that Elihu, in the above quotation. speaks not of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as believers now know it. This was wholly unknown to saints in Old Testament times, and was the direct result of accomplished redemption — the special fruit of the glorification of Christ, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. This important truth has been repeatedly referred to and dwelt upon at other times, and hence we shall not go into it now but we would request the reader to turn to John 7: 39, and John 16: 7, and meditate upon the doctrine there taught, apart from all preconceived thoughts of his own, and irrespective of all the opinions of men. From these Scriptures he will see distinctly that the Holy Ghost did not and could not come, until Jesus was glorified. This is not a mere speculation — a human theory — the dogma of a certain school. It is a grand foundation truth of Christianity, to be reverently received tenaciously held, and faithfully confessed by every true Christian. May all the Lord's people be led to see and believe it!}

Here lies the deep and blessed secret of ministerial power and success. "If any man speak, says Peter, "let him speak as the oracles of God." It is not, be it carefully observed, merely speaking according to Scripture — an all-important and essential matter, most surely. It is more. A man may rise and address his fellows for an hour, and, from beginning to end of his discourse, he may not utter so much as a single unscriptural sentence; and all the while, he may not have been God's oracle at the time; he may not have been God's mouthpiece, or the present exponent of His mind to the souls before him.

This is peculiarly solemn, and demands the grave consideration of all who are called to open their lips in the midst of God's people. It is one thing to utter a certain amount of true sentiment, and quite another to be the living channel of communication between the very heart of God and the souls of God's people. It is this latter, and this alone, that constitutes true ministry. A man who speaks according to this most excellent principle will so affect the hearts and consciences of his hearers that each one will feel tempted to think that some one has been telling tales to the speaker, and revealing to him the very feelings of his own heart. In short, a man who speaks as an oracle of God will bring the

conscience of the hearer so into the very light of the Divine presence, that every chamber of the heart is laid open, and every moral spring touched. This is true ministry. All else is powerless, valueless, fruitless. Nothing is more deplorable and humiliating than to listen to a man who is evidently drawing from his own poor and scanty resources, or trafficking in second-hand truth, in borrowed thoughts. Better far for such to be silent — better for their hearers, better for themselves. Nor this only. We may often hear a man giving forth to his fellows that on which his own mind has been dwelling in private with much interest and profit. He may utter truth, and important truth; but it is not *the* truth for the souls of the people — *the* truth for the moment. He has spoken according to Scripture, so far as his matter is concerned; but he has not spoken as an oracle of God.

Thus, then, may all learn a valuable lesson from Elihu; and, most surely, it is a needed lesson. Some may feel disposed to say it is a difficult lesson — a hard saying. But no; if we only live in the Lord's presence, in the abiding sense of our own nothingness and of His all-sufficiency, we shall know the precious secret of all effective ministry; we shall know how to lean upon God alone, and thus be independent of men, in the right sense; we shall be able to enter into the meaning and force of Elihu's further words, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away" (Job 32: 21, 29).

In studying the ministry of Elihu, we find in it two grand elements, namely, "grace and truth." Both these were essential in dealing with Job; and, consequently, we find both coming out with extraordinary power. He tells Job and his friends very distinctly that he knows not how to give flattering titles unto man. Here the voice of "truth" falls, with great clearness on the ear. Truth puts every one in his right place; and, just because it does so, it cannot bestow titles of flattery upon a poor guilty mortal, however much that mortal might be gratified by them. Man must be brought to know himself, to see his true condition, to confess what he really is. This was precisely what Job needed. He did not know himself, and his friends could not give him that knowledge. He needed to be led down into the depths; but his friends could not conduct him thither. He needed self-judgment; but his friends were wholly unable to produce it.

But Elihu begins by telling Job the truth. He introduces God into the scene in His true character. This was just what the three friends had failed to do. No doubt they had referred to God; but their references were cloudy, distorted, and false. This is plain from Job 42: 7, 8, where we are told that, "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for *ye have not spoken of me the thing* that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." [The reader will bear in mind that the above words were spoken after Job's repentance. It is of the very last importance to see this.] They had utterly failed to bring God before the soul of their friend, and there they failed in producing the needed self-judgment.

Not so Elihu. He pursues a totally different line of things. He brings the light of "truth" to bear upon Job's conscience; and at the same time he administers the precious balm of "grace" to his heart. Let us quote his further sayings: "Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the

clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

In these accents, the ministry of "grace" unfolds itself, sweetly and powerfully, to the heart of Job. Of this most excellent ingredient there was a total absence in the ministry of the three friends. They showed themselves only too ready to bear down upon Job with "a heavy hand." They were stern judges, severe censors, false interpreters. They could fix their cold, grey eye upon the wounds of their poor afflicted friend, and wonder how they came there. They looked on the crumbling ruins of his house; and drew the harsh inference that the ruin was but the result of his bad behaviour. They beheld his fallen fortunes, and, with unmitigated severity, concluded that those fortunes had fallen because of his faults. They had proved themselves to be entirely one-sided judges. They had wholly misunderstood the dealings of God. They had never seized the full moral force of that one weighty sentence, "*God trieth the righteous.*" In a word, they were utterly astray. Their standpoint was false, and hence their whole range of vision was defective. There was neither "grace" nor "truth" in their ministry, and therefore they failed to convince Job. They condemned him without convincing him, whereas they ought to have convinced him and made him condemn himself.

Here it is that Elihu stands out in vivid contrast. He tells Job the truth; but he lays no heavy hand upon him. Elihu has learnt the mighty mysterious power of "the still small voice" — the soul-subduing, heart-melting virtue of grace. Job had given utterance to a quantity of false notions about himself, and those notions had sprouted from a root to which the sharp axe of "truth" had to be applied. "Surely," says Elihu, "thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.

What words for any poor sinful mortal to utter! Surely, though "the true light" in which we may walk had not shone on the soul of this patriarch, we may well marvel at such language. And yet, mark what follows. Although he was so clean, so innocent, so free from iniquity, he nevertheless says of God that, "He findeth occasions, he counteth me for His enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, He marketh all my paths." Here is a palpable discrepancy. How could a holy, just, and righteous Being count a pure and innocent man His enemy? Impossible. Either Job was self-deceived, or God was unrighteous; and Elihu, as the minister of truth, is not long in pronouncing a judgment, and telling us which is which. "Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man." What a simple truth! And yet how little understood! If God is greater than man, then, obviously, He, and not man, must be the Judge of what is right. This the infidel heart refuses; and hence the constant tendency to sit in judgment upon the works and ways and word of God — upon God Himself. Man, in his impious and infidel folly, undertakes to pronounce judgment upon what is and what is not worthy of God; to decide upon what God ought and what He ought not to say and to do. He proves himself utterly ignorant of that most simple, obvious, necessary truth, that "God is greater than man."

Now, it is when the heart bows under the weight of this great moral truth, that we are in a fit attitude to understand the object of God's dealings with us. Assuredly He must have the upper hand. "Why dost thou strive against him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters. For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, *that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.*"

The real secret of all Job's false reasoning is to be found in the fact that he did not understand the character of God, or the object of all His dealings. He did not see that God was trying him, that He was behind the scenes and using various agents for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious ends.

Even Satan himself was a mere instrument in the hand of God; nor could he move the breadth of a hair beyond the divinely prescribed limit; and moreover, when he had executed his appointed business, he was dismissed, and we hear no more about him. God was dealing with Job. He was trying him in order that He might instruct him, withdraw him from his purpose, and hide pride from him. Had Job seized this grand point, it would have saved him a world of strife and contention. Instead of getting angry with people and things, with individuals and influences, he would have judged himself and bowed low before the Lord in meekness and brokenness and true contrition.

This is immensely important for us all. We are all of us prone to forget the weighty fact that "God trieth the righteous." "He withdraweth not His eyes from them." We are in His hands, and under His eye continually We are the objects of His deep, tender, and unchanging love; but we are also the subjects of His wise moral government. His dealings with us are varied. They are sometimes preventive; sometimes corrective; always instructive. We may be bent on some course of our own, the end of which would be moral ruin. He intervenes and withdraws us from our purpose. He dashes into fragments our air-built castles, dissipates our golden dreams, and interrupts many a darling scheme on which our hearts were bent, and which would have proved to be certain destruction "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, *to be enlightened with the light of the living.*"

If the reader will turn for a moment to Hebrews 12: 3-12, he will find much precious instruction on the subject of God's dealings with His people. We do not attempt to dwell upon it, but would merely remark that it presents three distinct ways in which we may meet the chastening of our Father's hand. We may "*despise*" it, as though His hand and His voice were not in it; we may "*faint*" under it, as though it were intolerable, and not the precious fruit of His love; or, lastly, we may be; "*exercised by it,*" and thus reap, in due time "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

"Now, if our patriarch had only seized the great fact that God was dealing with him; that He was trying him for his ultimate good; that He was using circumstances, people, the Sabeans, Satan himself, as His instruments; that all his trials, his losses, his bereavements, his sufferings, were but God's marvellous agency in bringing about His wise and gracious end; that

He would assuredly perfect that which concerned His dear and much-loved servant, because His mercy endureth for ever; in a word, had Job only lost sight of all second causes, and fixed his thoughts upon the living God alone, and accepted all from His loving hand, he would have more speedily reached the Divine solution of all his difficulties.

But it is precisely here that we are all apt to break down. We get occupied with men and things; we view them in reference to ourselves. We do not walk with God through, or rather above, the circumstances; but, on the contrary, we allow the circumstances to get power over us. In place of keeping God between us and our circumstances, we permit these latter to get between us and God. Thus we lose the sense of His presence, the light of His countenance, the holy calmness of being in His loving hand, and under His fatherly eye. We become fretful, impatient, irritable, fault-finding. We get far away from God, out of communion, thoroughly astray, judging every one except ourselves, until at length God takes us in hand, and by His own direct and powerful ministry, brings us back to Himself in true brokenness of heart and humbleness of mind. This is "the end of the Lord."

We must, however, draw this paper to a close. Gladly would we expatiate further on Elihu's remarkable ministry; with pleasure and profit could we quote his further appeals to Job's heart and conscience, his pungent arguments, his pointed questions. But we must forbear, and leave the reader to go through the remaining chapters for himself. In so doing, he will find that when Elihu closes his

ministry, God Himself begins to deal directly with the soul of His servant (Job 38-41). He appeals to His works in creation as the display of a power and wisdom which ought assuredly to make Job feel his own littleness. We do not attempt to cull passages from one of the most magnificent and sublime sections of the inspired canon. It must be read as a whole. It needs no comment. The human finger could but tarnish its lustre. Its plainness is only equalled by its moral grandeur. All we shall attempt to do is to call attention to the powerful effect produced upon the heart of Job by this the most marvellous ministry surely under which mortal man was ever called to sit — the immediate ministry of the living God Himself.

This effect was threefold. It had reference to God, to himself, and to his friends — the very points on which he was so entirely astray. As to God, Elihu had declared Job's mistake in the following words: "Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin; he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.... Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst: My righteousness is more than God's?" But mark the change. Hearken to the breathings of a truly repentant spirit; the brief yet comprehensive statement of a corrected judgment. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, *but now mine eye seeth Thee*" (Job 42: 1-9).

Here, then, was the turning point. All his previous statements as to God and His ways are now pronounced to be "words without knowledge." What a confession! What a moment in a man's history, when he discovers that he has been all wrong! What a thorough breakdown! What profound humiliation! It reminds us of Jacob getting the hollow of his thigh touched, and thus learning his utter weakness and nothingness. These are weighty moments in the history of souls — great epochs which leave an indelible impress on the whole moral being and character. To get right thoughts about God is to begin to get right about everything. If I am wrong about God, I am wrong about myself, wrong about my fellows, wrong about all.

Thus it was with Job. His new thoughts as to God were immediately connected with new thoughts of himself; and hence we find that the elaborate self-vindication, the impassioned egotism, the vehement self-gratulation, the lengthened arguments in self-defence, all is laid aside; all is displaced by one short sentence of three words: "*I am vile.*" And what is to be done with this vile self? Talk about it? Set it up? Be occupied with it? Take counsel for it? Make provision for it? Nay, "*I abhor it.*"

This is the true moral ground for every one of us. Job took a long time to reach it; and so do we. Many of us imagine that we have reached the end of self when we have given a nominal assent to the doctrine of human depravity, or judged some of those sprouts which have appeared above the surface of our practical life. But, alas! it is to be feared that very few of us indeed really know the full truth about ourselves. It is one thing to say "*We are all vile,*" and quite another to feel, deep down in the heart, that "*I am vile.*" This latter can only be known and habitually realised in the immediate presence of God. The two things must ever go together, "*Mine eye seeth Thee*" — "*Wherefore I abhor myself.*" It is as the light of what God is shines in upon what I am, that I abhor myself. And then my self-abhorrence is a real thing. It is not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It will be seen in a life of self-abnegation, an humble spirit, a lowly mind, a gracious carriage in the midst of the scene through which I am called to pass. It is of little use to profess very low thoughts of self, while, at the same time, we are quick to resent any injury done to us, any fancied insult, slight, or disparagement.

The true secret of a broken and contrite heart is to abide ever in the Divine presence, and then we are able to carry ourselves right toward those with whom we have to do.

Thus we find that when Job got right as to God and himself, he soon got right as to his friends, for he learned to pray for them. Yes, he could pray for the "miserable comforters," the "physicians of no value," the very men with whom he had so long, so stoutly, and so vehemently contended! "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

This is morally beautiful. It is perfect. It is the rare and exquisite fruit of Divine workmanship. Nothing can be more touching than to see Job's three friends exchanging their experience, their tradition, and their legality for the precious "burnt-offering;" and to see our dear patriarch exchanging his bitter invectives for the sweet prayer of charity. In short, it is a most soul-subduing scene altogether. The combatants are in the dust before God and in each other's arms. The strife is ended; the war of words is closed; and instead thereof, we have the tears of repentance, the sweet odour of the burnt-offering, the embrace of love.

Happy scene! Precious fruit of Divine ministry! What remains? What more is needed? What but that the hand of God should lay the top-stone on the beauteous structure? Nor is this lacking, for we read, "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." But how? By what agency? Was it by his own independent industry and clever management? No; all is changed. Job is on new moral ground. He has new thoughts of God, new thoughts of himself, new thoughts of his friends, new thoughts of his circumstances; all things are become new. "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; *every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.* So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. ... After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days."