

running a sharp fire. But, whatever may be the final settlement of the various contentions, the problem and its development will not thereby be vitally affected. We may assume that both prologue and epilogue are by the same hand as wrote the body of the poem. Even though the prologue were not written by the author of the poem proper, it must at least have been adopted by him. As for the epilogue, it may have been a later contribution by another hand, but we need not stop to consider it, as the problem is really finished before the epilogue is reached. The disputed passage, xxvii. 7-38, is doubtless misplaced, or is an interpolation, and may be overlooked altogether. The Elihu speeches are certainly of later origin than the rest of the poem, and will be employed simply as a side-light.

II.—HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE BOOK.

The Jews had no conception of secondary causes. The almost deistic laws of nature, as formulated by the modern scientist, would have been most antagonistic to the Jewish idea of providential control. Jehovah, without intermediate agencies, or necessary compliance with what we call "law," directed the operations of nature, and governed His chosen people. No principle was more thoroughly engrained in the Jewish mode of thinking than that national prosperity was the reward of obedience and national suffering the punishment of disobedience. This was the dogma of theocratic government. It was early laid down as such (Exodus xxiii. 20-22), and explained to the Israelites the source and reason of such noted victories and terrible sufferings as were theirs during the march across the deserts to the Promised Land. Moses, before his departure, collects in a vast catalogue the blessings or curses which were attached to the keeping or the breach of specific laws. And the better to burn the conviction into the hearts of his people that the Lord would pursue such a mode of government in the future, he rehearses in detail their history, and demonstrates the operation of such a method in the past.

Until the exile, never was there a doubt expressed about the absolute domination of the theocratic principle of government.