

which shall answer this question the four friends of Job exhaust all their wisdom, but at the last the spiritual eye of their afflicted friend, as well as their own, is turned to look upon the Almighty God. They acknowledge that they have questioned that which was too wonderful for them, and in the worship of profound faith they find relief.

Many of these psalms take up the question of the Book of Job, and out of the same basis of real experience of suffering. But in these psalms, of which the 37th and 49th may be taken as examples, the question is not, Why hath God done this? but, Why are the wicked permitted to do it? And the answer is found in a firm faith in the final perfection of rectitude, in the distribution of rewards and punishments. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the hereafter of that man is peace," or "there shall be a hereafter to the man of peace." "But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, and the hereafter of the wicked shall be cut off."

But of all scriptural pictures of the honest, distressed doubter, the Book of Ecclesiastes is the most vivid and the most varied and universal in the variety of the questions. The problem there set forth is not so much the evil and sorrow of life, but the vanity, the disappointing, unsatisfying character of even the best that it offers. The Book of Job cries out for an optimism, the Psalms for universal justice, but before the writer of Ecclesiastes there hangs the dark cloud of pessimism. The profound views of man and the universe which we find in this book; the sense of universal beauty, the human instinct of eternity, the thirst for universal knowledge, the infinity and eternity of God's works, all these highest thoughts of humanity, rise up before him as seeming aggravations of the vanity and disappointment of human life, until at last he finds the all of man in religion and rectitude of life, with a patient waiting for that hereafter when "God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

This study gives us fresh illustration from every side of the perfection, universality, and catholicity (to press the word into a new use) of God's Word. If we study it as the expression