

**THE STRANGE WAYS
OF GOD; A STUDY IN
THE BOOK OF JOB**

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The Strange Ways of God; A Study in the Book of Job by Charles Reynolds Brown

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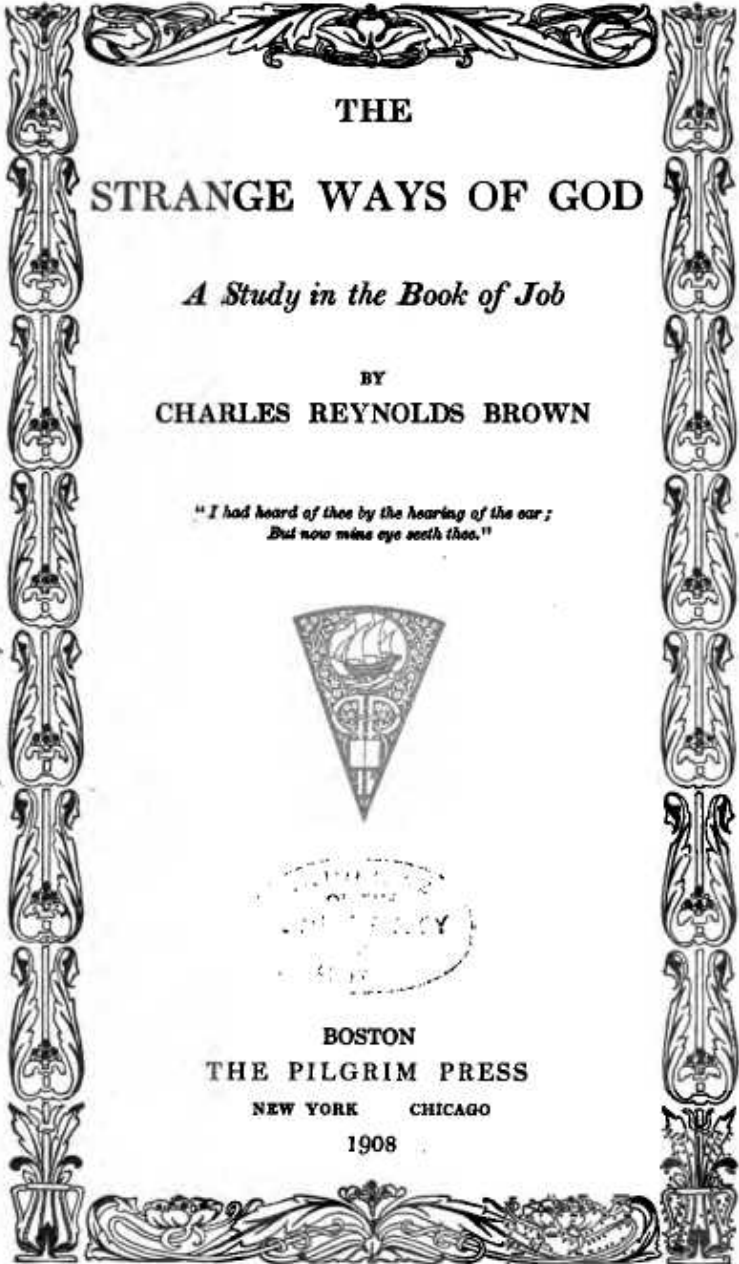
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CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

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OF GOD; A STUDY IN
THE BOOK OF JOB**



THE
STRANGE WAYS OF GOD

A Study in the Book of Job

BY
CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

*"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ;
But now mine eye seeth thee."*



BOSTON
THE PILGRIM PRESS

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1908



PREFACE

THIS little book is not in any sense a commentary upon or a critical exposition of the book of *Job*. The larger part of the material was originally used in a series of lectures intended for a popular audience and designed to increase the interest in, and to aid in a better understanding of this ancient poem.

The literary quality of the book of *Job* is such as to give it a high place among the world's masterpieces, but the many faulty translations in the Authorized Version, the ill-considered arrangement of the parts of the poem as to their literary form in an ordinary copy of the Scriptures, and a widespread misconception as to the main purpose of the argument, have tended to obscure its beauty.

In the main I have used the translation given in the Revised Version and the literary arrangement found in Moulton's *Modern Reader's Bible*. Here and there, however, I have used my own paraphrase where it seemed to me the essential meaning could be more clearly rendered. I have occasionally quoted together lines which stand apart in the text, without the insertion of the customary marks, but in this I am sure no violence has been done at any point to the author's meaning, nor has the essential course of his argument been in any wise disturbed.

I freely confess my indebtedness to Prof. John F. Genung's *The Epic of the Inner Life*, as well as to

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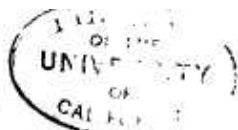
PREFACE

Watson's volume on *Job*, and to Davidson's *Job* in the Cambridge Bible.

I have written these pages in the hope that they might increase the interest of all lovers of good literature in the frequently neglected poem, and aid in bringing out more clearly its teachings, which in my judgment have special value for the times on which we have fallen.

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The
Strange Ways of God



I. THE POINT OF VIEW

THE book of Job has stood for generations as one of the great dramas of doubt. The quality and source of the doubt give the book special interest to practical minds in that it takes up, not those speculative inquiries which are spun out by cloistered schoolmen sitting comfortably apart from the strain and stress of actual experience, but rather the vital problems of ordinary people. The prevailing faith of the day is challenged by the hard lot which fell to a flesh-and-blood man. We find a certain man of unblemished integrity in the full enjoyment of health, property, family joy, and a life of kindly usefulness, brought to the point where he feels the foundations slipping from under him because of terrible misfortunes which the God of righteousness allows to fall upon his home of peace. It is, therefore, not a clever contest between two hair-splitting theories, but the battle of warm faith with hard facts, that we find portrayed in the book of Job.

It is at this very point that the busy people of the world to-day most commonly find themselves puzzled. In their minds the real debate is not over the fine points of this particular dogma or of that; it deals

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with something more fundamental and vital. They listen on Sunday to the warm assurances of faith put forth from the pulpits of the land,— a God who knows that we have need of all the things that are demanded for joyous and useful existence; a Friend who does not suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice; a Father who is more ready to hear and answer the prayerful appeals of his people than earthly fathers are to give bread to their children; an All-embracing Providence whose affectionate interest in our well-being counts the very hairs of our heads! Then on Monday morning they go out into the world — not some imaginary world as men have agreed together to picture it to themselves, but the real world as it is. They rub against the unplanned side of it and find it rough, full of knots and splinters. They are torn and bruised by the contact; or, if happily they themselves escape for a time, they painfully witness the discomfiture of their less fortunate fellows. They ponder the apparent discrepancies between the theories of the pulpit and the facts which face them. It need not be said that in general they hold firmly to the facts while oftentimes their faith in the theories slips entirely away. All such serious, observant, puzzled, and frankly rational men will be interested in those pages of Hebrew literature, where the same old battle of belief was fought out in the land of Uz.

This book is commonly regarded, not as literal history, but as a dramatic poem. There may have been some historical basis for the story, as there was for the plays of Hamlet and Macbeth. Two writers of Scripture, Ezekiel and James, refer in passing to a

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man named "Job." Some good man bearing that name may indeed have suffered extraordinary misfortune, but the treatment of the material is literary, poetic, dramatic. In the four great calamities which fell upon the hero of the story, one servant, and only one escaped on each occasion to report the event. The occurrences of actual life do not commonly repeat themselves with such mathematical exactness. When Job regained his property he had exactly twice as many sheep, oxen, camels, and asses as before his misfortunes. In the second family he reared, he had exactly the same number of children as in the first, and the sexes were in precisely the same proportion, seven sons and three daughters, an arrangement highly acceptable to the Oriental heart. All this is good literary form, but in the regaining of property, and in the rearing of a second family, actual history does not usually follow so strictly an arithmetical plan in order to reach a striking climax. All these items have the artificial look which belongs to the deliberate arrangement of materials for dramatic effect.

This book, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, belongs to what is called the "Wisdom Literature" of the Bible, which stands as the nearest approach made by the Hebrews to a moral philosophy such as we find among the Greeks and in modern nations. The wisdom literature in its method and spirit lies quite apart from the Law and the Prophets. In this book of Job no appeal is made to the Law of Moses, nor is there any "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophet. No mention is made of any of the sacred writings of the