

*The* WYCLIFFE  
BIBLE  
COMMENTARY

*Edited by*

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Old Testament

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New Testament

*The Southwestern Company*

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago

Second Printing, 1963

Third Printing, 1966

Fourth Printing, 1968

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 62-20893

*Printed in the United States of America*

R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company  
Chicago, Illinois and Willard, Ohio

R.R.D. 1-69

# JOB

## INTRODUCTION

**Title.** The name of both the book and its hero, *'iyyôb*, appears in extra-Biblical texts as early as 2000 B.C. Its monosyllabic English form, *Job*, derives from the Vulgate (i.e., Latin) version.

**Literary Genre.** The central core of the book is poetry, set like a gem within a prologue and an epilogue of epic prose. Such ABA structures are found elsewhere in ancient literature. For example, Hammurabi placed his laws within a prologue and an epilogue of poetry. And an Egyptian work, *The Eloquent Peasant*, frames the peasant's nine semipoetic protests within a prose prologue and an epilogue.

Along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and, in a sense, the Song of Solomon, Job belongs to the Wisdom (*hokmâ*) genre, a type of writing amply illustrated in a variety of forms in ancient Near Eastern literature. Within the canon of Old Testament Scripture, the distinctive contribution of the Wisdom books is that they expound the relevance of the foundational covenant revelation through Moses to the great issues of man's life in this world, more specifically, of man's life apart from the peculiarly theocratic context of Israelite history. There are many formal similarities between Job and various extra-Biblical Wisdom pieces; e.g., dialogue style, and motifs like the problem of suffering and the longing for death. Nevertheless, in its essential teaching, Job differs altogether from the non-Biblical Wisdom literature because it represents the unique message of redemptive revelation, the wisdom of God which makes foolish the wisdom of men. Even in its literary structure, considered as a whole, it is unique—a masterpiece universally acclaimed.

Closely related to the literary form is the question of historicity. Certainly Job was a historical person (cf. Ezk 14:14,20; Jas 5:11), and his actual experience was substantially as recorded in this book. Nevertheless, the magnificent poetry of the several discourses has compelled general assent to the conclusion that the treatment of the account

here is not literal but free. Moreover, the semipoetic epic style of the prologue and epilogue (with their strophic structure and refrains), though it does not require the view that the narrative is legendary, suggests the possibility of a free, figurative treatment of some details.

**Authorship and Date.** Discussions of the authorship of Job by most modern critics are complicated by the critics' doubts as to the unity of the book as we have it. The evidence is not primarily external, for though the LXX text of Job is about one-fifth shorter than the Masoretic text, its omissions are clearly secondary. The sections that have been most widely regarded as additions to an original basic work are the prologue and the epilogue, the poem on wisdom (ch. 28), the Elihu material (chs. 32–37), and part or all of the Lord's discourses (chs. 38–41). Also, chapters 24–27 are regarded as seriously disarranged. However, strong defense of the integrity of our present text is found in the masterly structural unity of the whole and the rich interrelationships of all the parts.

The question of date has received every possible answer, which indicates the difficulty of determining the time precisely. The date of the *writing* of the book is not to be confused with the date of the *history* narrated. The man Job apparently lived in early, patriarchal times. We note, for example, the longevity of Job, as well as the not inconsiderable practice of true religion (attended by special supernatural revelation) outside the bounds of the Abrahamic covenant, and the early economic and political developments reflected in the book. The question regarding the dating of the book, then, is: How long was the story of the patriarch Job transmitted—whether orally or at least partially in writing—before the anonymous Israelite writer, under divine inspiration, transformed the tradition into the canonical book of Job. The majority of negative critics favors an Exilic or post-Exilic date, their judgment being influenced by the way they construe the interdependence of Job, Isa-

iah, and Jeremiah—and by their dating of the pertinent Isaiah passages. The most extreme dating (2nd century B.C.) seems to be decisively contradicted by fragments of Joban manuscripts included among the Dead Sea finds, especially those in the old Hebrew script. The grandeur and spontaneity of the book and its deeply empathic re-creation of the sentiments of men standing early in the progress of revelation point to the early pre-Exilic period, before the doctrinal, especially, the eschatological, contribution of the prophets. Many conservative scholars have favored a date in Solomon's time, that being the great age of Biblical

Wisdom literature (cf., e.g., the similarities of Job to Psalms 88 and 89, which are from the Solomonic age; cf. 1 Kgs 4:31).

*Theme.* Through the medium of the problem of theodicy, the book of Job sounds anew the central religious demand of the Covenant. It calls men to unreserved consecration to their sovereign Lord. And this way of the Covenant, this consecration to the transcendent, incomprehensible Creator, it identifies with the way of wisdom. Thereby it presents the Church with its proper testimony to redemptive revelation before the wisdom schools of the world.

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## COMMENTARY

### I. Desolation: The Trial of Job's Wisdom. 1:1-2:10.

#### A. Job's Wisdom Described. 1:1-5.

The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the hallmark of Job. The wellspring of his life and character was the covenantal religion of faith in the Christ of promise, "who of God is made unto us wisdom" (I Cor 1:30; cf. Isa 11:2).

1. Job's homeland, Uz, lay somewhere to the east of Canaan, near the borders of the desert that separates the eastern and western arms of the Fertile Crescent. It was an area of towns, farms, and migrating herds. Perfect and upright (AV), does not denote sinless perfection (cf. Job's recognition of his sins; e.g., 7:20; 13:26; 14:16ff.) but straightforward integrity, specifically, covenant fidelity (cf. Gen 17:1,2). There was an honest harmony between Job's profession and his life, quite the opposite of the hypocrisy of which he was presently accused by Satan and later by his friends. One that feared God. In the OT "the fear of the Lord" is the name for true religion. Job's piety was the fruit of a genuine commitment to his Lord, before whom he walked in reverence, resolutely rejecting what He proscribed.

2,3. True wisdom finds expression in the vigorous prosecution of God's creation mandates to replenish and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Due to the abnormality of history, which results from the Fall, failure often dogs the efforts even of the godly. But Job's undertakings in family, field, and flock had been crowned with the Creator's blessings (cf. Job's description of this period in ch. 29).

4,5. Mindful of his God in good days as in evil, Job faithfully fulfilled his function as priest within his family. No mere formalist, Job perceived the root of sin in the human heart (cf. ch. 31); and no mere moralist, he recognized, as special redemptive revelation had made clear, that there is no remission of sins

without the shedding of sacrificial blood. Burnt offerings, while symbolic of the Messianic expiation of sin, were also a consecration rite. By means of them Job dedicated the fruits of progress in the area of culture (cf. 1:2,3) to his Creator. Thus human culture reached its proper end in the worship of God.

#### B. Job's Wisdom Denied and Displayed. 1:6-2:10.

He who is wise unto salvation is aware of the demonic dimension of history, the age-long fury of Satan against "the seed" of the woman (cf. Gen 3:15), that is, Christ and His people. The Adversary charged that Job's godly wisdom was not genuine, that his piety was only a temporary by-product of his prosperity. Put to the test, however, Job bruised Satan under foot by demonstrating that he was ready to serve God "for nought." Since true wisdom, the fear of God, is a divinely bestowed redemptive gift, Satan's charge against Job was actually a defiant denial of the wisdom of God, a challenge to the sovereign efficacy of God's redemptive decree to "put enmity" between the elect and the serpent (Gen 3:15). The primary purpose of Job's suffering, unknown to him, was that he should stand before men and angels as a trophy of the saving might of God, an exhibit of that divine wisdom which is the archetype, source, and foundation of true human wisdom.

#### 1) The Enmity of Satan. 1:6-12.

6,7. That the reader may discover the primary purpose of Job's sufferings and so be in a position to judge accurately where true wisdom lay in the sequel, the veil is withdrawn from the invisible angelic world, depicted here as a royal court with the Sovereign seated on his throne amid his servants. The sons of God. This phrase in ancient polytheistic myths denotes divine beings. In the Bible it refers either to men (e.g., Gen 6:2) or, as here, to celestial creatures. Satan, literally, the Adversary, is

among those obliged to render account before the heavenly throne. That, as well as the fact that Satan cannot tempt Job without permission, advertises his absolute subordination, along with all other creatures visible and invisible, to the God whom Job feared.

8-10. God glorifies himself by pointing to Job as a creation of his redemptive grace. There is none like him in the earth (v. 8b). This divine endorsement goes even beyond the description in verse 1. But though the hostile accuser can find nothing in Job's outward life to condemn (contrast the situation in Zech 3), he insinuates that the patriarch's apparent devotion is that of calculated self-interest. He is saying, in effect, "Job is a deceiver like me, his true father, the devil." Satan sought to pluck Job out of God's hand, and so he disputed the Lord's claim that Job had been made His son by redemptive grace. The devil hints that, in failing to recognize the fraudulence of Job's piety, God is naive. For who, having been given a world all his own with a fence around it, would not keep up the necessary appearances of loyalty to the giver? The satanic assault on the integrity of Job is thus ultimately an assault on the integrity of God: God has bribed the profane Job to act pious. The opportunity given to Job by his trial, therefore, is not so much to vindicate himself as to justify God.

11,12. In the temptation in Eden, Satan disparaged God to man; here he disparages man to God. But he used the same subtle technique in both instances. He began with an insinuating question, then moved boldly on to outspoken contradiction of the divine word. Remove Job's prosperity, he says, and the piety that rests on it will collapse. God accepts the challenge. Indeed, by directing Satan's attention to Job, in his unfathomable wisdom, he invites the challenge.

That the heavenly scene and the transactions of the heavenly court are not disclosed to Job is in keeping with the fact that this book is not intended primarily to answer the question, Why do the righteous suffer? Rather, the book represents absolute consecration of self to man's faithful Creator-Saviour as true wisdom. A man must continue to fear God even when his world flies apart and life strands him, like Job, in stunned bewilderment on the refuse heap.

2) The Integrity of Job. 1:13-22.

13-19. How unequal the contest seems! Preternatural knowledge and power — the element of surprise in its favor — arrayed against a mortal! David and Goliath, in comparison, were *equally* matched. Yet Job's steadfast righteousness, like David's heroism, was only the visible index of the power of divine redemption working in and through the servant of God. The strategy of God, like that of Elijah on Carmel, was to make it impossible for Satan to foist on the witnesses a naturalistic explanation of the wonder He was about to perform. The overwhelming advantage God allowed Satan became, in the sequel, the measure of the devil's ignominy and of God's praise.

There was a day (v. 13b). Possibly the banquet weeks were special occasional celebrations; but if there was a continuous succession of weekly rounds of feasting, this was the day when Job had offered burnt offerings. His piety and desolation being thus set side by side, his desolation seems the more unaccountable. Certainly the repetition of the picture of Job's happy family life as the prelude to the record of the strokes that obliterated it serves to set the joyous prosperity and the sudden desolation in sharpest contrast. The Sabaeans (v. 15). Arab Bedouins. The fire of God (v. 16b). Possibly lightning. The Chaldeans (v. 17) of this early period, unlike the later empire-builders, were nomadic marauders. The great wind (v. 19b). Apparently a desert whirlwind, like that from which God later addressed Job. Note how the unsparing assaults of men on the accumulated fruit of Job's lifetime alternate with the assaults of nature. The messengers were spared only to convey the evil tidings, in overwhelmingly close succession, to their bereaved master.

20-22. And worshipped (v. 20b). Behold, the wise man! Not wise because he comprehended the mystery of his sufferings, but because, not comprehending, he feared God still. Naked shall I return thither (v. 21b), i.e., beyond the scene of life under the sun, into the dust (to which Job perhaps pointed). Cf. Gen 3:19. Blessed be the name of the Lord (v. 21 c). The remarkable thing is that Job, recognizing that he could not resist the sovereign God, not merely maintained his spiritual composure, but even found in adversity occasion for praise. Perhaps in measuring the great-

ness of his loss, Job took stock of the abundance which had all the while been entrusted to his stewardship. Moreover, this hour of desolation was a moment of truth for him. Stripped naked of the things of this world, Job was unusually sensible of God's confronting presence. Deep was constrained to cry out unto deep. And how can the adoring redeemed heart respond in the presence of God but with doxology: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps 73:25). Satan prophesied: "He will curse thee" (Job 1:11). But Job blessed God his Saviour. In the Hebrew there is a play here on one root word, Satan using it with the meaning of cursing, and Job with the meaning of blessing.

### 3) The Persistence of Satan. 2:1-6.

1-3. Summoned again before the throne of the heavenly court to render account, Satan volunteers no report on his temptation of Job. God, however, to magnify His name, declares openly the fact of the tried and true integrity of His servant. Without cause (v. 3c). This represents the same Hebrew word as the "for nought" of Satan's question (1:9). God echoes the term to give the lie to Satan's insinuation. It is now obvious that Job does serve God for nought and, therefore, it was for nought that Satan had accused him.

4-6. Skin for skin (v. 4b). A cynical parody of the reverent praise with which Job had responded to his desolation (1:21). Satan insinuates that even Job's doxology, born in the anguish of bereavement, was the calculated response of a shrewd bargainer. Though disappointed that God had not given him anything to keep, Job concealed his bitterness over his losses out of profane concern for his physical well-being: all that a man hath will he give for his life (v. 4b). Satan implies that Job, by his doxology had only feigned love for God as the exorbitant but necessary fee for health insurance. Touch his bone and his flesh (v. 5b). If God will let Satan touch not merely Job's possessions but also his person, so that there will be no profit left in "the religious deal," Job will weigh back curse for curse. Thus again Satan proceeds from the depreciation of Job's past piety to a prediction that he will prove to be profane. So once again God permits the mystery

of affliction to engulf His servant.

### 4) The Patience of Job. 2:7-10.

7,8. Sore boils (v. 7b). Modern medical opinion is not unanimous in its diagnosis of Job's disease, but according to the prognosis in Job's day, it was apparently hopeless. The horrible symptoms included inflamed eruptions accompanied by intense itching (2:7,8), maggots in ulcers (7:5), erosion of the bones (30:17), blackening and falling off of skin (30:30), and terrifying nightmares (7:14), though some of these may possibly be attributed to the prolonged exposure that followed the onset of the disease. Job's whole body, it seems, was rapidly smitten with the loathsome, painful symptoms. Though Satan had been obliged to spare his victim's life, the sufferer probably thought his death was imminent. Among the ashes (v. 8b). The incurable disease was such as to reduce this former prince of eastern patriarchs, revered above all others by his fellows, to an outcast from human society. Once renowned as the salt of the earth, he was driven out as its offscouring. His dwelling was in the utter desolation of what was probably the town dunghill.

9,10. The narrative reminds us repeatedly of the temptation in Eden (Gen 3). Job's wife plays a role remarkably like that of Eve. Each woman succumbed to the tempter and became his instrument for the undoing of her husband. Satan had spared Job's wife—as he had spared the four messengers—for his further use in his war on Job's soul. Curse God, and die (v. 9b). The blasphemous apostasy to which she urged the sufferer was precisely what Satan had prophesied of Job. Her evil counsel brought this phase of Job's torment to its fiercest pitch and elicited his second decisive response. As one of the foolish women (v. 10a). The charitable restraint of Job's reply testifies as convincingly as his doxologies to the genuineness of his piety. He did not call his wife a fool, but he charged her with speaking, in her frenzied despair, like one of that company in whose counsel she would not ordinarily walk. The folly of her behavior brings into sharper relief the wisdom of Job's godly patience. In the Bible, "wisdom" is a religious virtue, and the "foolishness" Job refers to is not lack of intellectual

keenness but surly lawlessness and godlessness (cf. Ps 14:1). Shall we not receive evil? (10b) The verb means to *receive meekly, patiently*. It is used in an ancient Canaanite proverb: "If ants are smitten, they do not receive (it passively) but they bite the hand of the man who smites them" (Amarna Letters, 252:18). In all this did not Job sin with his lips (v. 10c). He did not utter curses against God, as Satan had hopefully prophesied. There is certainly no veiled suggestion that Job had cursed God in his heart. Job's wisdom proved sound; he truly served God for nought but for God Himself.

Satan seduced Adam even while Adam was standing in the integrity of his creation righteousness. From this it might have appeared that Satan could trip up the depraved sons of Adam at will and trample upon them. But herein lies a great wonder of redemptive grace: sinner Job stands triumphant where righteous Adam tragically fell! Thus, for the confounding of Satan and the reassurance of the saints, the Lord gave clear proof that a righteousness more enduring than that of Adam was being provided through the second Adam. This triumph of Job's patience over the Adversary's malice provided a seal, especially for the ages before the Incarnation, of God's promise that He would bestow on the faithful the gift of eternal salvation through the Christ to come.

## II. Complaint: The Way of Wisdom Lost. 2:11-3:26.

### A. The Coming of the Wise Men. 2:11-13.

The trial of Job's wisdom was by no means over. A new phase of it now began with the aggravation of Job's evil state by spiritual torment. Though Satan does not appear again, he was none the less still present, subtly using Job's well-intentioned comforters as his unwitting accomplices, with more apparent success than had marked his efforts hitherto.

11. After the second crisis of temptation and before the arrival of the friends, there was an interval of some months (7:3), during which Job's spirit was stretched taut by the unrelenting distress in his flesh and the ravages of the foul disease which disfigured him beyond recognition (see chs. 19:30). Job's three friends. The cherished companions and

counsellors of "the greatest of all the men of the east" must have been princes of their people and sages of renown. Teman in Edom was proverbial for wisdom (Jer 49:7). The Shuhite tribe (cf. Gen 25:2,6) and doubtless Naamah, were located in the east country, land of wise men (cf. 1 Kgs 4:30).

12,13. Though the friends were aware of Job's calamities, they were unprepared for what they found. Their stunned, week-long silence was like a mourning for the dead (cf. Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13). Sincere as was their sympathy, their mute presence evidently afforded little comfort. To judge from their subsequent interpretation of Job's wretchedness, their mission of consolation would have misfired even sooner had they spoken. Still, it does seem regrettable that the prolonged silence had to be broken by the cry of the distraught sufferer rather than by a healing word of comfort from a friend.

### B. The Impatience of Job. 3:1-26.

Between the heights of spiritual serenity in the prologue and in the epilogue stretches the abyss of Job's spiritual agony. The descent into and ascent out of that abyss are marked by sudden, dramatic changes of spiritual temper. These are described in brief transitional passages (i.e., chs. 3; 42:1-6). The first of these portrays Job's startlingly abrupt plunge from patience to deep despondency.

1. Cursed his day. What turned Job's submissive doxologies into unrestrained imprecations? Had his spiritual resistance been worn away by the endless days and nights of physical distress? Or did the sight of the distinguished companions of his former prosperity recall too vividly the vanished honor and happiness of the past? Or was it that the faces of his friends, aghast with unutterable pity, mirrored too faithfully the ugliness of his present? Is not the clue to be found in the friends' identity as "wise men"? The brooding presence of these philosophical interpreters of life could not fail to start Job philosophizing about his tragic experience. But the more intently he sought an explanation for it, the more anxiously aware he became of the wall of mystery encompassing him. Seeking the Why, he soon had lost the Way. Obsessed by the dread that God had abandoned him, he cursed his forsaken



existence. Neither at this point nor later did Job fulfill Satan's prediction that he would renounce God with a curse. By cursing his own existence, however, Job, in effect, ventured to dispute with the Sovereign who decreed it. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; hence, the need of Job's repentance (cf. 42:1-6) as the way to renewed peace with God.

3-10. Job's inescapable present misery obliterates the memory of his former joyful years as he laments that he was ever born. Let the Almighty not call his birthday into the light (v. 4), but let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own (v. 5a, ASV). Would that the night of his conception were blotted out of the calendar of time (v. 6), that leviathan (v. 8b, ASV; a mythological symbol of the foe of cosmic order) would swallow it into chaos.

11-19. Why? Explosive imprecation yields to piteous lamentation. Why, since he was conceived and born, was he at least not an abortion or stillborn (vv. 11,16)? Even confinement in the dark grave—not yet illumined by the resurrection glory of Christ—seemed a far better state of existence. There Job, outcast and a by-word of base men and fools, would share a common lot with kings and princes (vv. 14,15); there all those afflicted by "the wicked" and taskmasters find relief from human troublers (vv. 17-19).

20-26. Why, not having been stillborn but rather welcomed alive and nourished (v. 12), must his wretched life continue? As the complaint draws to a close, Job finally voices his basic problem: Why does God give the light of life to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? (v. 23; cf. v. 20) The word Satan had used to describe Job as *hedged about* on every side by the favor of God (1:10), Job now uses for himself as one *hemmed in* by God with darkness and disfavor.

### III. Judgment: The Way of Wisdom Darkened and Illuminated. 4:1-41:34.

#### A. Verdicts of Men. 4:1-37:24.

Because the dialogue of Job and his friends attaches to Job's complaint rather than directly to his calamities, the friends' mission assumes less the air of pastoral consolation than of judicial discipline, and this becomes increasingly so with each successive cycle of speeches.

(For the cyclic structure of the dialogue, see the Outline above.) The friends sit as a council of elders to pass judgment on the clamorous offender. The weighing of Job's guilt involves discussion of broader aspects of the problem of theodicy, but always with Job's particular case and condemnation in view. Hence, for Job the debate is not a detached, academic study of suffering in general, but a new, more painful phase of his sufferings. The friends are beguiled by their adherence to traditional theory into aiding and abetting Satan in his hostility to God, and darkening the way of wisdom for God's servant, Job. But the debate serves to silence this wisdom of the world and so prepares for the presentation of the covenantal approach to wisdom, which follows in the discourses of Elihu and the Lord. Again, in Job's appeal from the verdicts of men to the highest court, expressed in his passionate longing to plead his case before the Lord, the debate reaches out to the visible manifestation of God.

#### 1) First Cycle of Debate. 4:1-14:22.

##### a) First Discourse of Eliphaz. 4:1-5:27.

4:1. As the eldest, apparently, of the friends (cf. 15:10) and thus the possessor of the most seasoned wisdom, Eliphaz is accorded the dignity of precedence in each series of speeches (cf. 42:7). He sets the direction for the counsel of the friends by presenting his theory of sin and suffering and applying it to Job's case. The fundamental, but false, assumption of Eliphaz is that righteousness invariably brings weal and wickedness woe, that there is a direct ratio between sin and suffering. He addresses himself first to Job's despondency (4:2-11), then to his impatience (4:12-5:7), and finally counsels him to repent (5:8-27).

2-11. Who can withhold himself from speaking? (v. 2b) For seven days the wise men had looked on Job's calamities without offering a word of consolation. When Job complained, however, the comforters could not restrain reproof for a moment. Thus for the whole course of the debate their sights were fixed on Job's temporary lapse into impatience, while his earlier prolonged display of patience quite disappeared from their perspective. They reproach Job as though he had given up at the first taste of adversity: it

toucheth thee, and thou art thrown into alarm (v. 5b).

Even as I have seen (v. 8a; cf. 5:3). The authority for Eliphaz' theory is experience. He accepts the traditional view of Eastern sages because his observations of life seem to bear it out. His statistics show, for example, that extreme calamity follows extreme wickedness (vv. 8-11). Only arrogant sinners who make a lifework of sowing sin reap a harvest of death amid calamities. They perish like herbage scorched by the withering blast of desert wind (v. 9), or like a den of roaring lions dispersed by a sudden blow (vv. 10,11). His observation also has confirmed the converse: **Who ever perished, being innocent?** (v. 7a) Though the righteous experience a measure of suffering, they are never cut off under affliction. From such observations Eliphaz deduces his law of sin and suffering, and he assumes that it must uniformly and universally govern human history. Unfortunately, Eliphaz' method of constructing the doctrine of providence is unreliable. For true theology rests on the authority of divine revelation, not on limited human observation and fallible speculation. Unfortunately, too, as Job points out later, even Eliphaz' observations and statistics are inaccurate (cf. 21:17ff.).

Vain doctrine can offer only vain comfort. **Is not thy fear of God thy confidence, And the integrity of thy ways thy hope?** (4:6, ASV) Eliphaz does not question Job's essential righteousness. Therefore, thinking to arouse him from his despondency, he assures him that because he is a pious man, he will not perish. But this favorable evaluation of one laid low by disasters is inconsistent with Eliphaz' own theory. To be consistent he must regard Job as the basest son of Belial. For the patriarch's agony is so great that he passionately covets that death from which Eliphaz, declaring it the worst calamity that could befall the ungodly, has pronounced him immune. Later, when Eliphaz has worked out his position more consistently, he charges Job with hypocrisy and criminality. In this first speech, however, unappreciative of the exceptional severity of Job's sufferings, he classifies Job with the generality of moderately sinning, moderately suffering righteous men, and is only astonished that he complains so immoderately.

4:12-5:7. Job had called in question

the wisdom of God's providence. Eliphaz counters with the argument that fallen men, whether godly or ungodly, are deficient in wisdom and justice and, therefore, incompetent to criticize Providence (4:12-21). They are, moreover, justly subject to all the woes attending mortality (5:1-7).

4:12-21. Now a word was brought to me stealthily, my ear received the whisper of it (v. 12, RSV). As a supplementary source of his knowledge, Eliphaz refers impressively to a special revelation vouchsafed to him in a hair-raising (v. 15) night vision. His account of the mysterious appearance and voice (vv. 15,16) serves to cast a prophetic mantle about him. (For similar features in theophanies witnessed by Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, see Gen 15:12; Num 12:8; 1 Kgs 19:12.) The content of the alleged revelation is presented in Job 4:17-21. **Shall mortal man be just before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker?** (v. 17, ASV marg.; cf. RSV) The AV and ASV translation is also grammatically possible and would provide as suitable a rebuke for the challenge to God's government implicit in Job's complaint. If by comparison with God's wisdom, even the wisdom of angels is imperfect (v. 18), certainly man who lives and dies without wisdom (v. 21b, ASV) is not qualified to sit in judgment over God's ways. Analyzing man's inferiority to angels in terms of his mortality, Eliphaz echoes the divine verdict against man's body of dust (v. 19; cf. Gen 3:19). In comparison with angelic life, human life, like that of the moth (Job 4:19,20), is fleeting. Man's death is like the collapse of a tent when its cord is loosed (v. 21, ASV).

5:1-7. If Eliphaz had applied to himself the message of the Lord's transcendent wisdom and man's lack thereof sent him in the night vision, he would not have volunteered so dogmatic an explanation of God's dealings with Job. **Affliction cometh not forth from the dust . . . but man is born unto trouble** (vv. 6a, 7a, ASV; cf. 4:8). Though a servant of God, he insists, Job is still a fallen mortal. His troubles, therefore, did not **spring out of the ground** like a magical harvest, never sown; they are the thorny fruits of his sins. Hence, neither men nor angels can listen sympathetically to his cry (v. 1). **Vexation killeth the foolish man** (v. 2a, ASV). To display resentment against

God's providence is worse than futile; it invites affliction unto death. I have seen the foolish (v. 3a). Again Eliphaz' authority is experience. His thoughtless sketch of the cursing of the house, field, and children of the churlish fool (vv. 3-5), reminiscent as it was of Job's recent losses, might well have made Job wonder whether Eliphaz judged him to be such a fool.

8-27. Eliphaz urges the murmuring victim to submit trustfully to God. The core concept of his exhortation is the beatitude of the chastened man (v. 17). He describes the goodness of God's marvelous ways (vv. 8-16), prophesies of the happiness that will follow upon repentance (vv. 18-26), and adds a confident guarantee of the wisdom he has offered (v. 27).

8-16. But as for me, I would seek unto God (v. 8, ASV). The unscarred sage has no doubt how he would act if tempted like Job. His advice is clearly sound; his account of the goodness of God's providence and His special interest in the mourning poor is excellent (see Paul's quotation of v. 13 in I Cor 3:19). But his misinterpretation of Job's extraordinary sufferings and his uncharitable attitude indispose Job to profit from this exhortation.

17. Happy is the man whom God correcteth. Eliphaz recognizes the distinction between chastisement and punishment, and he appreciates the ultimate benefits of God's fatherly chastening. However, his views of the relation of sin and suffering leave no room for other purposes, such as trial and testimony, in the suffering of the righteous. (For further comments on this theme see 33:31-33.)

18-26. Crops and flocks restored (vv. 23, 24; ASV, shalt miss nothing rather than AV *shalt not sin*), numerous offspring (v. 25), and long life (v. 26)—these are indeed to be Job's happy portion. Eliphaz spoke more truth than he realized, too, in predicting deliverance from the scourge of the tongue (v. 21a), as the reader, aware of Satan's slanders and the friends' misjudgments, well knows. The skill of the author is evident in this early anticipation of the actual outcome, presented as it is in the form of a forecast based on such profound misunderstanding. For Eliphaz was mistaken in assuming that renewed prosperity always follows repentance. Suffering is not sent in exact proportion to sin in this

life, and neither is prosperity granted in proportion to piety. All depends on God's good pleasure.

b) Job's Reply to Eliphaz. 6:1-7:21.

The presence of the philosophers had set Job to speculating about his fate, and that led to his questioning God's wisdom (ch. 3). The pronouncements of Eliphaz concerning the relation of sin to suffering had introduced a theme that was to lead Job to question the justice of God; for Job knew that his own extraordinary sufferings could not be accounted for on the ground of extraordinary sins. In this first reply, however, the patriarch does not engage in theological discussion about God's justice, but vents again his inner ferment, the consequence of his sense of estrangement from the God who afflicted him. That had been the undercurrent of Job's original complaint, and the efforts of Eliphaz had only aggravated it. The present speech is, therefore, a continuation of the complaint, with certain new overtones. Beginning on the defensive, Job justifies his original outburst (6:1-13). Then, taking the offensive, he reproves his friends for their pitiless attitude (6:14-30). Finally, turning from his friends to God, he renews his lament (7:1-21).

6:1-13. As the plural forms indicate, this chapter is addressed to all the friends. For they all concurred in the views of Eliphaz, and by glance and gesture had no doubt signified the "Amen" which would presently become vocal in their own speeches. Oh that my vexation were but weighed (v. 2a, ASV). Job ignores Eliphaz' insinuations as to the cause of his desolation, and defends the vexation expressed in his complaint. To Eliphaz the complaint had sounded ominous (5:2). But, says Job, if the rash (v. 6:3b, ASV) words wrenched from his lips by anguish were placed in the scales, they would easily be overbalanced by his calamities, which were heavier than the sand of the sea. The arrows of the Almighty . . . the terrors of God (v. 4). An aloofness, an almost sullen resentment, had been betrayed in Job's complaint by his reluctance to mention God even as the author of his sufferings. The vigorously theistic interpretation of Eliphaz did at least prompt a wholesome change in this regard. Job now frankly expresses his feeling that God is confronting him like

an enemy, marshaling hosts of terrors against him. In further defense of his complaint, Job observes that even animals do not complain without reason (v. 5). And it is only natural for a man to reject insipid, loathsome food (vv. 6,7). Then, recalling Eliphaz' description of the death of frail mortals (4:19-21), Job declares that death is precisely what he longs for (vv. 8,9). **I would even exult in pain unsparing** (v. 10b, RSV). Even if he should die the kind of death Eliphaz says is reserved for the ungodly, it would be welcome. Nor would it, in his case, be the death of the ungodly; for contrary to the insinuations of Eliphaz, he had **not denied the words of the Holy One** (v. 10c, ASV). **What is my end, that I should be patient?** (v. 11b, RSV) Job's resources for endurance were spent. In spite of Eliphaz' fair predictions, the future in this world was **hopeless**.

14-30. Eliphaz has attacked Job's complaint; Job now attacks Eliphaz' "consolation." **My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook** (v. 15a). **He has not begged favors, such as a great ransom** (vv. 22,23)—only the pity a man naturally expects from friends. Yet he has been as bitterly disappointed in his "comforters" as a thirsty desert caravan when it reaches the eagerly anticipated wady—sometimes a rushing, dark torrent—and finds not even a **trickle** among the rocks (vv. 15-21). **Ye see a terror, and are afraid** (v. 21b, ASV). . . . **And make merchandise of your friend** (v. 27b, ASV). Their pitiless procedure, says Job, is dictated by fear that terrors like his may be visited upon them. If they should show him sympathy, God might misinterpret their concern as criticism of His providence, and **He might plague them similarly**. To buy God's partiality for themselves, they insinuate that Job must have sinned in proportion to his sufferings. As evidence they point to the rebellious tone of his complaint. But his desperate words uttered under extreme provocation give no proof of his normal attitude and conduct (v. 26). **Return, I pray you** (v. 29a; i.e., "Stop begging the theological question by assuming my guilt, for I am righteous" (v. 30).

7:1-21. In the midst of his replies Job repeatedly turns from his friends and addresses himself to God. The structure of the patriarch's individual speeches thus reflects the over-all course of his inner struggle as, disappointed by earthly

friends, he is compelled to look anew to his heavenly Friend and divine Redeemer for understanding.

1-16. **Like the days of an hireling** (v. 1). Human existence, and Job's life in particular, is like a soldier's hard campaign or a field laborer's weary grind. It is a succession of days of panting for the cool of evening, and restless nights of longing for the morning, a round of misery and hopelessness (vv. 1-6). **Thine eyes shall be upon me, but I shall not be** (v. 8b, ASV). Reverting to the theme of human mortality introduced by Eliphaz, Job builds upon it his renewed complaint. He introduces (vv. 7-10) and concludes (v. 21b) his appeal for relief (vv. 11-21a) with the pathetic prospect of the Deity looking for his faithful servant too late to show him overdue pity. **Am I the sea, or a sea-monster?** (v. 12a, RSV) To judge from the incessant surveillance kept over him, Job says, **one** would think he was the chaos-monster (a mythological figure, cf. 3:8) threatening the stability of the universe.

17-21. **What is man** (v. 17a). An ironic twist is given to Ps 8:4 (cf. Ps 144:3). The contrast between divine transcendence and human finitude is exploited to minimize the significance of human action. **If I have sinned, what do I unto thee** (v. 20a, ASV). Actually, of course, God's transcendence magnifies the seriousness of sin; it is the foundation of the meaningfulness of human experience and of all that is. Moreover, this struggle of Job was particularly significant because it had been made the test case for this very truth of the transcendent authority and control of God over history. In Job's temptation the stability of the universe was under attack—as the "sons of God" could have told Job—by the real "dragon" (cf. Rev 20:2) of whom the mythical sea monster was a paganized version. The angels saw the world trembling with every tremor of Job's spirit. For if the redemptive power of God could not preserve Job in the fear of God, not only Job but the world was lost to satanic chaos.

c) First Discourse of Bildad, 8:1-22.

Bildad proves to be as insensible as Eliphaz regarding Job's wretchedness. He spurns the sufferer's defense of his complaint, ignores his criticism of the unsympathetic approach of the friends, and proceeds to give Job more of Eli-

phaz' counsel in the name of divine justice (vv. 2-7) and venerable tradition (vv. 8-19). Then he awkwardly appends a brief word of cheer (vv. 20-22).

**2-7. How long** (v. 2a). Here is no appreciation of the months of patience; only indignation over a few minutes' impatience! **Doth God pervert justice?** (v. 3a, ASV) Of course God was not unjust to Job. But behind Bildad's rhetorical question lay the judgment that Job was reaping a harvest of sin. This issue of God's justice, though doubtless involved in Job's complaint, had not previously been foremost in his thoughts. The patriarch had contemplated his destiny more from the metaphysical perspective of divine transcendence and human finitude. By focusing attention on the judicial aspect, the comforters succeeded only in intensifying their friend's temptation. Job's theodicy was as inadequate as theirs. Reason therefore told him that God must be deeply grieved with him. But his conscience refused to acknowledge transgression commensurate with his suffering. Where then was justice? Where was the good God he had known? He has delivered them into the power of their transgression (v. 4b, RSV). An astonishingly heartless but thoroughly consistent application of the friends' thesis! Though the form is conditional, the intent is declarative. **If thou wouldst seek unto God** (v. 5a). Since Job's afflictions have not yet proved fatal, as his children's did, he may entertain hope that he is not, like them, reprobate and that his repentance will be followed by a restoration of blessing surpassing his former prosperity (v. 7; cf. 42:12).

**8-19. Enquire . . . of the former age** (v. 8). Aware of the limitations of the individual mortal (v. 9), Bildad would bolster the authority of personal observation with traditional lore (vv. 8,10). Between Bildad and Eliphaz there is no essential difference. Each builds on sand—on speculations drawn from the subjectivity of his own consciousness and the relativity of the changing world—rather than on the granite disclosures of the omniscient Creator. Bildad reproduces the proverbial wisdom of the fathers, couched in similes drawn mostly from the lush growth of swamp and garden (vv. 11-19). **So are the paths of all that forget God** (v. 13a). All the similes teach one lesson: the happiness of the wicked is fragile, perishable. If appearances sometimes seem to con-

tradict the traditional theory that suffering is the wages of sin, it is never for long. But why does Bildad allow a warning designed for the ungodly to dominate his counsel to Job?

**20-22.** The peroration states the application of Bildad's doctrine to the perfect and to evildoers (v. 20, ASV). The speaker offers some encouragement for Job, but it is brief and perfunctory (vv. 21,22). Though the sufferer finds himself here in the category of the "perfect," he cannot forget Bildad's earlier **If** (v. 6).

d) Job's Reply to Bildad. 9:1-10:22.

Following the general pattern of his previous reply, Job addresses himself first to the friends (9:1-24), then more or less directly to God (9:25-10:22). He opens his rebuttal of Bildad with sarcastic endorsement of his friend's opening (and fundamental) theme (9:2; cf. 8:3) and closes with vehement contradiction of Bildad's closing (and dominant) contention (9:22-24; cf. 8:20-22). Then Job resumes his complaint to God in the mood of reckless defiance to which the counsel of the friends has goaded him. In this speech he plunges into the darkest depth of his imagined alienation from God. Though he approaches blasphemy in his frenzy, he does not turn from God with a curse but wrestles on in prayer. For Satan cannot pluck him from his Father's hand.

**9:1-24. Of a truth I know that it is so** (v. 2a, ASV). See comments on 8:3. The judicial aspect of the situation now looms large to Job. God appears to him a prosecuting judge. **But how can man be just with God?** (v. 2b, ASV) Though this question is similar in form to Eliphaz' revelation (4:17), its meaning is different. Job is not saying that man, being a fallen mortal, cannot stand in his own integrity before God. He is saying (as the following verses show) that no matter what the righteousness of a man's cause, he is too puny and ignorant to defend it successfully in court before the overwhelming wisdom and power of God. The thought of God's transcendence had led Job to ask why God should bother to afflict a frail man. Now the same thought provokes the question, Why should a frail man bother to contend against God? This question exposes Job's loss of the sense of God's loving-kindness. The Almighty seems to confront him like a giant adversary.

Which doeth great things past finding out (v. 10a). Again Job gives a new application to a quotation from Eliphaz (cf. 5:9) by way of answering Bildad. Eliphaz spoke these words as a ground for Job's committing his cause to God (5:8) and illustrated with gracious works of providence (5:10-16). Job repeats them to show how futile it is for him to plead his cause before God. And he illustrates with more ominous examples of the sheer omnipotence of God's cosmic rule (vv. 5-13). In the final illustration Job apparently adopts again the imagery of current mythology, the helpers of Rahab (v. 13b, ASV), to depict God's rule over the sea (cf. 26:12). He cannot answer him one of a thousand. . . . Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge (vv. 3b, 15). This strikingly anticipates the subsequent theophany (38:3ff.) and Job's response (40:3-5). Yet the preview is again subtly veiled in misunderstanding. For the reality which will prove to be the prelude to joy regained, here seems to Job a dismal eventuality. I am perfect (v. 21a, ASV). This section terminates in a crescendo of invective, Job's exclamations becoming almost incoherently staccato. In utter despair of ever establishing his integrity before the irresistible God, who seems bent on breaking him without cause (v. 17b; cf. 2:3), Job nevertheless defiantly affirms his uprightness. He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked (v. 22b). The assertion of the friends that only the wicked are carried away violently needs correction; Job, however, fails to discern the love of God in the death of the righteous. He will laugh at the trial of the innocent (v. 23b), just as, sitting unassailable in the heavens, he will "have in derision" (Ps 2:4, the same word as is here translated laugh) the rebels raging against his throne. The friends had condemned Job that God might be righteous—according to their standard. Job, defending himself against their unjustified insinuations, is driven to condemn God that he himself might be righteous (cf. 40:8).

9:25-10:22. The sufferer bewails his sorrows, continuing to interpret them as tokens of divine condemnation. He cannot suppress his longing for a day in court, though he has no hope of being granted such a privilege. Hence, he rea-

sons earnestly with the strange God, the phantom creation of his frenzied doubt.

9:25-35. Now my days are swifter than a post (v. 25a). The opportunity for the Judge to reverse his decision and return Job's prosperity will soon be gone. Job compares the swift passage of his miserable life to those things that are fleetest on land (v. 25), on the sea (v. 26a), and in the air (v. 26b). Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch (v. 31a). Even if the case came to court and Job proved his innocence as effectively as human skill could (v. 30), the Judge would overpower him with charges of guilt. There is no umpire between us (v. 33a, RSV). Here, when Job's faith is at its lowest ebb, there emerges in this complaining negative form the concept of the Mediator, which was afterwards to become for Job a positive conviction. This concept attains its grandest expression in the speech (ch. 19) that marks the crest reached by Job's faith within the course of the debate. For lack of a *daysman*, Job trembles before the omnipotent One, who seems determined to terrorize him into dumbness (vv. 33-35) and find him guilty.

10:1-22. I will give free course to my complaint (v. 1b, ASV). With the bravado of despair Job questions the Judge who condemns him (v. 2). He appeals to God against God—to the nature of the God he had known against the phantom God who contends against him. In particular, Job appeals to God's pride of office as Judge (vv. 3-7) and to his Creatorhood (vv. 8-12). Is God subject to human limitations, liable therefore to misread the facts (v. 4) or fail to overtake the guilty (vv. 5,6)? No. He has the qualifications to be judge of all the earth; he is omniscient and omnipotent (v. 7). Thine hands have made me (v. 8a). Does the Creator destroy the creature on which he has expended such marvelous skill in the processes of procreation and gestation (vv. 10,11) and such providential care (v. 12)?

The imaginary "trial" of God ends as the reality of pain and ignominy reasserts itself in Job's consciousness. The phantom God has prevailed, it seems, and Job changes abruptly from appeal to complaint and lament (vv. 13-22). Yet these things thou didst hide in thy heart



(v. 13a, ASV). God's secret design in the earliest formation and nurture of Job's life was to prepare a prey to be stalked like a lion, mercilessly, relentlessly (vv. 14-16). God's hidden purpose was all the while to make that life miserable at last by witnessing to its guilt with an unending host of plagues (v. 17). Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? (v. 18a) The consideration of God's role in the origin of his life brings Job back to the theme of his original complaint (cf. 3:11). Let me alone (v. 20b). Cut off, as he feels himself to be, from the love of God, the most he can ask, before he slips into the darkness of death, is that God will simply cease paying attention to him for a moment. Nevertheless, it is still to God that Job cries.

e) First Discourse of Zophar. 11:1-20.

Job had reacted to Eliphaz' and Bildad's concentration on his judicial status with increasingly intense protestations of innocence. These in turn provoked the friends to ever more consistent application of their theory, until Zophar now bluntly condemns Job's alleged iniquity (vv. 1-6). He supports his charge by appealing to God's infinity (vv. 7-12), yet he concludes with an assurance of restored prosperity (vv. 13-20).

1-6. Job had insisted that God had afflicted him knowing him to be righteous (v. 4; cf. 9:21; 10:7). That, Zophar points out, contradicts traditional theory, is irreligious, and can not be allowed to stand as the last word. Should a man full of talk be justified? (v. 2b) The customary introductory courtesies, dispensed with altogether by Bildad, are thus dispatched by Zophar with such haste and distaste that accusation merges with apology. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee (v. 5). Job seems irrepressible in controversy with his fellows; but if he were granted the very thing he himself longs for, an open debate with God (cf. 9:35), he would be silenced. Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth (v. 6b). More literally, God causes to be forgotten for thee some of thine iniquity. In his zeal to contradict Job's complaint that God searches out and mercilessly marks his every sin (cf. 10:6,14), afflicting him out of proportion to his iniquities, Zophar ventures to modify the other two friends' theory of direct ratio—but in

the opposite direction from Job! Here is the climax of condemnation in the first cycle. Job 11:6 is pivotal; it concludes the indictment but also introduces the following theme by mentioning the unfathomable wisdom of God (cf. 5:9).

7-12. Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (v. 7b) By his infinite wisdom God comprehends and controls creation in its height and depth, length and breadth (vv. 8,9). Who can hinder him? (v. 10b) If God wills to bring a man into judgment, the man cannot escape. Zophar thus endorses the conclusion Job had earlier drawn from the absolute wisdom of God, namely, that resistance to Him is futile (cf. 9:12; 10:7b). But while Job had also appealed to the divine omniscience for vindication of his innocence (10:7a), Zophar does so to convict Job of guilt: He seeth wickedness also (v. 11b). Having openly condemned Job, and being ignorant himself of any direct evidence to substantiate his charge, Zophar finds it convenient to supplement his own ignorance with the omniscience of the Almighty. He would have made better use of his excellent doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, however, if he had humbly recognized the limitations of his own knowledge of divine providence and had not presumed to understand Job's sufferings to perfection. This truth of God's unsearchable wisdom, though sadly mishandled by Zophar, is the doctrine that should have quieted Job's spirit and silenced his complaints. By reckoning more seriously with it, Job and his friends alike would have recognized that his sufferings were compatible with exemplary piety on one side and divine favor on the other. It is primarily by the proclamation of His incomprehensibility that the Lord Himself later delivers Job from his temptation. Thus again the author of the book employs veiled anticipation. In 11:12 he uses another favorite device, clinching an argument with a proverbial saying. He cites the asininity of vain men as a foil for the infinity of divine wisdom.

13-20. Compare the similar appeals of Eliphaz (5:8ff.) and Bildad (8:5-7,20-22). Contrary to Job's pessimistic opinion (9:28; 10:15), suit for God's favor would be successful (v. 15). At least it would be if preceded by thoroughgoing repentance, extending to heart, hand, and home (vv. 13,14; cf. Ps 24:4). By laying down this condition Zophar man-

ages to insinuate accusation into the midst of consolation. Renewal of God's favor will be accompanied by restoration of prosperity, in which present grief will be forgotten as waters that are passed away (v. 16b, ASV). Also, contrary to Job's forebodings of unrelieved darkness (10:21,22), a bright dawning of hope, peaceful security, and honor, as of old, awaits him (vv. 17-19). But the eyes of the wicked shall fail (v. 20a). Zophar's growing suspicion of Job suggests the advisability of his seasoning consolation further with warning. He closes by identifying the only hope of the wicked with death, in words clearly resembling Job's description of his own prospects. Zophar's pattern of repentance and restoration was to be worked out; but in a way quite surprising to him.

f) Job's Reply to Zophar. 12:1–14:22.

Thoroughly contemptuous of the arrogant ignorance of his counselors, Job subjects them to devastating criticism (12:1–13:12). He declares his righteousness to his friends (13:13-19), then once more appeals directly to God (13:20–14:22). In the midst of this appeal, a new hope dawns in Job's soul—the hope of life beyond Sheol! Though despondency darkens Job's concluding words, it is clear that in this reply to Zophar, his faith has begun its triumphant ascent out of the abyss of despair.

12:1–13:12. Wisdom shall die with you (12:2b). Job's sarcasm suggests how insufferable he found the pretensions of the trio who had all sung the same empty tune. Their words would continue to sting but he would no longer take them seriously as possible solutions to the riddle of his sufferings. I am not inferior to you (12:3b; cf. 13:2). The familiar formulae they recited hardly justify their attitude of superiority. In the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for misfortune (12:5a, ASV). In sheer exasperation Job bewails the whole situation. Because of his troubles, a man of godly wisdom is treated like a simpleton or criminal on the basis of a theory that is contradicted by another (equally distressing) fact, namely, that robbers are prospering while he is reduced to such mockery (12:4-6). Into whose hand God bringeth (12:6c). Better, who bring their god in their hand (ASV marg. and RSV). Lamech-like (cf. Gen

4:23,24; Dan 11:38) they idolize the weapon in their hand.

Ask now the beasts (12:7a). The three friends' doctrine of God's majestic wisdom is common knowledge; all creation teaches it. In 12:11-25 Job demonstrates his familiarity with the concept of divine rule, which his friends thought to teach him. His account of it, indeed, surpasses their own (cf. Ps 107). All the glory and dignity of man's earthly kingdoms are at the mercy of God's sovereign might (Job 12:23; cf. 1 Cor 1:25). The elemental forces of nature are at his disposal to overturn the earth (Job 12:15; cf. Gen 7). The highest civil and cultic dignitaries are impotent against him (Job 12:17-21,24). Verse 19 mentions *priests* (ASV) and *'ētānim* (cf. Ugaritic *ytnm*, a temple guild). Job takes special delight in expounding the text: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor 1:20), and one need not look far to discover certain wise men he had particularly in mind.

Surely I would speak to the Almighty (13:3a; cf. 5:8). Mounting disgust with human helpers drives Job again to reason with God, but first he delivers a scathing rebuke to the self-appointed legal counsel for God (13:4-12). And it should be your wisdom (v. 5b). If they had never broken their seven days' silence, they would not have exposed their stupidity (cf. Prov 17:28). Will you show partiality toward him, will you plead the case for God? (13:8, RSV) They have disgraced their dignity by servility. Worse, they have curried God's favor at the expense of truth: ye are forgers [lit. *plasterers*] of lies (13:4; cf. v. 7). See the similar charge in 6:21,27. Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are . . . of clay (13:12, ASV). The weighty maxims by which they falsely condemn Job in order to justify God are as vulnerable to the hammer of truth as clay to a hammer of iron. Their defense of God was an offense to God. They equated a certain providential procedure, falsely assumed to be invariably followed, with divine justice. In effect, they set up an abstract principle as an absolute and so subordinated God to it. Is it good that he should search you out? (13:9a) Zophar sought to convict Job of his supposed guilt by haling him before the bar of God's omniscience. The patriarch reminds him and his associate prosecuting attorneys that, in the process of indicting him, they too have come to



stand before that Judge; and under such scrutiny their impious motives and false charges cannot escape detection. **He will surely reprove you** (13:10a) is Job's accurate prediction (cf. 42:7ff.). Though Job's confidence in the justice of God is obscured, in his more desperate moments, by his ascription of absolute caprice to the Almighty, he has not lost it altogether.

13:13-19. In the process now of turning from men to God, Job stirs up his courage to face his Judge. **Let come on me what will** (v. 13b). He intends to plead his cause at all hazards, even though it may imperil his life (v. 14). **Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope: Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him** (v. 15, ASV). This translation follows the Hebrew text, and it suits the context better than the familiar AV rendering — *yet will I trust in him*. The latter depends on the Masoretic marginal suggestion to read *lô* ("for him") instead of *lî* ("not"). The verb in the disputed clause means "wait in patiently eager expectation" (cf. 6:11; 14:14). Job has nothing to look forward to, for he expects God to terminate his life very soon — perhaps all the sooner for the bold plea he is about to make. Nevertheless, he *must* declare his innocence. This also shall be my salvation (v. 16a, ASV). This daring desire to come before God is itself a token of a favorable verdict; for the presence of God is the one place shunned above all others by one whose heart condemns him as a hypocrite. **Who is there that will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die** (v. 19, RSV). A triumphant challenge, but unseemly if Job envisages God as well as men. If he could be successfully contradicted, if he could be proved ungodly in reality — and not just according to appearances and theories —, he would die dumb. But that, he knows, is impossible: **I know that I shall be justified** (v. 18b).

13:20-14:22. **Then will I not hide myself from thee** (13:20b). If granted a fair trial, Job will not, like Adam, flee from God, covered with shame. If only God will desist for a time from oppressing him and refrain from overwhelming him with his terrible majesty (13:21; cf. 9:34, 35), Job will appear before him either as defendant or as complainant (v. 22). If Job can successfully defend his integrity, it will be evident (according to his inadequate concept of human suffering) that God has been at fault in

afflicting him so severely. Or, if Job is to succeed in convicting God of such wrong, he must first demonstrate his own integrity. Imagining himself as confronting his tormentor in the coveted trial, the sufferer now demands an explanation of God's hostility (13:23,24). But the judicial scene quickly fades, and the court oratory turns into the customary closing lamentation (13:25ff.).

**Thou . . . makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth** (13:26b). Compare with this the affirmation of man's universal sinfulness in 14:4. When Job was disputing with his friends, the issue at stake was his general integrity, concerning which he was outspokenly confident. But apparently, in the imagined confrontation with the Judge, that issue yielded to the more penetrating question of the status of a sinner before the perfectly holy One. Job's later response to the actual theophany is foreshadowed here (cf. 40:3-5). Meanwhile, his fearful desolation, not accounted for by the general sinfulness of men, crushes his spirit. **Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day** (14:6). Though this lament is expressed in terms of the frailty of all mortals, it is nevertheless personal (cf. 14:3b). Let the common toil and sorrow of mankind suffice for Job (cf. 7:1ff.; Gen 3:17-19). **Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake** (14:12b). Once laid low in death, man, like a felled tree (14:7-9), has no prospect of standing again on the earth (14:10-12). (For the eternity of the heavens, cf. Ps 72:5,7,17; 89:29,36,37; Jer 31:35,36.) Job does not expect annihilation, but he despairs of anything beyond death except existence in Sheol, which is not real life.

Recoiling from such gloom, he exclaims: **Oh that thou wouldst hide me in Sheol . . . and remember me!** (14:13, ASV) If this longing would come true; if Sheol were only a temporary abode and, indeed, a place of relief from the present inexplicable hostility of God (v. 13); if beyond Sheol there were a resurrection change (v. 14c) springing from renewed compassion in the Creator (v. 15) — so blessed a future would transfigure the present warfare (v. 14b)! The concept of resurrection does not provide the key to unlock the mystery of Job's present suffering, but it does offer a framework for hope. Job's yearning later becomes conviction (19:25ff.), and such a hope is glorious. This ultimate hope of

redemption is not, however, the central theme of the Book of Job. The book does, indeed, challenge us to endure, with hope. But it confronts us with an even more profound demand. It sounds the primary and everlasting call for glad consecration, come what may, to the covenant Lord.

But now thou numberest my steps (14:16a, ASV). The curve of Job's spiritual state through the course of the great debate is graphed in reduced scale in individual replies like this, where the climax is not at the end but is followed by an emotional decrescendo. The flame of the patriarch's hope is extinguished, though only for the moment, by his bitter thoughts of the unsparing severity of God, who miser-like hordes up Job's every sin for visitation (14:16,17). **Thou destroyest the hope of man** (14:19c). By incessant affliction, even as a constant force in nature wears away the most durable objects (14:18,19). **Thou prevailest for ever against him** (14:20a). God's hostility culminates in the death stroke, cutting man off from rapport with this world, even from knowledge of his posterity (14:21), shutting him up to himself in death, to the endless dull pain of decomposition and the soul's dreary dirge (14:22).

2) Second Cycle of Debate. 15:1-21:34.

a) Second Discourse of Eliphaz. 15:1-35.

How a round of debate can alienate friends! The genteel Eliphaz forgets even introductory civilities. All is new censorious warning. The philosopher exposes his professional sensitivity to Job's slights (cf. 12:2,3,7ff.; 13:1,2,5,12) by reverting to the relative wisdom of himself and Job each time he introduces a new indictment (cf. vv. 1ff., 7ff., 17ff.).

1-6. **Vain knowledge** (v. 2a). Literally, *knowledge of wind*. Cf. the parallel east wind (v. 2b), i.e., the violent, suffocating desert blast. Job's claims to wisdom are belied by his windy speeches (v. 3). **Yea, thou doest away with fear, And hinderest devotion before God** (v. 4, ASV). Job's brazen outbursts are worse than intemperate, for they depreciate the fear of God, and so undermine religion. **The tongue of the crafty** (v. 5b). Possibly an allusion to the "subtle" (same word) serpent in Gen 3:1. Job's guilt explains his words (v. 5), and his words prove his guilt (v. 6).

7-16. The friends have the advantage over Job in age and hence in wisdom (vv. 7-10; cf. 12:12). His bravado to the contrary, Job has not the antiquity of Adam nor of some primeval beings (v. 7; cf. wisdom personified in Prov 8:22ff.). Neither has he any special, secret knowledge of God's decrees (Job 15:8; cf. the heavenly scenes in the Prologue). Perhaps verse 10 refers particularly to Eliphaz. **Are the consolations of God too small for thee** (v. 11, ASV). A rather charitable description of the friends' counsel, but in line with Eliphaz' alleged special revelation (4:12ff.), which he now echoes (vv. 14-16; cf. 4:17-19). The purpose of the repetition is revealed by a comparison of 15:16 with 4:19. Eliphaz seeks to express his revised estimate of Job as one who lusts disgustingly after sin.

17-35. **Unto whom alone the earth was given** (v. 19a). In addition to the personal observations of the eldest contemporaries (v. 17; cf. v. 10), Eliphaz invokes the sanction of purest tradition (vv. 18,19) to support his retribution dogma and contradict the Joban heresy that the ungodly often prosper (cf. 12:6). The prosperity of the wicked, with whom Job (by his afflictions) is evidently identified, is merely imaginary (vv. 20-35). **He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness** (v. 22a). His peace is ruined by presentiments of calamity without remedy (vv. 20-24), the tormenting forebodings of a conscience defiled by carnal ease and contempt of God (vv. 25-28). Every promising enterprise he undertakes proves abortive (vv. 29-34), according to the law of retribution (v. 35), which may be delayed but not thwarted. Eliphaz has here sounded the counselors' keynote for the second round of debate.

b) Job's Second Reply to Eliphaz. 16:1-17:16.

As the crisis of faith nears, Job pays little attention to his friends' arguments, except to express his disappointment in a brief introduction (16:1-5). In the remainder of this speech Job seems to be musing aloud and only occasionally addressing his words to God (16:8; 17:3,4) or to his friends (17:10).

16:1-5. **Miserable comforters** (v. 2b). Literally, *comforters of trouble*. A sarcastic response to Eliphaz' query (15:11). The counsel of the three friends has not merely been irrelevant; but it has also

betrayed their ignorance of the comfort of redemptive righteousness.

6-17. **Though I speak** (v. 6a). It seems useless to Job to continue the lament and the debate, for both man and God are set against him. His fervent protestations of innocence have been and will be interpreted as proof of godlessness. Devoid of inner resources and outer reinforcements (v. 7), he is labeled "sinner" by his impotent wretchedness (v. 8). **He hath torn me in his wrath** (v. 9a, ASV). It seems to Job that God has savagely rent him (v. 9), and given him over to the spiteful rabble, who had once been obliged to respect him (vv. 10,11). God shatters (v. 12a) and batters (v. 14) him, piercing his vitals (vv. 12b,13) and reducing him to a sobbing wreck, prostrate in the dust (vv. 15,16). And all without cause: **Although there is no violence in my hands, And my prayer is pure** (v. 17, ASV; cf. Isa 53:9).

16:18-17:3. The power of God that is made known to a man in his weakness now enables Job to hope against hope. **O earth, cover not thou my blood** (v. 18a). The cry of Job's innocent blood demanding vindication must not be muffled (cf. Gen 4:10; Heb 12:24). **Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven** (v. 19a, ASV). This heavenly witness-avenger is God himself! Job prays to him with tears (v. 20b), that he will maintain the right of a man with God and with his neighbor (v. 21, ASV). This paradoxical faith in God to advocate Job's case against God, who now slays him, reappears in the plea: **Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself** (17:3, ASV). Let God covenant to establish Job's integrity at the time of judgment.

17:4-9. Verse 4 is transitional. It explains that God must provide Job's pledge because human friends refuse to do so, and it launches a lament over the patriarch's public humiliation. Job's experience cannot but astound righteous men (v. 8). But they (and Job among them) will persevere the more in righteousness, undaunted by the irregular dealings of providence or the slanders of the public. A triumphant confession; it confounds Satan's hopes (cf. 2:5).

10-16. Job's changes in mood are abrupt and extreme. Disdainfully inviting the wisdomless wise men to renew their witless counsel (v. 10), Job concludes with a description of his pathetic plight

—on the brink of community with the worms.

c) Second Discourse of Bildad. 18:1-21.

In his longing for a divine advocate, Job probes far deeper into the mystery of godliness than do his counselors, whose later replies degenerate into irrelevant harangues on the woes of the wicked.

1-4. Resentful of Job's low estimate of his accusers' acumen (v. 3; cf. 17:10; 12:7), Bildad retorts in kind: **Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger** (v. 4a, ASV), like a stupid brute, bellowing the while that God is to blame (cf. 16:9). To judge from the way Job beats himself to death against the established order of creation and providence (in particular, against the law of retribution invoked by the friends), it would seem that he expects the universe to be redesigned just for him (v. 4b, c). The plural forms in verses 2 and 3 are possibly in sarcastic allusion to Job's associating himself with the company of the righteous (cf. 17:8,9).

5-21. This word-painting, entitled by the artist **the dwellings of the wicked** (v. 21a), is not an exact likeness of its original, but it is sufficiently so for Job to recognize it as his portrait. He beholds his tent-site strewn with brimstone, symbol of God's perpetual curse (v. 15b; cf. 1:16; Gen 19:24; Deut 29:23). He sees himself being consumed by the **firstborn of death** (v. 13b), i.e., deadly disease; being hurried off to the **king of terrors** (v. 14b), death itself; being chased into oblivion (vv. 16-19), a spectacle of horror at which people involuntarily shudder (v. 20).

d) Job's Second Reply to Bildad. 19:1-29.

Felled by Bildad's brutal judgments (cf. 18:20), Job cannot summon the contemptuous indifference he showed toward the disputants in his previous speech. He is starved for understanding, and he seeks pity from his fellow human beings (19:2-22). But he finds them inhuman still. In his extremity, however, he discovers again the breath of life in the love of God, his heavenly Sympathizer (vv. 23-29).

2-22. Job's introductory plaint leads to further self-defense, along with a description of his desolation (vv. 7-12) and isolation (vv. 13-19). If the friends are so antagonistic that they must prosecute

the case against him (v. 5; cf. 22), let them know now that God hath subverted Job in his cause (v. 6a, ASV; Bildad used the same verb in 8:3, to which this is a delayed reaction). They are defending injustice. Mine acquaintance are wholly estranged from me (v. 13b, ASV). Job's sense of ostracism, aggravated by the debaters' callous handling of him, has become a crushing burden. He is avoided, forgotten, abhorred by all—from nodding acquaintance to closest family intimate (vv. 13-18), and last but not least by his group of counselors (v. 19). Out of this abandonment issues the double Have pity upon me (v. 21a). Enough of accusation and false charges! (v. 22) Thus this section comes full circle (cf. vv. 2,3), encompassing Job in dereliction.

23-29. Since his contemporaries disbelieve his personal witness to his integrity, Job wishes it might be committed to writing on a scroll (v. 23) or, more indelibly, on a rock (v. 24). Then it might secure a hearing and possibly a kinder verdict from some future generation. By the inclusion of Job's history in the Scriptures, that wish has been realized beyond his imagining. Job despaired, however, of any fulfillment whatsoever. Besides, what his soul most craved was not human but divine vindication. The look to the future was, therefore, only preliminary to the look unto heaven: But I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he shall arise upon the dust (v. 25). The hope of a heavenly, a divine vindicator which had been gathering strength in Job's soul (cf. 9:33; 16:18ff.) is here perfected. The office of the redeemer (*gō'ēl*) was that of next of kin. It was his responsibility to restore the fortune, liberty, and name of his relative, when necessary, and to redress his wrongs, especially to avenge the shedding of innocent blood. Job is confident that although all earthly kin may disown him (cf. v. 13 ff.), his divine kinsman is prepared to own him and to speak in his favor the last word in the case (cf. Isa 44:6). The heavenly *gō'ēl*, hearing the cry of Job's innocent blood from the dust of his grave (cf. Job 16:18; 17:16), will pursue his defamers (vv. 28,29) and avenge his name.

And after the loss of my skin which is thus destroyed, even from my flesh shall I see God (v. 26). Like English "from," the Hebrew preposition here

translated "from" is ambiguous, meaning "in" or "without" (though the latter meaning is not attested elsewhere with a verb of perception). Job still regards death as imminent for his wasted body, rapidly being destroyed by disease (cf. v. 20); but his earlier longing for a return from Sheol to true life (14:13-15) revives now as a firm hope. God will thoroughly fulfill his kinsman's office, even delivering Job from the tyranny of the king of terrors. Hence, Job will witness, as he never could if he were cut off in Sheol (cf. 14:21,22), the intervention of God in the real world for his vindication. However the phrase from my flesh is construed, Job still expresses the idea of a renewal of the whole man after death. The emphasis of 19:27 is probably not that Job rather than another will see God (AV), but that Job will behold God as his kinsman, not as a stranger (ASV) hostile to him (cf. vv. 11,12). Here are the beginnings of what progressive revelation would ultimately enunciate in the doctrines of the coming of Christ at the end times, the resurrection of the dead, and final judgment. The fact that neither Job nor any other speaker subsequently refers to these exalted convictions is further indication that the author's purpose was not theodicy. This remarkable thrust of faith at the midpoint of the debate served to break the tension for Job, even though his spirit was unable to maintain this sublime level.

e) Second Discourse of Zophar. 20:1-29.

Job has struck such chords of redemptive truth as to thrill angels, but Zophar, having ears, hears not. He is enamored of Eliphaz' song, and he joins in close harmony with Bildad, continuing the ballad of the wicked man. Unfortunately, Zophar is too often content to draw the inspiration for his lyrics from the dunghill where the friends found Job.

I have heard the reproof which putteth me to shame (v. 3a, ASV). At the threat of God's pursuing him to avenge Job's blood (cf. 19:29), Zophar seethes with anger. He hastens to recast the actors, making Job the culprit on whom God wreaks vengeance for his oppression of the poor (v. 19). According to all the friends, the alleged prosperity of the wicked is deceptive, evanescent. Eliphaz stressed the continual inner unrest of the wicked; Bildad pointed to

his perpetual desolation; Zophar emphasizes his sudden vengeance at the pinnacle of his rapacious career. While his ambition is in the clouds (v. 6) and his bones are full of his youth (v. 11, ASV), when he has just savored sin like a delicate morsel (vv. 12,13,15a), in the fullness of his sufficiency (v. 22)—then the Avenger overtakes him (v. 23). Verse 27 is a direct contradiction of Job's hope (cf. 16:18,19; 19:25) and serves, in case there should be some doubt in Job's mind, to identify Zophar's wicked man.

f) Job's Second Reply to Zophar. 21:1-34.

The accusers, blind to Job's transparent sincerity, have denied rather than explained the mystery of his afflictions. But stronger now in hope, Job rises above his disappointment in them and takes the initiative in the debate. His eyes, once opened by his own strange experience to the fallacy of the tidy traditional notion of retribution, perceive that history abounds in "exceptional" cases. After a prefatory request for attention (vv. 2-6), he proceeds to undermine the opposition by exposing the fallacy in their analysis of the fortunes of the wicked (vv. 7-34).

**2-6. Let this be your consolations** (v. 2b). Their open ears afford more comfort than their open mouths (cf. the similar sarcastic response to Zophar in 13:5). The force of Job's argument should silence them (v. 5).

**7-34. Job describes the prosperity of the wicked**, first in general terms (vv. 7-16), then in contradiction of the friends' specific representations (vv. 17-26), and finally by way of his self-defense (vv. 27-34).

**7-16. Wherefore** (v. 7). The apparent inequity of life, though it supports Job's case, troubles him (cf. v. 6) precisely because he recognizes that God governs all (vv. 9b,16a). It is indicative of Job's integrity that even in his misery he would not exchange places with the wicked rich (16b). Job does not, however, appreciate sufficiently the necessity of divine grace for the continuance of the fallen race in this world. Furthermore, he lacks understanding of the evangelical goal of the common grace enjoyed by unbelievers (Rom 2:4; cf. Mt 5:45).

**17:26. How oft** (v. 17). The patri-

arch challenges the statistics on which the accusers lean (cf. v. 29). Job himself exaggerates, but he is nearer the truth than his opponents. In 21:19a Job anticipates a possible evasion (cf. 5:4; 20:10) and rebuts it (21:19b-21). The verbs in verses 19b,20 have the force of command; e.g., **Let his own eyes see his destruction** (v. 20a, ASV). **Shall any teach God knowledge?** (v. 22a) The traditional theory constitutes a disguised criticism of God's actual ways (vv. 23-26).

**27-34. I know your thoughts** (v. 27a). Job recognized his image in their veiled portraits. **Have you not asked those who travel the roads?** (v. 29a, RSV) Though the friends recommend their observations as primeval law (cf. 20:4), they are ivory-tower theorists, out of touch with real life (cf. comments on 4:2-11). **The wicked man is spared in the day of calamity . . . he is rescued in the day of wrath** (v. 30, RSV). The AV would make Job inconsistently endorse his friends' view of the death of the wicked, whereas Job insists that the death of such men is often easy (vv. 13b, 23) and honorable (32,33). Job's estimate of the career of the unrighteous lacks a balancing emphasis (found to an extent in the friends' speeches) on their spiritual unrest during life and perdition hereafter. But by puncturing the balloon of airtight retribution, Job leaves his accusers clinging to falsehood (v. 34).

3. Third Cycle of Debate. 22:1-31:40.

a) Third Discourse of Eliphaz. 22:1-30.

The conclusion inherent in the three friends' theory from the beginning and ever more broadly hinted at is now blurted out unashamedly. This open accusation of Job was their only alternative to capitulation after Job's considered denial that justice is uniformly discernible in God's treatment of men. The lamentable fact is that the friends endorsed Satan's view of Job as a hypocrite. Thinking to defend God, they became Satan's advocates, insisting that he whom God designated as His servant belonged to the devil.

**2-11. Since the all-sufficient God cannot be helped or harmed by man's actions**, the answer to Job's sufferings

cannot be in Him (vv. 2,3). Certainly Job is not being punished for piety: **Is it for thy fear of him that he reproveth thee?** (v. 4a, ASV) From these negative premises Eliphaz draws his positive conclusion in a sad betrayal of truth and brotherhood. **Is not thy wickedness great** (v. 5a). . . . **Therefore snares are round about thee** (v. 10a, ASV). For lack of real evidence Eliphaz finds the key to the precise nature of Job's crimes in his former wealth—its accumulation must have been stained by inhuman abuse of the poor and weak (vv. 6-9). Contrary to this drastic oversimplification of Job's dilemma, the Prologue has, of course, revealed to the reader that the answer was in God, who, though all-sufficient in himself, glorifies himself in his works and had decreed Job's trial for the praise of his redemptive wisdom.

12-20. And thou sayest, **What doth God know?** (v. 13a, ASV) Presuming to read Job's secret thoughts, Eliphaz puts in Job's mouth blasphemies untrue to the sentiments he has actually expressed (vv. 12-14). The fictitious argument is, then, unsatisfactorily answered by appeal to the unusual divine judgment on the Deluge generation (15ff.; cf. Gen 6:1-7; 8:21,22).

21-30. Eliphaz' last words, urging return to God in hope of peace and blessing, remind us that, in spite of all, he was a friend in the family of faith. Nevertheless, this consolation is vitiated by its Pharisaic spirit and its implicit repetition of the false accusations. In their distorted way these promises were prophetic of the sequel. Note especially 22:30: **He will deliver even him that is not innocent; Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thy hands** (ASV). Cf. Job's intercession for the friends (42:7-9).

b) Job's Third Reply to Eliphaz. 23:1-24:25.

The patriarch refrains from indignantly denying Eliphaz' unfounded charges, and resumes the theme of his previous speech (ch. 21). This monologue is, therefore, only indirectly a reply to Eliphaz. Job ponders the perplexing absence of discernible justice in God's dealings with himself, a righteous man (ch. 23), and with the wicked (ch. 24).

2-9. **Even today is my complaint rebellious** (v. 2a, ASV). Job stubbornly

refuses to yield to any exhortation to penitence which implies that his sufferings are his just desert (cf. 22:21ff.). **Oh that I knew where I might find him!** (v. 3a) Since he now believes that his divine Avenger lives, his longing to appear before God is more ardent than before, and his confidence in his vindication firmer than ever (vv. 4-7). But he cannot find God to reason with him face to face (vv. 8,9).

10-17. **But he knoweth the way that I take** (v. 10a). **Knoweth** probably expresses here not mere acquaintance but approval (as in Ps 1:6). **More than my own precept I treasured the words of his mouth** (v. 12b). Job has all along followed the way Eliphaz recommends (cf. 22:22). Yet God inexorably executes against Job all he has foreordained, in apparent disregard of merit or demerit (23:13,14). **Therefore am I terrified at his presence** (v. 15a, ASV) . . . not because of the darkness or because of my own face which thick darkness covers (v. 17; cf. ASV marg.). Not dark calamity (cf. 22:11) nor marred visage most dismayed Job but the inaccessibility of God (23:16) and his seeming failure to inform his providential rule with justice.

24:1-12. The burden of this section is found in its opening and closing words: **Why are times not laid up by the Almighty? And why do not they that know him see his days** (v. 1, ASV) . . . **God regardeth not the folly** (v. 12c, ASV). God does not, like Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 7:16), have a regular judging circuit for preserving order and punishing crime. Cruel and greedy men prey unchecked, upon the helpless. Job voices, therefore, the plaintive "How long?" of those who are oppressed by the lords of the soil.

13-17. Economic tyrants, such as those just described, often operate within legal technicalities. In addition to them, wanton and violent men overrun the earth. These are murderers, adulterers, thieves (cf. Ex 20:13-15), all lovers of darkness.

18-20. If the point of these verses is the quick, easy death of the wicked and the subsequent cursing of his heritage, unobserved by him, they agree with Job's views in chapter 21. The RSV introduces them with, "You say," so adopting the interpretation that Job here quotes the opposition's view of the certain doom of the wicked in order to answer it (cf. v. 21ff.). Possibly this sec-



tion represents a corrective modification in Job's earlier analysis of the wicked (cf. 27:7ff.).

**21-25. Yet God preserveth the mighty by his power** (22a, ASV; for vv. 22,23, see ASV for correction of AV). God allows the lives of the wicked to attain full maturity and to end as other men's lives end (v. 24). **Who will prove me a liar** (25a, ASV). Sure of his facts, Job issues his victory challenge.

c) Third Discourse of Bildad. 25:1-6.

Bildad avoids Job's challenge (24:25). Anxious, however, to say something, he repeats ideas expressed earlier by Eliphaz (cf. 4:17ff.; 15:14ff.) and accepted by Job (cf. 9:2; 14:4). The inept repetition indicates that the philosophers have exhausted their resources of wisdom. Bildad's brief, feeble effort represents their expiring breath. Zophar's subsequent failure to speak is the silence of the vanquished (cf. 29:22).

Job, an insignificant worm of the dust, says Bildad, by comparison with the glorious heavenly bodies (v. 6), may not hope to prove his innocence before God (v. 4), whose awe-inspiring majesty prevails universally (vv. 2, 3), putting to shame even the brightness of moon and stars (v. 5). The speech is reverent but irrelevant.

d) Job's Third Reply to Bildad. 26:1-14.

Job pursues more impressively and to better purpose the theme attempted by Bildad—God's wondrously wise ways (cf. 9:4-10; 12:13-25).

**2-4. The patriarch indulges his bent for sarcasm as he turns in disdain from Bildad's useless recitation. From whom hast thou declared words** (4a. On 'et, "from," cf. Akk. *ittu*; on this use of 'et, with *higgid*, cf. Mic 3:8). Bildad's ideas were but echoes of Eliphaz', and his use of them to condemn Job was more likely inspired by Satan than by God.

**5-14. They that are deceased tremble Beneath the waters and the inhabitants thereof** (v. 5, ASV). More remarkable than the awe God instills in beings near his heavenly throne (25:2) is the consternation his wisdom and dominion bring to the shades in Sheol (26:5,6). Whether Job's cosmology actually agreed with ancient concepts or is merely figuratively expressed, it is not presented as necessarily normative revelation. In his survey of the evidences of God's greatness, the speaker now passes from

the underworld to this world (vv. 7-13). Though verse 7 might envisage creative action, this section as a whole pictures God's general providential rule of nature. **The north over empty space** (v. 7a, ASV), refers to the northern heavens. **He incloseth the face of his throne** (v. 9a, ASV) means, He veils the heaven with clouds. The qualification in 26:10b is not temporal (AV) but spatial (ASV). **The pillars of heaven** (v. 11), are mountains, their peaks hidden in clouds. **He smiteth through Rahab** (v. 12b, ASV) . . . **His hand hath pierced the fleeing serpent** (v. 13b, ASV marg.). God controls the upper and lower waters to procure favorable climatic order. For the mythological imagery, cf. Isa 27:1; Ugaritic text, Gordon UH 67, I, 1ff. **Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways: And how small a whisper do we hear of him!** (v. 14a,b, ASV; cf. ch. 28) If Job's friends had recognized the limitations of their knowledge, they would have avoided their misinterpretations. Job's praise of the perfection of God's knowledge contradicts their identification of him with ungodly men.

e) Job's Instruction of the Silenced Friends. 27:1-28:28.

Since Zophar fails to speak, Job continues, now addressing all the friends (cf. plurals in 27:11,12). Aware of his mastery, he assumes the role of teacher (27:11). After once again declaiming his righteousness, with a strong oath (27:1-7), he contrasts his own experience with that of the wicked (27:8-23). Chapter 28 is an artistic introduction to the way of wisdom. Modern critics have argued forcefully that the text from 27:7 on has suffered disarrangement. They contend that the sentiments expressed contradict Job's previous remarks, or, in the case of chapter 28, are incompatible with the sequel. It seems possible, however, to defend the originality of the present textual arrangement, and the following exposition is based upon it.

**27:1-7. As God liveth, who hath taken away my right** (v. 2a, ASV). This oath remarkably epitomizes Job's spiritual dilemma. On the one hand, it proclaims God the God of truth, and on the other, charges that his treatment of Job is unjust. **Surely my lips do not speak unrighteousness** (v. 4a, ASV, marg.). This is not a vow (AV); it is a declaration that Job's unshakable claim to integrity (vv. 5,6) is true to conscience and fact.

Let mine enemy be as the wicked (v. 7a). The reader of the Prologue appreciates how diabolical was the accusation that Job's piety was not genuine.

**8-23. For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off?** (v. 8a, RSV) No longer driven to reactionary extremes by the pressure of debate, Job achieves a more penetratingly spiritual analysis of the ungodly. They are without God in the world. That means not only that they will suffer eternal perdition (v. 8), but that they have no divine refuge amid present trouble (vv. 9,10; cf. 22b). **Why then are ye become altogether vain?** (v. 12b, ASV) The friends should have recognized by Job's persistent crying to God that their identification of him with the godless was false (cf. 35:9ff.). **This is the portion of a wicked man with God** (v. 13a; cf. 20:29; 31:2). The prosperity of an ungodly family (vv. 14-18) is not passed down through successive generations. As for a wicked individual, prosperity is not his final destiny (vv. 19-23). Job so far modifies his former statement as to agree with his silenced opponents that the prosperity of the wicked is not the dominant trend in the world. But he still recognizes that the wicked may prosper for a season. And any such exception is fatal to the logic of the theory that condemned him.

**28:1-28.** Some commentators regard this chapter as a hymnic interlude inserted by the author to separate the dialogue from Job's final summing up (chs. 29-31). It is treated here as a continuation of Job's instruction "concerning the hand of God" (27:11a, ASV) and, as such, further demonstrates that his piety is both genuine and fervent.

**1-11.** As a foil to the following theme of the failure of man to gain true wisdom apart from God (v. 12ff.), there is pictured the success of the daring sons of Tubal-cain (cf. Gen 4:22) in exploiting earth's hidden treasures. Mankind's conquest of the earth, commanded by God at the beginning (Gen 1:28), is marked by phenomenal technological triumphs.

**12-19. But where shall wisdom be found?** (v. 12a) The next section (20-27) is also introduced by this refrain question. There it receives a positive answer, but here a negative one. In spite of amazing achievements in scientific enterprise (vv. 1-11), men are unable by the techniques or treasures of science to attain wisdom. That supreme prize cannot

be obtained by probing or purchase, because it is not, like some precious stones, deposited in earth or sea (vv. 13,14).

**20-27.** Back of the assumption that man can discover wisdom lies the presupposition that the Creator possesses infinite wisdom. Wisdom is not found in the land of the living (v. 21; cf. 13,14), nor in the realm of the dead (v. 22). The way of wisdom is beyond the unaided ken of man here or hereafter. It is directly visible only to the One who enjoys all-encompassing, all-penetrating perception (vv. 23,24). Note the use of *hearing* and *seeing* for partial and perfect knowledge respectively (vv. 21-27). The Creator perceived wisdom in the beginning, when he was ordaining the laws of the world (vv. 25,26). In fact, the natural creation, with its governing laws, established by God, is an expression and embodiment of wisdom (v. 27; cf. Prov 8:22-31). For wisdom is the word of his will and becomes articulate for man in God's law—natural and moral. Divine law is the form in which God reveals his wisdom to men.

**28. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.** Man's reverent acknowledgment that he and his world are subject to the Creator is so much the lifeblood of human wisdom that it can be identified with wisdom. A man begins to be wise when he ceases to strive for wisdom independently of God and in his own power. He advances in wisdom through meditation on the moral law and investigation of natural law. Apart from a true recognition of divine revelation, whether in the natural creation or in the Word, man's meditation and investigation produce not wisdom but folly. The cultural enterprise not begun and consummated in the cult is vain. And the cult, if it be not the true cult of the Lord, is vanity. The fear of the Lord, covenant consecration, is the beginning and chief part of wisdom.

f) Job's Final Protest. 29:1-31:40.

The engagement with the friends is over; now the encounter with God comes to the fore. In a final monologue Job summarizes his cause. The direct address in 30:20-23 marks it as part of Job's continuing recourse to God. This speech is a reiteration of Job's opening complaint, considerably tempered for having passed through the fires of the great debate. It is a trilogy, consisting of a description of Job's former exaltation (ch. 29), a description of his present



humiliation (ch. 30), and a final protestation of innocence (ch. 31).

1-25. Job begins this exposition of his extraordinary history where the Book of Job begins it — in the prosperous months of old (v. 2a, ASV). In the ripeness of my days (v. 4a, ASV); not *youth* (AV). Job starts with the heart of the matter (as the book also does) — the close covenant bond between himself and God (cf. 1:1). The blessedness of those former days which now stirs such longing in Job was not the paradise-like abundance as such (v. 6), but the friendly favor of God (cf. Ps 25:14), from which that prosperity flowed (vv. 2-5). When I went forth to the gate (v. 7a, ASV). Because Job's estate was adjacent to the city, Job was active in civil and judicial affairs. The gate and adjoining "street," or open market place, was the location of the town forum. The eminent role the patriarch had played in council and court seems to him now the most significant aspect of his past (vv. 7-17, 21-25), viewed from his present personal struggle for justice. The last word, so grudgingly granted him in the present debate, had always before been his undisputed right (vv. 21-23) as he sat a king among his fellows (v. 25). The irony was that he who had been the celebrated champion of the poor and oppressed (vv. 11-17), the beloved comforter of mourners (v. 25c), was now, in his trouble, denied a fair hearing by friends (cf. esp. ch. 22) and, apparently, by God. I put on righteousness and it clothed itself with me (v. 14a, ASV marg.). The righteous cause became incarnate in Job, who, undaunted by despondency or difficulty (v. 24, ASV), wielded the sword of justice to deliver the innocent from predatory men (v. 17a; cf. Isa 11:2-5; Ps 72:12-14). One of the blessings of Job's lost paradise had been his happy hopes of prolonged days in the bosom of his family (Job 29:18), of honor (20a), and of strength (20b) constantly renewed (v. 19). Job presently relates the sad confounding of these hopes (ch. 30).

30:1-31. The repetition of *But now . . . And now . . . And now* (vv. 1, 9, 16) effectively accents the theme as Job contrasts the bleak, turbulent present with the peaceful past. The king of counselors has become the byword of fools (vv. 1-15). The friendly favor of God has turned into cruelty (vv. 16-23).

1-15. The extremity of Job's dishonor appears in the fact that even the lowest

of humanity look down on him. By describing their wretchedness (vv. 1-8; cf. 24:5ff.), the sufferer suggests with skillful indirectness his own yet worse condition. So devoid of all dignity and reliability was this bestialized breed (vv. 6-8) of starving outcasts (vv. 3-5), that Job, for all his sympathy towards social inferiors (cf. 29:12ff.; 31:15), would not have entrusted even their eldest with responsibilities customarily given to shepherd dogs (v. 1b). **Men whose vigor is gone** (v. 2b, RSV). They lack even the physical stamina to serve as hirelings. But now even the juveniles (v. 1a) of this rabble regard Job as the fitting butt of their derisive ditties (v. 9). No show of contempt is too mean for them (v. 10; cf. 17:6, ASV) as with unbridled spite (v. 11b) they devise torments (v. 12ff.) against this ruined bourgeois, now a helpless outcast in their dunghill domain.

16-23. Far more distressing to the patriarch than the cruelty of men is that of God (v. 21a), who seems to stare stonily (v. 20b, ASV) at his pleading victim. God persecutes Job (v. 21b, with physical afflictions continually (vv. 16h, 17), humiliatingly (vv. 18, 19), mercilessly (vv. 20, 21), violently (v. 22, ASV), unto the grave (v. 23). Though Job fails here to pursue the logical implications and to appropriate the comfort of his recently expressed thoughts concerning wisdom, human and divine (ch. 28), it must be remembered that he was not stone but a man of flesh, and still being crushed by the serpent's coils.

24-31. A melancholy cry concludes Job's reflections on his humiliation and dereliction. To cry for help in distress is natural (v. 24, according to ASV and RSV), especially when the calamity is contrary to all expectations (vv. 25, 26; cf. 29:15-20). In emotional turmoil (v. 27, ASV), Job wails before the world (v. 28, ASV) like a howling jackal or dolorous ostrich (v. 29, ASV). With death-fever consuming him (v. 30), he plays beforehand a dirge against the day of his burying (v. 31).

31:1-40. Protestation of innocence has been Job's main burden all along. Here, elaborately formulated, it becomes the climax of his peroration. In form, this is a retroactive oath of covenant allegiance (cf. v. 1a). In such oaths the speaker called down curses upon his own head for proved violations of the moral code (cf., e.g., the Hittite Soldiers' Oath, ANET, 353, 354). Even the imagery of

the extant samples of such ancient oaths corresponds with Job's (e.g., loss of crops, grinding, breaking of limbs, thistles. See vv. 8,10,22,40). The picture, therefore, is that of the covenant vassal protesting his faithfulness to the various stipulations laid upon him, dumbfounded that his sovereign has visited him with the curses rather than the blessings of the covenant (cf. Deut 28:18,31,35). God seems to Job to have forsaken the suzerain's role as protector, and strangely turned enemy against an obedient vassal.

1-8. Job begins by disclaiming private sins of the heart — lust (v. 1), vain deceit (v. 5), covetousness (v. 7). In this he displays profound insight into the spirituality of God's law (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5; 6; 7). His deep concern with the Suzerain's imminent judgment emerges frequently (vv. 2-4; cf. 11,12,14,23,28), most strikingly in his self-maledictions (v. 8; cf. Deut 28:30c, 33). By these references to the penal sanctions of the covenant Job solemnizes his oaths of innocence. Mingled with Job's reverent fear of his Judge is his confident longing to stand before him, eloquently proclaimed in vv. 35-37 and more simply here (v. 6).

9-23. The patriarch also disavows public sins against his neighbors—adultery (v. 9), maltreatment of menials (v. 13), neglect of the social obligation of charity to the needy (vv. 16,17,19-21). Self-maledictions are attached to the first and last "if" clauses in this section. In addition, Job's denials are vigorously enforced: his denial of adultery, by indignant denunciation of such enormity (vv. 11,12); his denial of abuse of servants, by a reckoning with divine investigation (v. 14) and a recognition of common creaturely origin (v. 15); and his denial of uncharitableness, by positive affirmation of the opposite (v. 18) and confession of his fear of God (v. 23).

24-37. The charge of hypocrisy and secret iniquity that the counselors brought against him, for want of evidence of Job's supposed crimes, had already been contradicted by his protestations. It is now directly repudiated by his denial of concealed sin in his relations with God, his enemies, and strangers. Neither the deceitfulness of riches (vv. 24,25) nor the fascination of pagan worship of heavenly bodies (vv. 26,27) had ensnared Job in covert idolatry, the transgression of the most fundamental demand of allegiance to God (v. 28). Secret malice

towards foes (v. 29) he firmly denies (v. 30). Household intimates acquainted with his private life can vouch that he has not begrudged hospitality to the passing stranger (vv. 31 [ASV, not AV], 32). Summing up, he forswears any similarity to Adam, who tried to hide his sin (v. 33; cf. 13:20; Gen 3:7-10). Job had no need to fear the open scrutiny of society (Job 31:34) or of God (v. 35ff.). In utter contrast to the fright and flight of Adam at the approach of the Lord, Job passionately desires to confront God (v. 35a; cf. 13:3,22; 23:3-9; 30:20). **Lo, here is my signature** (v. 35b, ASV). Dramatizing the desired audience with God, Job represents the defense he has just offered as a signed and sealed legal document. Then, with consummate arrogance, he declares how he will stride before God as a prince (v. 37b), crowned with the very scroll of his indictment (v. 35c, ASV; v. 36) which will be transformed into an emblem of honor for him by being refuted charge by charge (v. 37a).

38-40. The in pious challenge just uttered (vv. 35-37), while answering to the "if like Adam" condition (vv. 33,34), forms so satisfactory a refutation of the entire catalogue of sins and so grandiloquent a conclusion for the whole speech that many scholars regard the anticlimactic verses 38-40 as dislocated. Stylistically, however, the author of Job is fond of the penultimate climax (cf. e.g., 3:23ff.; 14:15ff.). And materially this final sin (vv. 38,39) and imprecation (v. 40) follow naturally the allusion to the fall of Adam (v. 33ff.), for Job here invokes the elementary primeval curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17,18; cf. Gen 4:11,12).

Job's protestations of innocence have kept pace with his deepening perception of the demands of divine holiness. But now his exhibition of remarkable penetration into God's moral requirements exposes an equally remarkable depth of self-righteousness in him. Such blindness to the depravity and deceitfulness of his own heart did not negate the genuineness of the divine redemptive work in Job. But it did constitute a serious spiritual need, to deal with which — as Elihu was presently to point out (ch. 32ff.) — was one purpose of God (even though not the paramount purpose) in appointing Job's sufferings.

4) The Ministry of Elihu. 32:1-37:24.

Elihu, apparently one of a larger audience attending the debate of the masters, now comes forward and presents his theodicy. Introducing him earlier would have marred the dramatic movement of the poem by a clumsy anticipation of the debate's outcome. The younger man was as ignorant as the others of the heavenly transactions related in the Prologue. His interpretation of Job's sufferings is, therefore, not comprehensive. Elihu did, however, perceive the significance of the all-important principle of God's free grace, which the others had slighted. Hence, with this speech, the light of day begins to dawn on the way of wisdom after the long night of debate, pierced by only an occasional gleam of understanding. The princely arrogance of Job is subdued, and thus Elihu serves as one sent before the face of the Lord to prepare the way for His coming in the whirlwind (ch. 38ff.).

The speech of Elihu (32:6-37:24), though marked by several pauses (34:1; 35:1; 36:1), is essentially a unit. Following the apology (32:6-22), the theodicy is developed in answer to particular complaints of Job (quoted in 33:8-11; 34:5-9; 35:2,3; cf. 36:17ff.) and by means of an exposition of God's grace (33:12-33), righteousness (34:10-36:25), and power (36:26-37:24).

32:1-5. The poetical form is briefly interrupted by this prose preface. Elihu's origins are rather fully traced (v. 2a; cf. 1:1; 2:11). Buzite. Cf. Gen 22:21. Job's failure to be more jealous of God's honor than his own had aroused Elihu's indignation (v. 2b); note the Lord's concurrence (40:8). What provoked Elihu to instruct his elders was the failure of the friends to answer satisfactorily Job's defiant protests against God. And yet had condemned Job (v. 3b). The friends' charge of hypocrisy was a shameful expedient to cover their logical and theological deficiencies. Another possible translation is: because they had not condemned Job. That is, they had failed to prove him wrong in his aspersions against divine justice. This agrees well with Elihu's interest in the justification of God. According to a variant ancient textual tradition, verse 3b would read: and so condemned God. That is, the friends' silence before the still-protesting Job was tantamount to their condemning God.

6-22. Elihu's preliminary apology for claiming the ears of the audience is here

expanded beyond Occidental taste, but that may not reflect on proprieties in the land of Uz (cf. *Iliad* 14:122ff.). Days should speak (v. 7a). Deference for the wisdom associated with age had forestalled Elihu's earlier intervention (vv. 6,7,11). Wisdom, however, is basically a matter of divine gift, specifically of God's endowment of the spirit he has breathed into man: But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand (v. 8, RSV; cf. Gen 2:7). The inglorious performance of the counselors has demonstrated their lack of wisdom in spite of age (Job 32:9,12,15,16), while Elihu claims understanding in spite of youth (v. 6b,10). Rebuking them for abandoning the crusade (v. 13, ASV), Elihu undertakes it (vv. 16,17) with new strategy (v. 14), under the compulsion of a spirit bursting with knowledge of the mystery the sages found so perplexing (vv. 18-20), and with fearless devotion to truth alone (vv. 21,22).

33:1-33. The general apology has been directed to the friends. Now introducing his answer to Job's protests, Elihu addresses to him a challenge (vv. 1-7). He cites statements of Job (vv. 8-11) and gives his own reply (vv. 12-30). So the gauntlet is once more thrown down (vv. 31-33).

1-7. Behold, I am toward God even as thou art (v. 6a, ASV). Elihu is a fellow human being, made out of clay (v. 6b) by God's creative breath (v. 4; cf. Gen 2:7). Facing Elihu's challenge, Job cannot, therefore, make his favorite excuse that paralyzing divine terrors rob him of the composure necessary to defend himself (cf. Job 9:34; 13:21).

8-11. Elihu does not misrepresent Job's position. Job had given a nod of assent to his involvement in human sin (cf. 7:21; 13:26). Moreover, his protestations of innocence were justified in so far as they defended his integrity against the cry of hypocrisy and other excessive charges of the friends. Nevertheless, a tendency towards an overestimate of his righteousness is traceable in those protestations (cf. 9:21, ASV; 10:7; 12:4; 16:17; 23:10ff.; 27:5,6; 29:11ff.). And this conceit becomes almost incredibly bald and bold in Job's final words (ch. 31). In 33:10b Elihu quotes 13:24b; in 33:11 he quotes 13:27a.

12-30. When Elihu cites the further complaint of Job that God giveth not account of any of his matters (v. 13b;

cf. 19:7; 30:20), it might seem that he has dismissed Job's doubts of God's justice very briefly (vv. 8-12) to return to them later (cf. chs. 34-37). But in his answer to the alleged lack of revelation concerning God's ways (vv. 14-30), Elihu incorporates an explanation of the suffering of God's servants, and thus actually begins his defense of divine justice. In OT days God spoke to his people by various special means no longer employed after the completion of the NT revelation (cf. Heb 1:1). Elihu mentions dreams (Job 33: 15-17) and the interpreting angel (vv. 20-30) as special media of revelation. God did not leave his covenant people to grope without the light of authoritative revelation. If there be for him an angel as an interpreter, one of a thousand (v. 23). Innumerable angels minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14; cf. Job 4:18; 5:1; Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17; Dan 7:10; Rev 5:11), one ministry being the interpretation of God's will and ways. Possibly one of a thousand suggests not the abundance of such hierophants but the rarity and pre-eminence of his angel-mediator (cf. Eccl 7:28).

To bring back his soul from the pit (v. 30a; cf. vv. 18,24,28). At the heart of such revelation are the principle and purposes of divine grace. Men live under the shadow of the destroyers (v. 22b), God's angels of death, because of the Lord's holy displeasure with their sin. But once . . . twice, yea thrice (vv. 14,29, ASV) grace intervenes. Sometimes special revelation interposes as a warning to prevent the purposed evil and so deliver from its disastrous consequences (vv. 15-18). Sometimes the revelation comes at the eleventh hour, when a course of sore chastening has brought man to the brink of the pit (vv. 19-22). Then there is remarkable restoration of the blessings of righteousness (vv. 25,26), celebrated by a psalm of confession and thanksgiving (vv. 27,28, ASV). Such deliverances are accomplished by the confrontation of man with his uprightness, i.e., the straight, right way for him (v. 23b; cf. v. 16), and by the man's repentance. This process is the ransom (v. 24c) which is found if God is gracious unto him (v. 24a). In the light of past revelation vouchsafed to God's servants, Elihu labels their sufferings as chastening (v. 19).

31-33. The interpretation of suffering as chastisement is applicable in Job's case (see concluding comments on ch. 31).

Elihu, too, had suggested chastening as one reason for affliction (5:17), but he regarded chastening as meted out in proportion to sin. Though severe chastening might actually be "blessed," never theless it stigmatized a believer as ranking humiliatingly low in the community of the sanctified! Elihu saw chastening in its redemptive context, as informed and governed by the principle of sovereign grace. Since grace is by its very nature sovereignly free, it may bestow the blessing of chastening most abundantly on the saint who has relatively least need! Elihu does not reflect here upon wicked men, but his discovery that suffering is a working of God's free grace is clearly the key to the unpredictable, seemingly arbitrary variety in their sufferings, and in their prosperity as well. For them, too, suffering is a gracious dispensation warning them away from the eternal pit. Thus Elihu removes the sting from the mystery of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. Job's heart leaps for joy. But shame fills him as he recalls the railing accusations he has shouted against the God of grace, and so he holds his peace (v. 33).

34:1-37. The structure of chapter 33 is repeated: an introductory call to hear (vv. 2-4), quotation from Job's complaints (vv. 5-9), an answer thereto (vv. 10-28), and a closing challenge (vv. 29-37).

2-4. It appears from 34:34 that Elihu calls for the attention of a wider circle of listeners than the three friends.

5-9. Elihu once more sets up as his target Job's complaint that God perverts justice by afflicting him with incurable wounds though he is without transgression. This accurately summarizes much in Job's speeches (for v. 5a, cf. esp. 13:18; 23:10; 27:6; for v. 5b, 27:2; for v. 6, 9:20; 6:14; 16:13; for v. 9, cf. 9:22; 10:3; 21:7ff.; 24:1ff.).

10-28. The perversity of Job's charge is proved by a consideration of the righteousness of God. Elihu begins with a direct denial that God is unjust (vv. 10-12). Logically, this may be begging the question, but that only demonstrates the limitations of human logic. For Elihu's appeal is to the sense of deity in God's image-bearer, and that is the only ultimately sound procedure in declaring God's name. Confirmation of the Creator's perfect justice is found in his omnipotence and omniscience (v. 13ff.). Pure impartiality is the correlate of his tran-

scendence above all possible motivation to show respect to the persons of his creatures (vv. 13-20). It is in God that all flesh lives, moves, and has its being (vv. 13-15); kings and the mighty are no exceptions (vv. 16-20). Moreover, God's ordering of the universe contradicts the charge of injustice in him, for injustice works anarchy, not order (v. 17a). No flaw can arise through ignorance in God's government (vv. 21-28). He needeth not further to consider a man (v. 23a, ASV). With one omniscient look God comprehends all the facts in the case, even the secret works of darkness (vv. 21,22) and veiled oppression of the poor (vv. 24-28).

29-37. To question the benevolent providence of God is folly (vv. 29,30). For unto God does one say, I have borne (affliction) without offending? (v. 31). Elihu apparently resumes the thought of verses 5-9 -- the unheard of presumption (cf. v. 7) of Job's protests to God (cf. v. 6b). Shall his recompense be as thou wilt, that thou refusest it? For thou must choose, and not I (v. 33a,b; ASV). Again opportunity is afforded Job to defend his rebelliousness, but he remains silent.

35:1-16. Returning to the idea that God is infinitely exalted above any temptation to tamper with justice (vv. 4-8), Elihu again introduces it by citing the complaint of Job which it refutes (v. 2,3). He then corrects a distortion of this doctrine of divine transcendence (v. 9-13), applying the point to Job (v. 14-16).

2,3. Cf. 34:9. Thinkest thou this to be right? (35; 2a) This refers not to 2b but to verse 3 (see ASV). Also, 2b is subordinate to 3, thus: To criticize the consequences of righteousness is to assume a righteousness superior to God's.

4-8. Thy companions with thee (4b). The workers of iniquity with whom Elihu associated Job in this complaint of profitless righteousness (cf. 34:8,9). It is evident that men can neither diminish (v. 6) nor increase (v. 7) the glory of him who is exalted above the heavens (v. 5). Therefore, neither fear nor favor can hamper him in his administration of justice. Eliphaz had presented a similar argument for divine justice (cf. 22:2-4), but it was vitiated by his misunderstanding of the administration of that justice. Job, too, had referred to the unchangeableness of the self-contained Creator, but had concluded that it minimized human responsibility (cf. 7:20,21).

9-13. God's transcendent immutability is not equivalent to indifference to human virtue and vice; it is not a distant disinterest in the multitudes who cry . . . because of the pride of evil men (v. 12 a,c), as Job had complained (cf. 24:12). Such prayer rather goes unheeded because God will not hear an empty cry (v. 13a, ASV), a mere animal cry (v. 11) for physical relief. None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night (v. 10). It is not that God is indifferent to men but that men are indifferent to God. They do not seek God for God's sake, content to sing doxologies in the midst of desolation if only he be their portion. Elihu summons Job to the wisdom of his original response of faith (cf. 1:21).

14-16. If God's judgment tarries (v. 14; cf. 19:7; 23:8ff.; 30:20), and his wrath is restrained the while (v. 15, ASV; cf. 21:7ff.), Job ought not jump to vain conclusions (v. 16).

36:1-37:24. Continuing the theme of God's righteousness, Elihu expounds further the gracious design of the afflictions of the righteous, exhorting Job to be profitably exercised thereby (36:1-25; cf. 33:19ff.). In the closing verses of this exhortation, the appeal shifts to the excellency of God's power (cf. 34:12ff.), and that becomes the grand subject of Elihu's conclusion (36:26-37:24), the herald's cry before the advent of the Lord (ch. 38ff.).

36:1-25. Elihu characterizes his theology as complete truth (vv. 2-4). Possibly 4b refers to God (cf. 37:16). God's greatness is a greatness of goodness and wisdom (v. 5), of justice bestowed impartially and grace bestowed abundantly on the righteous (vv. 6,7). Here again Elihu might seem to lapse into the approach of the friends, but the difference between them appears in his interpretation of the apparent exceptions to the general pattern observable in divine government (8ff.; cf. comments on 33:12-30). Afflictions call the righteous to more ardent spiritual strivings and thus are an effective means of deliverance from sin and its consequences (vv. 8-10,15). They disappear when their specific purpose is realized (v. 11); and only then (v. 12). Similarly, if the godless in heart (v. 13a, ASV) react to a long-suffering God's afflictive warnings with sullen rage (v. 13), they may expect only to be early fatalities of their debaucheries (v. 14). Let not the great-

ness of the ransom turn you aside (v. 18b, RSV; cf. 33:24). The overwhelming loss entailed in Job's chastening allured him away from the instruction (lit., *mouth*) of affliction (v. 16a; cf. 15b) into a response of angry judgment and scoffing (vv. 17,18a, RSV). Will thy cry avail, that thou be not in distress? (v. 19a, ASV) In Job's angry complaint, with its bitter longing for the night of the grave (v. 20), he spurns the sanctifying work of affliction (v. 21). Let him, therefore, consider the exalted works of God (vv. 22a,25), attend submissively to the instruction he sends (vv. 22b, 23), and so transform complaint into doxology (v. 24; cf. 35:10).

**36:26-37:24.** Adopting his own counsel (36:24), Elihu utters psalmodic praise to the Lord of creation. The divine rule is illustrated by various atmospheric phenomena: the rain cycle of evaporation and precipitation (36:26-28), fearfully majestic thunderstorms (36:29-37:4), and frosty winter's ice and snow (37:5-13). Each of these is introduced by an affirmation of the incomprehensibility of God's works (36:26,29; 37:5). Elihu observes that the elemental forces once unleashed do not escape God's control; but, like the expertly hurled missiles of warriors in the elite ambidextrous corps (36:32; cf. *Iliad* 21:183; 1 Chr 12:2), they perform God's bidding (37:12), whether as a curse (36:31a; 37:13a; cf. 1:16, 19) or as blessing (36:31b; 37:13b; cf. 37:7).

The intimate relation thus suggested between God's rule of nature and his rule of history prepares for Elihu's concluding application to Job: If man cannot comprehend God's natural rule, he ought not expect to comprehend God's moral rule. By a series of humbling questions (37:15ff.) Elihu impresses on Job his creaturehood, reminding him that by his finite standards he cannot judge God, all of whose ways are infinitely higher than human thought. Hence the folly of disputing his government (37:19,20,24b). The way of wisdom is to fear him who is incomprehensible and excellent in all his attributes (vv. 23,24a).

His ministry accomplished, Elihu retires from the scene. He has prepared the way of the Lord in the hearts of Job and his friends. From the literary perspective, the Elihu discourse forms an eminently successful transition to the

following theophany. The younger man's vivid description of the fury of the elements sets the mood for (perhaps was actually inspired by) the approaching whirlwind vehicle of God. His thematic concentration on natural revelation is continued by the Lord, as is also even the interrogating style of his final exhortation (cf. 38:3ff.). In judging Job's controversy with his friends (cf. 42:7-9), the Lord does not mention Elihu, because the younger man was not a party to the dispute of the older ones, nor had his words been such as to require expiation. Though the Speaker from the whirlwind does not mention Elihu by name, He does not ignore him. For by continuing Elihu's essential argument and endorsing his judgments concerning both Job (cf. 32:2 and 40:8) and the friends (cf. 32:3 and 42:7ff.), the Lord owns Elihu as his forerunner.

#### B. The Voice of God. 38:1-41:34.

The verdicts passed on Job by men had darkened the way of wisdom until Elihu spoke. That way is now fully illuminated by the Voice from the whirlwind. It is eminently appropriate that the Lord's approach to Job is in the form of challenge. So also he had confronted Satan (cf. 1:7,8; 2:2,3). God challenged both Satan and Job by confronting them with his wondrous works. And since Job himself is the divine work by which Satan was challenged, it is through the success of this challenge to Job that God perfects the triumph of his challenge to Satan. God's challenge to Job proceeds in two stages (38:1-40:2 and 40:6-41:34), with a pause midway, marked by Job's initial submission (40:3-5).

#### 1) The Divine Challenge. 38:1-40:2

**38:1-3. Out of the whirlwind** (v. 1). This characteristic vehicle of theophany (cf. Ps 18:7ff.; 50:3; Ezk 1:4,28; Nah 1:3; Hab 3; Zech 9:14) was such as to dramatize the spoken revelation it accompanied. Who is this that darkeneth counsel (v. 2). The absurdity of Job's criticism of God's counsel lies in their respective identities. The creature critic of the Creator! Gird up now thy loins like a man (v. 3a). The imagery of the divine challenge is drawn from the popular ancient sport of belt-wrestling. The figure is especially suitable in this context because belt-wrestling was also used as an ordeal in court, and it is by ordeal

that Job's case is being settled.

**38:4-39:30.** The ordeal to which the Creator challenges his creature is a test of wisdom. Many of God's questions deal with executive power, but the OT concept of wisdom includes the craftsman's talent. Attention is drawn to the Creator's unsearchable wisdom everywhere displayed—on the earth (38:4-21), in the heavens (38:22-38), and in the animal kingdom (38:39-39:30), the sequence of narration being, in main outline, the same that this Speaker adopted in Genesis 1. Job becomes increasingly impressed with the immensity of his own ignorance and impotence.

**38:4-21. Where wast thou** (v. 4a). Job's knowledge of the earth suffers from his spatial and temporal limitations. This section opens and closes with references to Job's nonexistence at creation (vv. 4, 21; cf. 12; contrast "Wisdom" in Prov 8:22ff.). Hence his ignorance of how the earth was founded (Job 38:4-7) or the sea bounded (vv. 8-11), of how earth's days are rounded by the cycle of dawn and darkness (vv. 12-15, 19-21). Neither has Job sounded the depth of the sea nor measured the breadth of the land (vv. 16-18).

**38:22-38. Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?** (v. 33b) To qualify as director and judge of man's life on earth, one must be able to govern the heavenly bodies that rule the earth (cf. Gen 1:14-18). Note the repeated mention of the influence of the atmospheric and astral heavens on earthly affairs (Job 38:23, 26, 27, 33, 34, 38). But Job has no control over the waters above as to whether, where, when, or how they will precipitate. The lightning will not present itself before him like an obedient servant (v. 35); nor has he the remotest influence upon heaven's seasonal signs (vv. 31, 32).

**38:39-39:30.** Again in this section on animate creation, the purpose is to convince Job of his incompetence for the role of world governor, while magnifying the wisdom of Him who actually is creation's Ruler (cf. 12:7). The creative and providential activity of God embraces wild creatures beyond man's control, just as, in the inanimate sphere, it embraces the wilderness beyond man's acquaintance (cf. 38:26, 27). Lions and ravens are not available or likely subjects for man's charities (38:39-41), nor the wild goats for the solicitous care of the animal husbandman (39:1-4). Man

cannot bring the elusive wild ass (39:5-8) and untamable wild ox (39:9-12) under his yoke. Even the stupid ostrich scorns the proud horsemen (39:13-18), while the horse, in turn, scorns the human battle host and the boast of Lamech (39:19-25; cf. Gen 4:22-24). The final vignette directs Job's eyes on high, toward his Creator's throne—to the raptorial hawk and eagle, waiting to be called by God to His judgment feast, with its prey of rebel men, kings and captains, horses and riders together (Job 39:26-30; cf. Ezk 39:17; Rev 19:17ff.). Here is the ultimate vanity of all the efforts of human wisdom—that man is reduced to food for the subhuman creation. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (I Cor 1:27a). Even the wildlings laugh at man's cultural strivings (vv. 7, 18, 22).

**40:1,2. Will the critic contend with the Almighty?** (v. 2a) The first "fall" of the wrestling ordeal is about to be decided. God demands that Job admit defeat. This would be still clearer according to a reading reflected in some ancient versions: "Will the contender with the Almighty yield?"

2) Job's Submission. 40:3-5.

**Behold, I am of small account** (v. 4a, ASV). The Creator's surpassing wisdom has been so effectively impressed on Job that he will not further dispute God's ways as he had once and again (v. 5). Far less will he approach God as a prince (cf. 31:37). Job's practice begins to adorn again the doctrine of wisdom he has confessed (cf. 28:8).

3) The Divine Challenge Renewed. 40:6-41:34.

**40:6,7.** An aim of belt-wrestling was to strip the opponent of his belt, but a contest was not always terminated by one such "fall." Thus Job is, in a figure, to fasten on the belt again and renew the ordeal. His initial submission (40:3-5) was good but only the beginning of his repentance. He must recognize not only the unreasonableness but also the sinfulness of criticizing the Almighty.

**40:8-14. Hast thou an arm like God?** (v. 9a) The redemptive power of God by which he saves his people and judges their enemies is often pictured as an outstretched arm and a mighty hand (cf. v. 14b). Job's criticism of God's government, especially his boast that he will overcome the Lord's imagined opposition to his justification, was, in



principle, a usurpation of the divine prerogative of world government, a lusting after godlike knowledge of good and evil (cf. Gen 3:5), a self-deification. Let Job prove his ability to execute the sentence of condemnation against wicked men, whose prosperity seems to him unjust (Job 40:10-13). Then God will worship at the cult of Job, acknowledging that he possesses the divine power of redemptive judgment whereby he can justify and save himself (v. 14).

**40:15-41:34.** (Heb. text, 40:15-41:26). Since Job obviously cannot ascend the heavenly throne to try his hand at judging the wicked, God proposes a more feasible test. The motif of the deity commissioning an animal champion to battle a human hero is paralleled in ancient mythology. (Cf. Gilgamesh Epic, in which Ishtar sends the bull of heaven against Gilgamesh.) In Mesopotamian art, moreover, the bull of heaven is depicted wearing the wrestling-belt. **Behemoth** (40:15ff.) is commonly identified with the hippopotamus; **leviathan** (41:1ff.; Heb. text 40:25ff.), with the crocodile. These two are found together in Egyptian art. It is not necessary to demonstrate the presence of hippopotamus or crocodile in the Jordan area of old, since *yardēn* (40:23b) is apparently a common noun meaning "river" (cf. the parallel in v. 23a). Many other identifications have been suggested; recently, for example, of behemoth with the crocodile and leviathan with the whale. If behemoth can successfully be identified as a crocodile (cf. 40:17,24a, Heb.), it ought to be considered whether the entire passage describes only one creature, i.e., leviathan. The designation **behemoth**, taken as a plural intensive, "the beast par excellence," would be an epithet like **chief of the ways of God** (v. 19a). Note the similar supreme claims made for leviathan (41:33,34). Certain descriptive details do not fit any real creature. This has led to the view that not zoological creatures are intended but mythological chaos monsters conceived along the lines of stylized hippopotamus and crocodile. Then 40:15ff. would be a symbolic elaboration of the preceding challenge to quell rebellious proud men (40:9-14). Compare the use of the dragon symbol for Satan in Revelation. How appropriate would be an intimation to Job that his wrestlings were with the prince of proud rebels!

Contextually suitable as this mythical interpretation is, the passage is more naturally understood as a picture of real creatures painted with some highly figurative strokes (e.g., 41:19ff.). Note especially that God presents behemoth as one **which I made as I made you** (40:15b, RSV). Here indeed is the point of the passage: Job is to discover from his inability to vanquish even a fellow creature the folly of aspiring to the Creator's throne. The a fortiori conclusion becomes explicit in 41:10b; **Who then is able to stand before me? The absolute divine transcendence contradicts Job's assumed right of claim against God because it precludes the possibility of Job's having given anything to God: Who hath first given unto me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine** (41:11, ASV).

Since the occasion of this extended demonstration of God's power is his engaging Job in a court ordeal, the demonstration is clearly offered as a defense of God's justice. Accordingly, it is introduced by the question: **Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?** (40:8; cf. 38:2) Not that the attribute of justice can be abstractly deduced from that of omnipotence. Attention is rather directed to the mighty, divine works as compelling witnesses to God—not just to one attribute but to God himself; the God who has revealed himself to man from within and without, by general and special revelation; the living God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; the God whose veracity and justice were the presupposition of Job's trial by ordeal, who swears by himself because he can swear by no greater.

#### IV. Confession: The Way of Wisdom Regained. 42:1-6.

**42:1-6.** This confession is the counterbalance to Job's complaint (ch. 3). It acknowledges the sinful rebelliousness which began with that complaint. It is not an admission of sins prior to his sufferings such as would support the friends' accusation. By this unreserved commitment of himself to his Lord, a commitment made while he was still in his sufferings, not having received either explanation of the mystery of the past or promise for the future, Job shows



himself a true covenant servant, ready to serve his God for nought. The confession therefore marks Job's final "bruising" of Satan, the final vindication of God's redemptive power.

No purpose of thine can be restrained (v. 2b, ASV). This is not bare resignation under omnipotent pressure, but praise of the living God and a trusting acquiescence in his wise purposes. In 42:3a, Job quotes God's words (cf. 38:2,3b; 40:7), directing their convicting light upon himself, and then responds, "I am the man" (42: 3b,5,6). Things too wonderful for me (v. 3c). Finite man may not pose as final arbiter, for in God and his ways there is mystery beyond human comprehension. But now mine eye seeth thee (v. 5b). For the contrast between hearing and seeing in relation to knowledge, see 26:14; 28:21-27. No form of God had appeared in the whirlwind; but the revelation of the Voice had been a transforming experience, illuminating all other divine revelation, whether general or such earlier, special revelation as had been transmitted to Job. By this new light Job finds again the way of wisdom. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (v. 6). Godly hatred of his own defilement is the natural accompaniment of the believer's confrontation with his holy Lord (cf. Isa 6:5). The philosophical Why? has not been answered, but God, by the condescension of his coming, has assured Job of his gracious concern. That is enough for Job.

#### V. Restoration: The Triumph of Job's Wisdom. 42:7-17.

##### A. Job's Wisdom Vindicated. 42:7-9.

The Lord works deliverance from Job's evils in the reverse order of their incurance and in the obverse order of their gravity. Job's false sense of God's estrangement had been the first evil corrected. Now the defamation of Job's name among men is dealt with, and afterwards family and wealth are restored.

Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath (v. 7c, ASV). If *'elay* were translated *unto me*, there would be a clear reference to Job's confession. But even if it is translated *of me*, it seems necessary to think primarily of Job's confession and the friends' lack of such repentance in response to the theophany. For in terms

of the theology expressed in their debate, the difference between them was merely one of degree. The words of all of them were in part censurable. Agreeably, the remedy is that Job should mediate for them in offering sacrifice, which was a mode of expressing public repentance in OT times (v. 8). The proportions of the offering were commensurate with the status of the offenders and the solemnity of the occasion (cf. Num 23ff.). Job is vindicated and the friends are rebuffed, but in such a way that the friends are forgiven by Job as well as by God. For the very form of Job's vindication is the privilege of praying for those who have despitely used him (cf. Ezk 14:14-20). God's vindictory acknowledgment of Job as *my servant* answered to Job's faith in his heavenly Kinsman and anticipated the eschatological, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt 25:21 ff.). Further, it was the confirmation of God's original boast to Satan (Job 1: 8; 2:3) and so crowns His triumph over the evil one.

##### B. Job's Wisdom Blessed. 42:10-17.

Religion is not a means to prosperity as an end. But God's creation is good, and the inheritance of the earth promised to the meek is an integral part of the total beatitude of the whole man. As the book of Job itself teaches, in this world piety and prosperity are not invariably companions. But under the government of the righteous Creator, righteous men must ultimately be given beauty for ashes. The life of Job was shaped by God to be a prophetic sign of "the end, of the Lord" (cf. Jas 5:11) for the greater encouragement of the righteous in that early period of redemptive revelation when the end was yet very far off (cf. Enoch's rapture, Gen 5:24).

Significantly, the turning point in Job's external circumstances, his deliverance from the hands of Satan, was marked by the act in which he spiritually exemplified the righteousness of God's kingdom (cf. Mt 6:33) and ceremonially typified the Messianic sacrifice which establishes that righteousness (Job 42: 10). The double blessing (v. 10b; cf. Isa 61:7; Zech 9:12) extends to Job's property (Job 42:12) and family (vv. 13-15), for the dead children are still Job's in his hope of immortality (cf. also v. 16b). Possibly the prolongation of his life to patriarchal fullness (vv. 16, 17; cf. Gen 25:7,8; 35:28,29) is a

doubling of a previous seventy years (cf. Ps 90:10). It certainly suggests the recovery of health, as the daughters' in-

heritance among their brothers (Job 42:15b) suggests the restoration of Job's earlier family felicity.

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