

Job in His Perfection; God in His

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INTRODUCTION: JOB THE OUTSIDER

It is certain that Job is not an Israelite.¹ He hails from the Land of Uz, the location of which is no longer identifiable to us.² This makes him an outsider to Israel. Moreover, if his homeland is in the territory of Edom, as many suggest, he would have been considered by the ancient Israelites a mortal enemy. This is not an incidental detail; we are hit square in the face with this fact in the very first phrase of the book. It is clear the author would have us understand Job's foreign identity to be critical for the understanding of this book.³ Another important observation is that, while the book presupposes a deep understanding of Mosaic Law and the majestic monotheistic theology of Israel's prophets, it is intentionally set, as it were, in far-off antiquity.⁴

When we place these two considerations together, we are left with a curious conclusion. Because Job is a man set in a land and time far away, he cannot be definitely linked to any historical moment in the history of Israel. This is an ingenious device by the author to lift the book into a timeless sphere, addressing all men at all times. We propose that the problem of suffering, though obviously an important issue, is not the core theme of the book. Rather, the central issue is Job's perfection—as human and limited as it is—and how it can relate to God's perfection—as divine and expansive as it is. Suffering serves as the platform upon which the perfections of both God and Job are displayed to humanity. The book critiques the theology of Job's friends, which represents the popular monotheism developing in orthodox Judaism after the Exile. In a nutshell, their theology is not comprehensive enough to grasp either Job's suffering or his perfection, with the result that it misses divine perfection as well. Monotheism can easily go to seed through emphasizing transcendence by de-emphasizing the inherent worth and integrity of humanity. This tendency is evident today in the philosophy and theology of many groups and peoples.

Job stands before us as *Ecce Homo*, bare before heaven and earth, like de Vinci's Vitruvian Man sketch—man as a cosmic fact: incredibly small yet expansive, mortal yet immortal, amazingly sinful yet righteous and capable of perfection. Man is real and not a mere shadow or a dream, having integrity of personhood with real powers, real feelings, real aspirations, real choices. This is how the book of Job represents mankind as he stands before YHWH, the absolutely sovereign and transcendent God, *Rex tremendi*, king of terrifying dimensions.

I. JOB THE PERFECT

Job is not only an outsider, but he is also clearly perfect and righteous. We are certain of this because the narrator introduces Job as such in the opening verse, and God Himself proclaims him to be so twice (1:8, 2:3). These three times complete a triple utterance. Nothing could be more clear from the very outset; this must not be doubted or forgotten by any of us as we progress through the story. Job is the very best of the best, the ideal man. In fact, God Himself is impressed by him, judging by His glowing pride in Job, even to the point of gloating over him as He shows him off to “the satan”.⁵

Here we must realize that the biblical notion of perfection is not to be understood as the attainment of an ethical high point measured on a celestial yardstick.⁶ The Hebrew word **תָּמ** (*tām*) carries nothing of the Greek ideal of static perfection or of reaching an apex.⁷ Still less can we bend the word to mean a state of sinless perfection.⁸ Rather, perfection is a dynamic idea that involves an orientation and a movement towards God. The perfect man commits himself to the process of emerging out of sin and chaos into the person God intends him to be. He can do this only because he is in relationship with God and embraces the divine graces God provides. This word **תָּמ**, along with its mate **יָשָׁר** (*yāšār*), which carries the ideas of straight, right, and just, come together here to paint a picture of Job's character, that he is whole, or integrated. His interior mirrors his outward actions. Such character development doesn't just happen. It is the result of a nurtured relationship with God such as Enoch had when it is said that he “walked with God” (Gen. 5:22ff.). Job “feared God” and “turned from evil” (1:1). The text here simply portrays Job's righteous perfection by opening one window into his life: his heart is revealed by his deep concern that his children would not curse God in their prosperity, and this is worked out by his unfailing sacrifices on their behalf (1:5).

There is certainly more detail to Job's spirituality, as we shall see later. The important point to be made here is that Job is someone who stands out to God above all men; no one is like him in all the earth (1:8). He is unique, which is, in fact, a divine quality.⁹ God takes notice of him. Job has integrity of being; he is someone who has achieved something real and lasting. He is highly prized! God is impressed. On the contrary, Satan is not impressed. In his travels and arrogant observations, he believes that he has a handle on the human race. People are, in his sight, mere vermin, capable only of operating out of self-interest, and, should God remove His blessing from him, Job would be no differ-

ent (1:9). And so the stage is set. A drama unfolds, and Job, the main actor, hasn't the foggiest idea that he has been drawn into a cosmic play. God has placed everything on the line with Job!

What is man? Does he hold any integrity as a creature made in God's image, or has he so spoiled himself that he is a complete sham? Who is right about the human race, God or the Satan? The text would lead us to believe that if there were but one man who is proved perfect and righteous, the whole human mess would be redeemable,¹⁰ and God would be justified in His ways.

II. JOB ON THE BRINK OF APOSTASY: THE INCANTATION

Among the above certainties, we may also hold that Job suffers to the fullest extent that a human is capable of suffering. The calamities that fall upon him methodically strip him of everything, and it is inconceivable how he, or anyone else who has ever lived in this world, could suffer more. True, there are many forms and variations of human woe, but who would argue with the wizened, broken-down, diseased lump of humanity before us—a man before whom all the goodness of the world once opened as a flower—and try to convince him that things could be even worse? We are, therefore, confronted with a terrifying tension within Job. Two mighty forces converge in conflict, tearing his soul apart. One is his radical perfection, the other, his radical suffering. The question before us is this: will Job keep his perfection, or will he crumble underneath the dead weight of human suffering, curse God, and die? Ironically, this is what Job dreads that his children will do (1:5), and what his wife actually suggests to Job as a solution to his dilemma (2:9).

More subtle, however, is the question of what a perfect man does with his perfection in the face of perfect suffering. Suffering is not a mere illusion in Hebraic thought. It is a deadly reality. It cannot be flung aside superficially by anyone, even the perfect man. True, suffering can be brought upon oneself by disobeying God. In such cases we have the consolation that it can be explained, at least to some degree. This is the line that Job's friends will follow. But how will Job deal with unexplained suffering, brought about, unbeknownst to him, because he is a pawn in a cosmic chess game that God and Satan are playing? Will he "hold on to his perfection" (2:9)? If so, what does this look like?

The outcome is messy. A curse leaps forth from the depths of Job's pure soul that is positively startling. What makes it so shocking is that it is so out of character; blessings were accustomed to come out of his mouth, not curses. Moreover, his curse is not an ordinary one. Like Job himself, it is perfectly proportioned. Such a curse could be forged only in the furnace of perfect pain. It is a literary masterpiece divided into three sections. In the first section is the incantation proper, where Job curses the day that he was born (3:3-10). Swirling around this cauldron of infernal words are anti-creation motifs, especially that of darkness which is invoked to overcome the day that gave light to his birth (3:4, 9). Job, concerned that his incantation will not be effective, invites those who are skilled in such matters, grand warlocks who possess the ability to raise Leviathan itself from the regions of darkness and death, to complete his curse (3:8). (Interestingly enough, it is YHWH Himself at the end of the book who conjures up this fearful creature before his eyes!)

The curse is completed with two more sections that more properly could be called complaints, or laments. In the first of these, Job asks if his birth was inevitable, why he could not have been a still-born (3:11-19). He would then lie senseless in his grave where troubles could not reach him. The concluding section (3:20-26) artfully begins with the question "Why does He (i.e., God) give light to the bitter of soul?"¹¹ The implication is clear. Job will curse the day that gave him light in his incantation above, but he will not curse God for doing the very same thing. Job is coming as close as he can to cursing God without actually doing so. To round it all off, Job employs a series of words to describe his hellish state of soul that are most naturally used in worship (3:21-22). He longs for death as one should long for God, he searches for it as for hidden treasures as one should search for wisdom, he would rejoice exceedingly if he found it and be glad as one who is elated with God.¹² Death is glorified rather than God! But he cannot find death! In fact, he feels like a man in his grave, but buried alive!¹³

We see Job, the perfect man, in his misery entertaining the real possibility of apostasy.

III. JOB'S FRIENDS IN THEIR TERROR: THE FIGHT FOR JOB'S SOUL

Job's friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have received a bad press over the ages. It is often overlooked that they sit silently with their miserable friend for seven days and seven nights, a perfect number and a perfect grieving period (2:13). It is only after experiencing the terrific blast of Job's curse, and sensing that his soul is in danger of apostasy, that they feel they have to say something. The truth of the matter is that they are his friends, and although their ensuing arguments seem tasteless to us and perhaps even cruel, one must always keep in mind that for them there is a greater issue at stake than even Job's great suffering—truth itself. They are desperate to keep Job in the truth, as they understand truth.

Who are these men? Although they, like Job, are non-Israelite,¹⁴ it cannot be doubted that they are operating with fully developed monotheism built upon Mosaic foundations and the high theology of Israel's prophets, such as we find

in Post-exilic Judah. Our author, therefore, would have us understand that he is moderating a debate in a safe and objective place outside of Judah so as to provide a mirror in which monotheistic Jews of the Second Temple Period can view themselves and critique their own theology. Monotheism is fueled by an exalted passion for transcendence. If a transcendent Creator-God exists, this is as it should be. However, human zeal for transcendent theology can create a truncated view of God, and by extension, a false idea of humanity. Their thesis is that God can be great only to the degree that man is small. In other words, God is perfect only to the degree that He is transcendent. Job's friends, defenders of this popular brand of monotheism, must set Job's questioning soul straight at all costs! Their whole world-view, their very cosmology, is at stake! The fight is on!

This fight is carried on in three great sections of the book. In each section Job's friends have their say followed by Job's response. Let us briefly observe this famous conflict of souls.

A. Round One: Job 4-14

Eliphaz is leader of the three and likes the stage.¹⁵ He easily brushes aside as superficial those essential aspects that have characterized Job's life to this point, i.e., his fear of God and his perfection (4:6). There must be something ugly underneath it all, for in Eliphaz' world, one sows what one reaps (4:8, 5:6). Eliphaz styles himself as a man of vision, one to whom God has revealed himself supernaturally (4:12-16). The revelation imparted to him was that of the radical transcendence of God (4:17-21). "Is mortal man righteous in the presence of God; is a human being pure before his maker?"¹⁶ These rhetorical questions are followed by statements that hammer away at the smallness and insignificance not only of man, but even of angels who share creaturehood with man. Men live and die, and God is too great to concern Himself with them. However, Eliphaz allows for that great scriptural doctrine of reversals, in which God brings low the proud and exalts the humble (5:8-16). He suggests to Job that he should seek God in his affliction (5:8), for surely God has punished him so as to correct him and finally bring him back to prosperity (5:17-27). Eliphaz has much confidence in his theology and feels safe with it.

When one surveys the thought of Eliphaz in this first round, one can see that everything he says is, in fact, generally true. There can be no doubt about the law of retribution in this world; life is generally merciless with our misdeeds and generally smiles upon our good deeds—we do tend to sow what we reap.¹⁷ However, we know in Job's case that this simply is not true. His suffering has nothing at all to do with bad character or actions. Moreover, any solid theology must come to terms with the radical transcendence of God over His creation. God *is* infinitely bigger than creation, and He has no need of it or of man to complete Himself. However, Eliphaz' application of this theology in his friend Job's case is absolutely spurious, for we know from the prologue that God is intensely interested in Job and even admires him. It is also true that God afflicts humans with suffering to correct them, but this is not the case with Job. Here, it is Job's perfection that is being tested. All this theology, especially that of God's magnificent transcendence, was standard Jewish theology of the Second Temple Period. However, although Eliphaz' theology is biblical and true as far as it goes, he is absolutely wrong in his application of it to Job's case. In fact, he has not a ghost of an idea of what is really going on with Job (i.e., that Job *really is* righteous and pure in God's sight), let alone any knowledge of what is going on in the supernatural.

However content Eliphaz is with his theology, it is all lost on Job, who is writhing in pain from God's poison arrows (6:4). To his mind, all his braying is a natural response to one in his circumstances (6:5-7). He senses fear in Eliphaz' heart, for Job is terrifying to behold in his suffering (6:21). Job discerns that his friends fear the words of his terrible incantation in chapter 3, but to him they no longer matter for they are lost in the wind (6:26). He makes a plea for his friends to be real and not to hide behind their theology,¹⁸ for, whatever they say, he knows that his righteousness still stands intact (6:29). Not so his body: his skin is disintegrating before their very eyes (7:5)! Given his horrible plight, he directly addresses God, claiming his right to complain (7:11), for he is a real person in a seemingly surreal situation. He asks God if he is the devil himself that He should make him suffer so.¹⁹ How is it that he has warranted such negative attention from God? Surely there must be a way to work things out (7:20-21). He ends this first speech as he will end all the rest, with a vision of death, destruction, or Sheol itself.²⁰

Bildad now makes his entrance into the dialogue. Neither he nor his friend Zophar will say anything original, nor take the argument beyond that of Eliphaz. They are small-souled men who have found themselves in a situation utterly beyond them. Bildad is disturbed by Job's daring speech before God and encourages him to repent (8:1-7). He directs him to seek the wisdom of the fathers (8:8-10), and then he employs a series of parables to cast light on Job's condition—that of the marsh plant (8:11-13), the spider's house (8:14-15), and the well-watered plant (8:16-18), all three being illustrations from nature of the theme of impermanence. His point is that Job's former prosperity must have been a flash in the pan, something without secure foundations in righteousness. He concludes with a very shallow "slap on the back," in a "cheer up, old fellow" sort of way, assuring him that things will work out all right in the end if Job gets his act together (8:19-22).

Job is not encouraged by such superficiality. He does, however, acknowledge to Bildad that he understands God's supreme and untouchable position. Although there is no indication that Job has backed down from his conviction that he is righteous (6:29), he is well aware that no man, including himself, can ultimately stand before God's righteousness

(9:2). To prove that he thoroughly comprehends the sovereignty of God, he launches into a speech that displays his own personal meditations on this subject. God is absolute master of creation, whether it be the highest heavens above or the watery deep below.²¹ Although Job questions God in his anguish, he knows on some level that no one can ask God “What are you doing?” (9:12). This means that God does not have a superior who is able to judge His acts.²² We are up against a Being outside the law, who does not play by the rules! What man can comprehend a God whom we know to be pure and righteous and who is in absolute control of the demon helpers of the chaos goddess Rahab (9:13)?²³ Although Job is as righteous and blameless as a mortal man can be, what can he say before such a supreme God (9:15, 20)? Job is, therefore, confused about himself (9:21)! Yet in the face of God’s overwhelming transcendence, Job is still compelled to maintain his personhood. He is real, his grief is real, and his integrity is real! The doctrine of the sovereignty of God cannot solve his problems.

Job then gives full vent to his feelings (10:1). He accuses God of acting basely like man does (10:3-6). He reminds God that, as Creator, it is His duty to be responsible for His creation (10:8-12). Instead, God hates His creature Job (10:13-17). He tells God to leave him alone so that he can have a little peace before he descends into the netherworld.

Before such a mighty blast, Zophar seems even smaller than Bildad. He does say something, however, that is prophetic. Out of his love for his friend, he longs for God to show Job a revelation of Himself so as to reveal Job’s fault (11:5-6). This, indeed, is what God will do at the end, but with a very different result than what Zophar could ever imagine. After hammering away on Job with the doctrine of God’s transcendence for a while (11:7-12), he ends with an appeal to Job to repent so that all will be well with him in the end (11:13-20).

Job responds with heavy irony, “Truly you are the people, and with you wisdom will die” (12:2). He who is just and blameless before God is mocked by his friends (12:4).²⁴ There is absolutely nothing they know that he does not know (12:3). Indeed, even the beasts and nature itself know and can teach this doctrine of the transcendence of God (12:7-12). Job then launches out on what may very well be a parody on Zophar’s argument, propounding an extreme transcendence that makes creation puppet-like (12:13-25). The problem is that this truth is not helping him (13:1f.). They peddle this doctrine to him the way quack doctors peddle their snake oil (13:4). Instead of defending God, they are offending Him with their superficiality (13:7-12). Job turns to God and demands an audience with Him with the proviso that He plays fair and does not crush him with His transcendence (13:20ff.). Job is taking God seriously; he naturally expects that God will respect his integrity as a person and will respond in kind. Job has little hope that this will happen, however. He, therefore, falls into a dark meditation on the pitiful state of humanity (Chapter 14). Again his concluding thoughts embrace death, as he ponders the little comfort he might find in the grave (14:13). God is the destroyer of hope; man is utterly alone in his pain and misery.

B. Round Two: Job 15-21

In round one, Job’s friends were feeling him out, so to speak, hoping to convince him of his errors so that he would repent. They are shocked at what they are hearing from their friend and are now finding themselves sucked into a heated exchange in which they never intended to be engaged. Indeed, they become angry and even more remote from Job’s suffering.

Eliphaz condemns Job for casting away the fear of God, which is, in effect, apostasy (15:4). More than this, he has become the very snake that seduced Eve in the garden (15:5-6).²⁵ With primal origins in mind, he asks Job in mockery if he is the first man, or perhaps the wisdom that was before the creation of the hills (15:7f.; cf. Prov. 8:22-31). Eliphaz is insulted that Job does not have greater respect for his friend’s wisdom (15:9f.). Through his anger, we gain a clear insight into Eliphaz’ mind and what is most real and dear to him: it is his doctrine of God. God is so big that even the purest of angels are impure to Him, let alone mankind, loathsome and corrupt, drinking iniquity like water (15:14-16). This, we remember, is merely an intensification of what he had said in his first speech (4:18-19). It is a deformed theology which strengthens itself by granting all greatness and glory to God, but does so only by making creatures, especially sinful humanity, proportionally small, insignificant to God, and hopelessly corrupt. This seems to be a position of humility but carries with it a scent of arrogant insecurity. Eliphaz, in his arrogance, feels obligated to defend God (cf. 13:6f.) but is insecure with the haunting possibility that his system may not be able to explain the complexity before him, in this case, Job. That Job should make a stand against God is the height of blasphemy, for it necessarily implies that God is lessened should he be allowed to continue. Eliphaz rails on him as if he were a rebel for the rest of the chapter.

Job senses this arrogant insecurity and plays the psychologist. He even suggests that Eliphaz is suffering from mental illness (16:3).²⁶ He would like to think that if the roles were reversed, he would be a comfort to Eliphaz (16:5). Be this as it may, Job sinks again into a diatribe against God, his tormentor (16:11-14). He makes a plea for an arbitrator (16:21), for which he has long lost hope (cf. 9:33). Since the truth about him is locked up with God on high (16:19), Job lays down before God his suffering and impending death as a witness to His injustice (17:3).²⁷ Thus settling his affairs, Job turns his face to the grave that is about to receive him (17:13) and prepares to be received by the gates of Sheol (17:16).

Like Eliphaz, Bildad is insulted by Job’s inability to appreciate him and feels brutish and stupid (18:3, cf. 15:9ff.).

We are left with the suspicion, however, that it is not Job's fault that he feels this way, but rather that he is simply feeling his inadequacy before things too wonderful for him. In a moment when silence would be fitting, Bildad lets loose a vindictive oratory describing the fate of the evil man, which, in this case, means Job. For Bildad, everything is simple.

Job protests such insensitivity on the part of his friends (19:1-6). He is merely trying to put words to how he feels (19:7-20) and asks for pity, of which God has deprived him (19:21f.). In the midst of his despair, however, something grips Job's spirit that is truly glorious. As he is making an appeal to posterity, that his words would be written in a book, yes, even inscribed in a rock by an iron stylus, a spark of faith ignites in his soul. From this light he sees that he will, indeed, be vindicated, and that he shall see God (19:23-27). Whether he means this to happen after his death in a resurrected state or whether in the corrupted flesh he now wears, is impossible to know from the text.²⁸ One thing is certain: it foreshadows the great theophanic vision towards which the book is oriented. With this flash of insight, Job has a heightened awareness of the danger his friends are in (19:28-29). This is no mere theological debate; it is a matter of life and death!

Now it is Zophar's turn, but he does no better than Bildad. Evidently, he interprets Job's burst of hope in 19:25-27 as arrogance (20:5ff.). He accuses Job of corruption (20:12ff.), but this is not a conclusion reached relationally or experientially with Job; it is an inference prompted by his own world-view. In his world, as in that of his two cohorts, evil befalls evildoers. Job must be guilty!

Again, Job cries out for mercy (21:1ff.). "Look at me and be astonished!" (21:5). His friends, because of their world-view, cannot see him as he is. They look and see only a wicked man. Job, therefore, challenges them with a classic argument posed by the question, "Why do the wicked prosper?" (21:7-26). In a nutshell, if God governed everything by simple retribution, why is it that the wicked prosper and often get away with crimes in their lives? However sincere Job's friends think they are, they cannot answer Job's argument directly (21:34). They are fooling themselves. This theology of simple retribution folds into their theology of transcendence. When evil befalls a man, it is because he has offended the Deity. Under just punishment, the guilty one has no right to complain, for he is a sinner and deserves even worse punishment than what he has received. The only recourse is to repent and hope for the best. So we see the infidelity of Job's friends is a matter of the narrow theology which forms their world-view. Possessing a narrow world-view is a moral matter. Job's friends are responsible for embracing a world-view which will not let them see Job.

C. Round Three: Job 22-31

We now come to the last round between Job and his friends. By now, anger has crescendoed to such a point that Job's friends completely lose sight of the obvious—Job the sufferer. Eliphaz and Bildad will have their last word; the irony is that they are now pelting Job, whom they originally came to comfort, with their outcry, heaping torment upon torment. As for the structure of the narrative, the curious feature is that we do not have a third speech by Zophar.²⁹ The text now concludes with Job's response to Bildad.

Eliphaz begins his final speech with that conviction which is so dear to him: the insignificance of man before God, especially a man like Job (22:2f.). He now openly accuses Job of outrageous crimes that have absolutely no foundation in reality (22:5-9). What is curious, however, is his accusation that Job holds God to be transcendent and detached (22:12-14). His reference to God in heaven's height with his lofty stars is reminiscent of Isaiah 40:26-27. There, Israel is discouraged and complains that "my way is hidden from the Lord." Likewise, Eliphaz interprets Job as saying, "What does God know, my way is hidden as one buried alive (cf. 3:20-26)? What can a God who walks heaven's celestial circle know about me down here in the darkness?" However justly Eliphaz has described Job's feelings about God here, we cannot help but see that it is Eliphaz' own theological brand of God's transcendence with which he bludgeons Job throughout his speeches. Ironically, God's response to Israel proclaimed that He knows every star by name, and so by implication, He knows all His children. Although Eliphaz has been hot and angry with Job, in the end he shows himself to be his friend by making one last appeal for him to submit to God so that he will be delivered (22:21-30).

Job fires back with a bold demand to have his day in court with God (23:2-7). The problem is that he cannot find Him; God is too elusive (23:8-9). As arrogant as all this may seem to Job's friends, such a demand is consistent with covenant. God, throughout prophetic literature, is dragging Israel to court for breaking the terms of covenant,³⁰ so why cannot the reverse happen? Job, in spite of his despair, cannot rid himself of the belief that there must be justice in this world, a justice that a man can understand and to which God will bind Himself. At this point, Job receives another flash of spiritual insight which sheds light into his gloom (23:10-12, cf. 19:25-27). Something within tells him God does know him, and when tested, he will show forth his gold, and he will be vindicated! One would think this would encourage him, but in his condition, any thought of God terrifies him (23:13-17). Perhaps he is now beginning to feel a premonition of the *mysterium tremendum* which he is about to encounter.

Be this as it may, Job concludes his speech with a charge against God. Chapter 24 has to be the most eloquent and moving complaint in the whole Bible about how God runs things on this earth. Here the desperate plight of the countless and nameless masses is laid bare for all to see. Life on earth is nothing less than miserable for the vast majority of humans that have ever lived. They eke out a living scratching about for food with hardly any protection from the ele-

ments or predators. Humanity sins in the most disgusting ways, but there is no justice. Job shoves this in Eliphaz' face and dares him to prove him a liar.

Unfortunately, Bildad must have his turn at this juncture (chapter 25). The only positive thing that can be said about his last speech is that it is short.³¹ It is, however, the only clear and succinct articulation in the Bible of the doctrine that has come to be known as the "depravity of man." That it comes from the mouth of Bildad must not be encouraging to those theologians that hold to an obtuse expression of this doctrine.³² Bildad's answer to Job's great challenge in chapter 24 is simple. The cosmos, and especially man, has no moral or ontological integrity before God. Man is a maggot!

Job finds himself at a complete loss as to how Bildad's speech can shed light on the problem before them (26:2-4). What follows is a soliloquy on the mystery of God which is difficult to understand in this context (26:5-14).³³ Be this as it may, Job defiantly proclaims his innocence in 27:1-6. To claim otherwise would be for him to lie, and this he will not do. "Job will not renounce his integrity as though it did not belong to him. It is his own, and he will claim it until death."³⁴ If he is as wicked as his friends say he is, then why is he continually calling out to God in his pain (27:8-10)?

Amidst the turbulence of this debate, there arises in chapter 28 a poem of perfect calm that does not seem to fit the emotional state of any of the characters, let alone Job.³⁵ It may be understood as an interlude by the narrator of the story which lifts the reader above the heat of argument to help him gain perspective on wisdom as it relates to Job and his situation.³⁶ The point is that the debate up to now has failed to get down below the surface of reality. Indeed, miners can dig deep into the earth to gather precious metals and gems with their technology (vv. 1-11). However, wisdom, defined as the comprehension of the very essence of reality and why it works the way it does, cannot be so mined by the human mind. It is, therefore, something of immeasurably more value than that which human ingenuity can dig up and expose (vv. 12-19). Only God holds the key to its mysteries (vv. 20-27). However mysterious wisdom is, man can possess it in a practical way, and indeed, this is true of Job. The great conclusion to this poem in v. 28, in which wisdom is described as the fear of the Lord and the departing from evil, exactly fits the description of Job in the first verse of the book. The poem serves, therefore, as a vindication of Job, at least as he was before his suffering.

Even wisdom, as the great preacher tells us in Ecclesiastes 1:18, has its limits. It does not necessarily lead to happiness. However wise Job might be, he doesn't feel its worth in the condition he is in. All he can do is pine for the former days before pain and humiliation (chapters 29-30). In this reflective state, Job becomes very candid about himself, revealing to us the very details of his righteousness and perfection (chapter 31). First of all, he has kept himself pure from sexual sins, not only in act, but in heart (vv. 1-12). He has been nothing but just to the poor (vv. 13-23). He has never been seduced by gold's allure (vv. 24-25), nor has he given in to idolatry (vv. 26-28). He has treated his enemies with respect and care (vv. 29-30). He has been hospitable (vv. 31-32) and transparent with regard to his sins (vv. 33-34). He ends his case in absolute defiance before God, the supreme Judge, challenging Him to prove him wrong (vv. 35-40). With this, Job has no more to say.

IV. ELIHUE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DETACHMENT

Unnoticed and not introduced to the reader is a young man sitting by, Elihue by name, who has remained silent throughout this unfolding debate. Because he seems to just pop up from nowhere with no mention in the introduction or conclusion, critical scholarship, in the main, has dismissed him and his speeches as a later addition to the book. However, Elihue serves to round out the debate from a new angle, and his speeches, as we shall see, prepare the reader for the great conclusion to the book.

Like Job and his friends, he is a foreigner, a non-Israelite.³⁷ He is young and passionate about theological ideas. He approaches Job in a far different way than do Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They approach Job as friends concerned for His soul. Though they violently disagree and say hurtful things, they care about Job and desire to set him straight. Elihue cares not about Job as a person. Rather, he is fascinated with the course of the debate, sitting on the edge of his seat, waiting to see who will win or lose. By the end, it is clear to him that Job's friends have lost the debate. Their mouths are shut with no response—Job has had the last word (32:1, 5, 15). Elihue cannot respect them for this; he is angry with their theological incompetence. Moreover, he is angry with Job because he won. Anger arises out of fear. Could it be that a mere man could stand justified before God? Elihue essentially agrees with the friends' world-view that exalts transcendence at the expense of human integrity, but he also believes that the case for God can be argued on a far more sophisticated level.³⁸ Indeed, his very name means "He is God," and he will be zealous to defend Him as such!

By their failure, Job's friends have virtually condemned God (32:3).³⁹ That is, they have left God and His justice vulnerable to human criticism. Elihue is now anxious for his chance (32:17-22). He is self-confident (33:2-4), and is hot for debate as one enlisting in a competition (33:5-7). His method is to pull out various phrases uttered by Job throughout his debate with his friends and then refute him. Elihue notices the contradiction that, although Job claims his own innocence (33:9), yet he also claims that God counts him his enemy,⁴⁰ for He has placed his feet in stocks, and keeps watch over his paths to do him harm (cf. 33:11 with 13:27). This impinges God's character, and in response, Elihue

cries out a prayer formula, “For God is greater than man,” (33:12) that compares with the Arabic “*Allah Akbar*.”⁴¹ That is, God is untouchable; He does not argue with inferiors. If God trifles at all with humanity, it is at best through an indirect encounter, such as in some dark dream (33:15-16). If God saves a man, it is by “a mysterious divine operation” that “is not subject to discussion: it is a unilateral action” (33:12-14 with 29-30).⁴²

Elihue encapsulates Job’s arguments in 34:5-6 that he is righteous and God has taken away his rightful due (cf. 27:2), and that his wound is incurable in spite of his innocence (cf. 6:4), and in 34:9, in which Job questions the value of a man delighting in God (cf. 9:22-24 and 21:7-13). Elihue swiftly polarizes Job’s impious utterances from his pure God and defends God’s untouchable transcendence (34:10ff.). In fact, God is so sovereign that He is above any human idea of due process (34:24). To Elihue, his theology is clear as a bell, and he presents it as the very verdict of the wise (34:35)!

Elihue then responds to Job’s questioning of whether God even cares if he has sinned or not (cf. 35:3 with 7:20). Essentially, Elihue answers that it really means nothing to God personally whether a man sins or not, because man is too small to affect God (35:4-7). Rather, it matters only how one’s sin affects others (35:8). Elihue then counters Job’s great complaint that God doesn’t seem to care about all the misery in His world (chapter 24) by claiming that God doesn’t hear the prayer of the wretched because they have forsaken Him in their pride and do not call out sincerely to Him (35:9-16). The irony is that Elihue himself is proud and pretentious; without batting an eye, he styles himself to be the perfection of wisdom (36:3-4).

Elihue finishes up his speech in dramatic style. He warns Job to take heed of God because He is big and terrifying, like a storm (36:21-33). In chapter 37 he loses himself in his own eloquence, imagining the divine thunder and lightning already upon Job. He sees it coming from the north like Ezekiel’s God-awful chariot of numinous fire—the very *mysterium tremendum* Itself (37:22). This Transcendent Potentate comes without even taking notice of or having any real interest in the best of men (37:24).⁴³

Perhaps this is why Elihue himself goes unnoticed in spite of his erudition and eloquence. Ignored, his punishment is that he gets no response from Job, Job’s friends, or God, and the silence is deafening. He is not taken seriously, the worse sort of predicament for a smart, young theologian who has so much to say. Be this as it may, Elihue does provide for us the service of succinctly rounding up the arguments that range from chapters 4-32, minimizing Job with one final blow of God’s transcendence. We find ourselves appreciating Job’s friends for what they are—friends—as opposed to a philosophically detached theologian of the likes of Elihue. Moreover, Elihue’s vision of the theophanic storm intrigues us. As we are about to see, it is one thing to theologize about the terror of God’s transcendence; it is quite another to actually encounter it.

V. YHWH IN THE STORM: TRANSCENDENCE WITH DIVINE JOY

The theophanic tempest which Elihue has seen in his imagination now, all of a sudden, breaks into reality. How Elihue and Job’s three friends respond, we do not know, although given the nature of such phenomenon, they most probably flee for their lives.⁴⁴ However this may be, it is specifically Job that YHWH addresses from the heart of the storm. Job had asked for his chance to defend himself before God, and God is now giving it to him. God challenges him to “gird up his loins” like a man, i.e., prepare himself for conflict as a man readies himself for battle (v. 3). We sense in this, certainly, a glimmer of divine humor, given that the battle is somewhat more than uneven, indeed, infinitely more. On the other hand, we sense a divine interest in the contest, especially when we consider God’s respect for Job at the beginning. God, out of this respect, will pull no punches with Job; He blasts him from the start with the jarring fact that it is impossible for Job to say anything that will not diminish the truth about how He runs Job’s life, let alone His world (v.2).

God then proceeds to pummel Job with questions about His creation in two speeches. He begins with the overall structures of the heavens and the earth, corresponding to days 1-4 of creation (38:4-38). He then questions him on the animal kingdom (38:39-39:30), corresponding to days 5-6 of creation. Overwhelmed by this onslaught, Job confesses that he is not able to make an answer to God (40:3-5), but God does not let up. Instead, He concludes with a speech on two curious animals, that of behemoth and Leviathan, and displays them before Job as a final revelation of His complete transcendence.

There have been many readers who have been somewhat disappointed with God’s response.⁴⁵ What He says really isn’t all that much different from what has been said by Job’s friends and Elihue. For instance, Elihue’s questioning of Job in 37:14-18 is in no way less profound than God’s speech in 38:4-38. In fact, it is more of the same. One would expect something more of God, like some incredibly deep ideas that would set the course of human thought straight for all time. This does not come. What does come, however, is of deep significance to Job, and by extension, to all of humanity.

Rudolph Otto, in his classic work *The Idea of the Holy*, tells us that what is really important here is not what God says, but rather what Job experiences. Job’s soul is ultimately reaching out, not so much for answers, but for a numinous encounter with the *mysterium tremendum*, the “Wholly Other.” While the rational mind thirsts for answers in this book,

what Job receives instead is a glimpse of transcendence that far exceeds his human capacity to conceptualize, but which brings complete satisfaction to his soul.⁴⁶ Surely Otto is correct here. Language is not a sufficiently powerful medium to uncover the mystery of life and suffering. It is, therefore, not so important what God says to Job, but, rather, the fact He has an encounter with Job and thus thrills his suffering soul to a state of exultation that dwarfs human misery. Transcendence, therefore, rather than being an abstract theological concept or a meaningless category that has no relevance to the human condition, is the only true medicine for mortality when administered in space and time through a divine encounter.

Having said this, however, we are still left with a very long speech by God, and if words are not so important, then we are left questioning why the speeches are not shorter or why there must be any speech at all. We must apply our imagination to the fact that these oratories concerning divine transcendence, although they bear many theological similarities to the speeches of Elihue and Job's friends, are made by YHWH Himself. For a shallow man to speak a truth is a far different thing than when this same truth is uttered by God. That God's speech catches Job's attention rather than those of his friends tells us that words are indeed important, but their impact has everything to do with the integrity of the speaker. The transcendent God, in fact, is using human words, however poor a medium, as a means of relating to Job. Job is all ears now, and God seems to be enjoying Himself.

God is communicating joy to Job—His own divine joy! He, with sweeping hand, points to the whole of His creation, from the stars above to Sheol below, and all that happens between them, and revels in their mysteries. He does this not to demean Job; in fact, this is exactly what Job's friends and Elihue have done with their doctrine of transcendence. He does this in competition with a man He respects, and He shows off, not for His own sake, but to create awe in Job's soul. He is inviting Job to experience the joy of infinitude, unlocking Job's soul, which sorrow had confined to a narrow place. The implication is clear: a God who can do all of this can surely deliver Job from His deepest fears.

God now parades His animals before Job. He begins with His terrible lions for whom He provides prey (38:39-40). This is all well and fine for the lions, but what about the prey? He speaks of baby ravens who cry out to God in hunger (39:1), the birthing of deer (39:2-4), and wild and untamable donkeys and oxen (39:5-12). Surely, it is in humor that God proudly displays His stupid ostrich who lays her eggs only to forget them and mindlessly crush them with her own feet. Still, she pridefully roars in horrible laughter at the noble horse and its rider. God doesn't seem at all embarrassed by such a creation but rather laughs right along with it while smiling at our confusion. God then points out the war horse that mocks fear and gets charged up by the sound of war and the smell of blood (39:19-25). He concludes with the hawk who makes her nest in heights inaccessible to man (39:26-30). The common denominator in all of these animals is that there is something profoundly enigmatic, even unsettling, about them to the human intellect.

Job is struck with the realization that he cannot get down to the bottom of anything in God's creation and confesses that he has been hasty in his demand for his day in court where he can tell God a thing or two (40:3). He promises to keep his mouth shut (4:4), and seems perfectly willing to forgo his complaint, but God is not through with him. God begins His second speech by reinforcing Job's humiliation with another challenge (40:6-14). However, there is something else God wants to display before him. Indeed, God wants to show off the two most terrifying monstrosities that He has made, the behemoth and Leviathan. These two beasts were quasi-mythical to the ancient mind. On one hand, they were understood to be exotic Nile creatures, the hippopotamus and the crocodile respectively. On the other hand, in this context of creation, they would have brought to mind the dreadful sea monster spoken of in Genesis 1:21. This monster took on the symbolic notion of chaos and death. True, God did not create evil, but He did create the monsters that came to symbolize these forces in creation. God's close proximity to something so dreadful forces Job into an even deeper perplexity.

The behemoth is described in 40:15-24. Truly a sight to behold, God chooses it, no doubt, for its chthonic qualities. God reminds Job that He made it "with you" (40:15), emphasizing the fact that Job is related to this beast as a fellow creature, indicating that it has certain rights and privileges in God's cosmos. But it is not the behemoth that God is most anxious to discuss. It is now time for the grand finale, the quintessential monster of them all, the Leviathan (Chapter 41). The reader will remember that Job invoked those who were skilled in conjuring up Leviathan to help him in his curse (3:8). Now it is not a wizard who does it but God Himself! What is frightening about this scene is that God seems as fascinated with this creature as man is in terror of it. As it is transformed from a scaly reptile to a fire breathing dragon with a heart of stone (40:15-24), it becomes clear that it is not merely some divine pet or puppet; this chaos monster is a creature wielding incredible power as "the king of all the proud" (41:34), swirling the depths of the watery deep with its tail (40:31-32). On earth there is nothing like him (40:33).

God delights in this creature not because He enjoys chaos, death, and the evil it represents. Rather, He delights in His Leviathan for the very fact that, as horrible as it is, it has a function in God's cosmos that man cannot comprehend. In fact, the bigger and more terrible Leviathan is, the bigger and more awesome God becomes in Job's eyes. Modern Western culture cannot understand this because it no longer has any intuition for transcendence. For contemporary thinkers functioning with this deficit, the larger the chaos looming over them, the smaller any concept of God they might have becomes. If there is a God, He is in process with us in space and time trying His best to fight the beast along with us.⁴⁷ Our society cannot appreciate the joy of God as He shows off the scariest of His creatures to Job; to us, it comes off as a bad joke. On the contrary, this divine display of power has its intended effect on Job and brings

him the relief for which his soul has so longed.

Now, it is true that nowhere in these chapters will we find any emotion we can ascribe to God. He speaks out of a theophanic storm. His challenges to Job could be interpreted as anger. Anger, however, would be inconsistent with His feelings toward Job expressed in the first two chapters and would be out of place after having allowed his afflictions. Rather, He is showing Himself, and given the effects of this divine showing on Job, one can only conclude that God is enjoying Himself and Job in this encounter. To miss the jubilancy of God in these chapters is to miss the whole point of the Book of Job. God is celebrating not only His unsearchable transcendence but also His unfathomable interest in all His creation. Job's God has revealed Himself to be as immanent as He is transcendent. His perfection consists in His enthusiastic embrace of both.

VI. JOB'S ENLIGHTENMENT

Job emerges from the storm a changed man. He undergoes not so much a change in theology as a change in depth of being. No doubt he has always believed that God could do everything and that no purpose of His can be thwarted (42:2). His soul now comprehends this in ways that it never could have before. In his pain, he uttered many hard things about God. Now he sees that he did so out of ignorance—not so much an intellectual ignorance, but a spiritual ignorance that gave itself over to a despair that minimized God (42:3). As perfect as Job was before his trials, there had been something lacking. Before, his knowledge of God was by hearing (42:5). To embrace God by faith through what one hears about God is crucial in Old Testament faith. However, the pinnacle of Old Testament spirituality is not so much in what one hears and to which one responds, but in what one sees. To see God is to become like God. This was granted to Moses and certain of the prophets, and here it is granted to Job.⁴⁸

Job, therefore, abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes (42:6). In doing so, however, he never denies his former perfection. He has never been wrong about his own righteousness and integrity. There is no sense whatsoever that he has acquiesced to that doctrine of depravity which his friend Bildad teaches in chapter 25. In fact, the whole debate over his perfection really belongs to a different era in his life prior to the theophany. What he was before is no longer of interest to him who has seen what he has seen. Indeed, his experience of the Divine has relegated his former existence, as real and appreciated as it was by God Himself, as a supreme embarrassment. Job is not here ashamed of any past moral failures as such but rather of his mortality as he stands before Immortality. Man, made in the image of God and made for immortality, intuitively knows that he is made for glory, and when the light of glory shines upon him, he must suffer from embarrassment.⁴⁹

VII. EPILOGUE: JOB'S PRIESTHOOD

God is not angry with Job; He never was. He is angry at Eliphaz and his two friends. Why? Because they did not "speak concerning Me that which was true" (42:7). It may seem curious to the reader that their sin is not seen as an affront to Job whom they tormented, but to God. This is because, in Old Testament thinking, God rightfully possesses all things, and all sins are ultimately against Him. Their sin was that they failed to see the truth about Job, and in doing so, they failed to see the truth about God. What was behind their moral failure? It was their skewed cosmology. They constructed around themselves a worldview built upon orthodox theological ideas, especially the transcendence of God, and by a strangely perverse process have minimized both Job and God with that same theology.

They have minimized Job by refusing to see him as he really is, righteous and perfect. They are his friends; they had previously known him to be perfect. Suffering, however, unnerves them. They are shocked to the point of indignation that Job could utter such ill feelings toward God and still be perfect in God's eyes. Their cosmology is threatened by the scene before them. They must protect God from this blasphemy, and they do so by attacking Job. True, they desire to bring Job to repentance, but their motives go deeper. If Job is right, then this means they do not know God, and if they do not know God, then their whole world falls apart. Ultimately, their fear drives them to sin against their brother. This is the great danger of those who have a high view of the transcendence of God without a corresponding grasp of His radical immanence. They must minimize humanity and creation so that God can remain great. The book of Job thus critiques this tendency in the high monotheistic theology of the Second Temple Period.

Job's friends also minimize God, Whom they so desperately wish to protect. Now, it is true that Job also has minimized God in his suffering, and for this he repents. However, Job's friends make God so transcendent that He can no longer be genuinely immanent. They cannot see that God is secure enough in His Being that He can enter into a bitter conflict with a mortal like Job and take the blows. They cannot see that in Job's anger and resentment, he has been addressing God all along and taking Him seriously. If they truly knew God, they would have had some intuition with regard to this. Though they were never privy to God's stellar assessment of Job in the first two chapters, still they have failed to recognize that God has a deep interest in Job as he is and not as they think he should be, as He has with all humanity. Indeed, God is not so big so as to let one little detail drop in His vast, unfathomable cosmos. All creation,

including those creatures that are truly savage and have become symbols of evil to the human race, has a certain integrity before God. God's greatness can only be known to man through His ability to take His creation seriously, and indeed, to become small enough to take delight and interest in it.

Job, therefore, becomes a priest and intercessor for these sinners (42:8f.). God hears his prayers not only because of his personal integrity and on account of his great suffering, but also because of his vision of God. His friends are thus saved from the wrath of God. This demonstrates God's great compassion and interest in Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; their destiny is inextricably connected to that of Job's. The story has a happy ending in that everything is restored to Job two-fold.⁵⁰

Viewing this book in the context of all of Scripture, we see that the story of Job makes sense eschatologically only as it is fulfilled in Jesus the Christ. In Him, God has found the one perfect man through whom the whole can be saved. Beloved by God, and exposed to the schemes of the cynical Satan, He suffers innocently with the result that His agony is vicarious. Indeed, His own fellows disown him as wicked. God accepts this sacrifice on the basis of His unique position before God, his perfection, His perfect suffering, and His clear vision into Deity. As Christ fulfills the part of Job, His role metamorphoses into the very Theophany Himself through Whom the vision of God becomes universal to all. Divine transcendence thereby becomes immanent in the most human way imaginable, an uncomfortable truth to those who think God should be above it all. This grand story is, therefore, not only about Job in his perfection, but ultimately about God in His perfection.

¹ "Scholars agree that neither the character of Job nor the story about his misfortunes originated in Israel." Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job*, vol. IV in the *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 328. We understand that Job was a historical person of deep antiquity, already legendary by the time of the prophet Ezekiel, who lists Job along with two other famous non-Israelites of yore, Noah and Daniel—not the prophet but the wise father of Aght in ancient Canaanite lore (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3). Recently there has been an attempt to portray Job as Judean, but a mere allegorical figure of Judah and its righteous King, specifically Hezekiah, suffering before the onslaught of the Assyrian carnage of the Eighth Century. David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). The theory is fresh and interesting but leaves one unconvinced in the end.

² The two most likely locations are Aram to the north of Israel, the ancient ancestral home of the patriarchs, and Edom to the south. See Marvin Pope, *Job*, vol. 15 in the Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), pp. 3f.

³ "One of the chief concerns of the author is to situate the theater of discussion outside Israel and to select as his protagonists persons whom the chosen people would consider heathen." Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1984 ed. of French original, 1926), p. cxiii.

⁴ Much has been made of the parallels between Job and pre-Mosaic times, such as Job's wealth as a nomadic herdsman, his sacrifices which were not according to Mosaic Law, and indeed, the whole aura of the book. This must be considered a literary device and not proof that the book is pre-Mosaic and therefore the oldest book of the Bible, as some have asserted. In reality, the book presupposes the whole of Old Testament theology. The author is a scholar *par excellence* who not only has a sweeping grasp of Israel's unique theology as it developed throughout the ages, but is a literary genius of the highest order. See Dhorme's section "The Book of Job in the Old Testament" in his introduction (pp. clii-clxxiv), in which he dates the composition to the Sixth or Fifth Centuries, B.C. So Newsom, p. 325.

⁵ The Hebrew *הַשָּׂטָן* (*haśśātān*) has the article which implies that this is a title of a spiritual being in the court of God who functions as an accuser of humanity, something like a prosecuting attorney, rather than the personal name of the arch-demon that developed later (cf. Zech 3:1-2). See Pope, p. 10. His cynicism and arrogance, however, certainly portrays him as an enemy of humanity, and therefore, to God. That God would allow such a creature in His court speaks of God's utter mastery over evil, not His complicity with it.

⁶ Brevard Child's discussion on the Hebrew word for "righteousness" (*קִדְמוּת*, *q̄d̄mūt*), a word that belongs to the same category as *תָּמִים* (*tām*) and *יָשָׁר* (*yāśār*) in our narrative, applies here as well. "According to the tradition of the Western world derived from Roman law, an individual's proper conduct was judged over against an absolute ethical norm. To be righteous was to be measured by a standard which stemmed from a fixed rule of justice. However, in regard to the Old Testament no one could satisfactorily determine what the absolute norm was. The mistake lay in the positing an ideal standard as a form of legal abstraction, whereas righteousness in the Old Testament was understood in terms of specific relations between covenant partners." *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Contest* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 208ff.

⁷ It is common to describe the Hebrew ideal of life as "dynamic" as opposed to the Greek ideal as "static." This is true as long as we do not understand "static" in its negative meaning. Perhaps the comparison is better portrayed by the word "dynamic" in contrast to "harmonic/resting." So Thordief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1960), pp. 27ff. Here it suffices to say that perfection for the Hebrew is not a harmonic state of changelessness but a joyful progress toward God that has no limit because God has no limits. See Jean Danielou's introduction to *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings* (Crestwood, NJ: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979).

⁸ For instance, King David, when assessing his life before God in II Samuel 22:21-24, pronounces himself as *קִדְמוּת* (*q̄d̄mūt*) and *תָּמִים* (*tāmīm*)—righteous and perfect, in spite of his well-known moral failings.

⁹ In the great "Shema" (Deut. 6: 4) the Hebrew word *אֶחָד* (*ehād*) means "one" in the monotheistic sense of God being one in essence rather than being a localized deity that is part of a pantheon, but it also implies that YHWH is unique, one of a kind, and against Whom nothing can compare.

¹⁰ Pope suggests that the idea of vicarious expiation and atonement by one truly righteous person in a community for the whole "...doubtless had a very ancient background of which we have only random bits in the OT." p. 12.

¹¹ Most versions translate the active transitive verb *יָתַן* (*yittēn*) as a passive, "Why is light given to the bitter of soul?" However, it is an active verb, and should be translated so here where it is clear that Job is referring to God who is the creator of light. So Dhorme, pp. 37f. and Pope, pp. 27ff.

¹² The first verb *חָקַה* (*hikkā*), which means "to wait," is commonly used when exhorting men to wait for God when He appears to be silent (Isa. 8:17, 30:18, Zeph. 3:8, Ps. 33:20, 106:13). The second verb, that of *חָפַר* (*hāpār*), which means "to dig or search for," is commonly used in connection with wells and pits, but here it occurs with the word *מַטְמוֹן* (*matmōn*). This reminds us of Proverbs 2:4 in which men are exhorted to seek out wisdom the way one seeks for hidden treasures. The next two verbs, that of *שָׂמַח* (*sāmāh*), "to rejoice," and *שִׁישׁ* (*śiš*), "to exalt," are words that ought to describe the attitude of God's people toward God, His righteousness, salvation, etc. ... (Isa. 61:10, 64:4, Ps. 35:9). The last verb, that of *מָצָא* (*māsā'*), "to find," is clearly associated with that famous scripture of Isa. 55:6 where the prophet challenges the people to "seek the Lord when He may be found."

¹³ The pun on the last word in verse 22 קֶבֶר (*qebher*), which means “grave,” with the first word in verse 23 גֶּבֶר (*geber*), which means “man,” associates Job with the grave, in which he is “hedged in” (Hebrew חָסָד, *sūḥk*) with the horror of still being alive.

¹⁴ Eliphaz is from Teman, a territory of Edom. Bildad seems to be of Aramean origin, but may also be from Edom. Zophar is from a land no longer known to us. For full discussion, see Pope, pp. 23f.

¹⁵ So Dhorme, where the first person personal pronouns “I/me” in 4:8, 12, 5:3, 5 imply that Eliphaz has a unique position of authority in these matters. See p. 49.

¹⁶ These questions are best understood not as man in comparison to God as many translations render them, for that would be too obvious (e.g. NKJV, NIV). No one, least of all Job, would deny that mankind could compare to God in righteousness and purity. With Dhorme, we render them as simple questions which illustrate Eliphaz’s radical transcendence that does not also emphasize God’s radical immanence—man cannot even be righteous and pure in God’s sight (so RSV).

¹⁷ We hardly need to mention that the law of retribution is gnomic with St. Paul (See II Cor. 9:6, Gal. 6:7, 8).

¹⁸ The Hebrew word עֲוֹלָה (*‘avla*) “falsehood” is used in reference to Eliphaz in 6:29 “... let there be no falsehood!”, and in v. 30, “Is there falsehood on my tongue?” The point is that Eliphaz, for all his theology, is not being real before Job in a way that allows them to have an authentic encounter.

¹⁹ The word יָם (*yām*, sea, watery deep) symbolizes the realm of death and chaos, and תַּנִּינִי (*tannīn*, sea monster, cf. Gen. 2:21, Ps. 148:7, Isa. 27:1, 51:9), represents the actual manifestation of chaos in all its terror.

²⁰ The last word of Job’s speech in 7:21 is the word אֶנְנִי (*‘ēnenni*) meaning “I will no longer exist.” He feels himself falling into a place of oblivion where even God will not be able to find him. All his speeches end with a dark vision (cf. 10:21f., 14:20ff., 17:13ff., 21:32f.).

²¹ The phrase “... he treads upon the heights (i.e., waves) of the sea” in 9:8 is interesting. The sea, of course, represents death and chaos (cf. footnote 19 above). It is God alone who has such power over the very thing that brings an end to mortals (cf. Mark 6:48).

²² “*Non habet superiorum qui de ejus factis judicare possit*,” as Aquinas tells us (cf. Ecclesiastes 8:4, Sirach 36:8f.). Dhorme, p. 134.

²³ Verse 13b of chapter 9 reads “the helpers of Rahab crouch beneath Him.” רַהַב (*Rāhab*) is Job’s third monster god after לִיַּוְיָאֵן (*liwyā’ān*, Leviathan, 3:8) and תַּנִּינִי (*tannīn*, sea serpent, 7:12). She is akin to the Babylonian Tiamat (chaos), whose gods march out against Marduk, the storm god. In other words, the infernal horde crouches in submission to God. See Dhorme, p. 134.

²⁴ The reader will recognize that the juxtaposition of the words צַדִּיק תָּמִים (*ṣaddīq tāmīm*) is the same as in Genesis 9:6, placing Job on the level of Noah. This accords with the prophet Ezekiel who groups Job with Noah and Daniel as the three most famous righteous pre-Israelite men (Ezek. 14:14, 20; see footnote 1). The irony is that his friends do not see this because of Job’s humiliating circumstances.

²⁵ The combination of the words “mouth,” “tongue of the crafty” (עֲרוּמִים, *‘arūmīm*, cf. Gen. 3:1) and “lips” make it very clear that Job has become dangerous, the evil seducer himself.

²⁶ The phrase מַה־יַּמְרִיץ־כָּא (*mah-yymrīṣ-kā*) “what sickens you...” is understood by Dhorme as mental illness (p. 228).

²⁷ We emend the verb עֲרַבְנִי (*‘orbēnī*) “pledge me” to the noun עֲרַבְנִי (*‘erḥōnī*) “lay then my pledge beside you” (so Dhorme, p. 244).

²⁸ The text of 19:26 is famously difficult to read, and we cannot here go into the details. Some understand it to mean that Job will see God in his flesh, corrupt as it now is, and therefore be vindicated and restored to favor. This certainly is what happens in the book. Others understand it eschatologically, that Job sees with the eyes of faith his resurrected state before God. Certainly both ideas are supported by Scripture. See commentaries.

²⁹ Dhorme believes that the third Zophar speech still survives in the text by claiming that 24:18-24 and 27:13-23, attributed by the headings to Job, originally belong to Zophar (pp. xlix f.). Pope, with some modification, agrees (p. xviii).

³⁰ For example, see Isaiah 1-6, Jeremiah 3, Hosea 2, Micah 1, not to mention the whole structure of the book of Deuteronomy.

³¹ Dhorme (p. xlix) and Pope (p. xviii) suspect that 26:5-14 is actually displaced, and should be understood as the conclusion of Bildad’s otherwise truncated speech in chapter 25.

³² That man is sinful, and far more sinful than he can ever know, is a fact that is clear in the Bible. Humble Christians at times will liken themselves to worms in comparison to God, an emotional conviction that can bring healing to an arrogant soul (cf. Ps.22:6, Is. 41:14, and interestingly enough, Job himself in 25:6). However, if this conviction is not countered by the other end of the paradox, that humans are divine image-bearers in spite of their sin, then one’s anthropology no longer is biblical. The truth is that humanity is far more evil, and far more good, than we can ever comprehend, and the truth is found by pushing both extremes out at the same time. See Thomas Merton’s discussion on paradox in the introduction to his book *No man Is an Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), pp. XVIf.

³³ See footnote 31 above.

³⁴ Dhorme, p. 381.

³⁵ Most critical scholars believe it to be out of place in the book and an insertion.

³⁶ So Francis Andersen, *Job in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press), pp. 222ff.

³⁷ Elihue has a good Hebrew name meaning “He is my God” (cf. I Sam. 1:1, I Chron. 12:20, 26:4, 7, and 27:18). However, he is a “Buzite” of the “family of Ram,” which identifies him as an Aramaean with ancestral ties to Abraham (Gen. 22:20, 21), and connects him with Uz, the tribe of Job. See Pope, p. 212.

³⁸ See Dhorme’s remarks on Elihue and his speeches, pp. livff. and xcviiff.

³⁹ It is most probable that the original text read “...and they condemned God” reading the Hebrew הָאֱלֹהִים (*hā’alōhīm*) “God” for the MT אֱיָהוּב (*‘iyyōḥb*) “Job.” Evidently, the Rabbis did not think it proper to juxtapose the divine name with the word וַיִּרְשָׁעוּ (*wayyarsī’ū*) translated here “condemn.” So Dhorme (p.474) and Pope (p. 212).

⁴⁰ Note the pun on Job’s name אֱיָהוּב (pronounced *‘iyyōḥb*) and the Hebrew word for “enemy” אֹיֵב (pronounced *‘ōyēḥb*) in 33:10.

⁴¹ Dhorme, p. 492.

⁴² Ibid., p. 506.

⁴³ The last phrase of Elihue’s speech in its most simplest and direct translation is “He does not even look upon all the wise of heart.” Dhorme takes this to mean that even by placing all the wise together, God would not even take notice of them (p. 573).

⁴⁴ The most obvious example is in Exodus 19-20 in which Israel could not stand before the theophanic storm even though they had been invited to do so.

⁴⁵ These range from critics who cannot appreciate the format of the speeches in the context and flow of the book (Dhorme, pp. lxxxvff.), to men of letters like Frank Baum in his *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* who fashions his wizard (Oz = Us) on the God of the book of Job, to psychologists like Carl Jung who psycho-analyzed God here as having an inferiority complex (Wolfers, pp.210f.).

⁴⁶ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 77ff.

⁴⁷ For instance, Andre Lacocque’s article *The Deconstruction of Job’s Fundamentalism*, *IBL* 126, no. 1 (2007), pp. 83-97.

⁴⁸ “To ‘behold the face of Yahweh’ ... is consistently represented in the Psalms as the goal of the ardent desires of the faithful and as attainment of salvation.” Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 40. Salvation and transformation come through the faculty of seeing, as we see in I John 3:2.

⁴⁹ Consider the dialogue between Psyche and Orual in chapter 10 of C. S. Lewis’ book, *Till we Have Faces* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956). Psyche is trying to explain the feeling that came upon her when she caught her first glimpse of the god. She felt like a leper and ashamed,

and explained, “Don’t you think the things people are most ashamed of are the things they cannot help?”

⁵⁰ Some have noticed that everything was restored two-fold except his sons and daughters (42:13), indicating that Job never really lost his first set of children, for they were with God. This could be true, but the word “seven” in the Hebrew has an ending that could be a dual form (שִׁבְעָנָה, *šib‘ānā*) indicating that he had double seven, that is, fourteen sons. The doubling of daughters would not have been seen in ANE culture as a blessing. See Pope, p. 291.