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Excerpts from the Book of Job (Chapters 1 - 10)

Introduction

The Problem of the Book of Job

Why do afflictions upon afflictions befall the righteous man? This is the question, the answering of which is made the theme of the book of Job. Looking to the conclusion of the book, the answer stands: That afflictions are for the righteous man the way to a twofold blessedness.

But in itself this answer cannot satisfy; so much the less as the twofold blessedness of which Job finally attains is just as earthly and of this world as that which he has lost by affliction. The answer is inadequate, since on the one hand such losses as those of beloved children cannot, as the loss of sheep and camels, really be made good by double the number of other children. On the other hand, it may be objected that many a righteous man deprived of his former prosperity dies in outward poverty. There are numerous deathbeds which protest against this answer. There are many pious sufferers to whom this present material issue of the book of Job could not yield any solace; whom, when in conflict at least, it might the rather bring into danger of despair.

The principal thing is not that Job is doubly blessed, but that God acknowledges him as His servant, which He is able to do after Job in all his afflictions has remained true to God. Therein lies the important truth--that there is a suffering of the righteous which is not a decree of wrath, into which the love of God has been changed, but a dispensation of that love itself. In fact, this truth is the heart of the book of Job.

But if we now combine both the truths illustrated in the book of Job--(1) The affliction of the righteous man leads to a so much greater blessedness; (2) The affliction of the righteous is a dispensation of the divine love which is expressed and verified in the issue of the affliction--this double answer is still not an adequate solution of the great question of the book. For there ever arises the opposing consideration: why are such afflictions necessary to raise the righteous to blessedness, afflictions which seem so entirely to bear the character of wrath and are in no way distinguished from judgments of retributive justice?

To this question the book furnishes, as it appears to us, two answers: (1.) The afflictions of the righteous are a means of discipline and purification. They certainly arise from the sins of the righteous man, but still are not the workings of God's wrath but of His love, which is directed to his purifying and advancement. Such is the view Elihu in the book of Job represents. The writer of the introductory portion of Proverbs has expressed this

briefly but beautifully (Prov. 3:11; cf. Heb. 12). Oehler, in order that one may perceive its distinction from the view of the three friends, rightly refers to the various theories of punishment. Discipline designed for improvement is properly no punishment, since punishment according to its true idea is only satisfaction rendered for the violation of moral order. (2.) The afflictions of the righteous man are means of proving and testing, which, like chastisements, come from the love of God. Their object is not, however, the purging away of sin which may still cling to the righteous man, but, on the contrary, the manifestation and testing of his righteousness. This is the point of view from which, apart from Elihu's speeches, the book of Job presents Job's afflictions. Only by this relation of things is the chagrin with which Job takes up the words of Eliphaz, and so begins the controversy, explained and justified or excused. And, indeed, if it should be even impossible for the Christian, especially with regard to his own sufferings, to draw the line between disciplinary and testing sufferings so clearly as it is drawn in the book of Job, there is also for the deeper and more acute New Testament perception of sin--a suffering of the righteous which exists without any causal connection with his sin, viz. confession by suffering or martyrdom, which the righteous man undergoes not for his own sake but for the sake of God.

Echoes in the Later Sacred Writings

It may be readily supposed that a book like this, which is occupied with a question of such vital import to every thinking and pious man, which treats it in such a lively manner, (riveting the attention and bespeaking sympathy), which apart from its central subject is so many-sided, so majestically beautiful in languages and so inexhaustible in imagery, will have been one of the most generally read of the national books of Israel. Such is found to be the case; and also hereby its origin in the time of Solomon is confirmed. The book of Job, next to the Proverbs of Solomon, was the favorite source of information for the author of the introductory proverbs (ch. 1-9).

Then in the prophets of the flourishing period of prophetic literature, which begins with Obadiah and Joel, we find distinct traces of familiarity with the book of Job. Amos describes the glory of God the Creator in words taken from it. Isaiah has introduced a whole verse of the book of Job, almost *verbatim*, into his prophecy against Egypt. In Jeremiah, the short lyric passage in which he curses the day of his birth falls back on Job 3. The form in which the despondency of the prophet breaks forth is determined by the book of Job, with which he was familiar. It requires no proof that the same prophet follows the book of Job in many passages of Lamentations, and especially the first part of ch. 3. He makes use of confessions, complaints, and imagery from the affliction of Job to represent the affliction of Israel.

By the end of the time of the kings, Job was a person generally known in Israel, a recognized saint. For Ezekiel, in the year 593-2 B.C., complains that the measure of Israel's sin is so great that if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the midst of Israel, though they might save themselves they would not be able to hold back the arm of divine justice. The prophet mentions first Noah, a righteous man of the old world; then Daniel, a

righteous man of contemporary Israel; and last of all Job, a righteous man beyond the line of the promise. He would not, however, have been able to mention him if he had not, by means of the written narrative, been a person well known among the people to whom the prophetic discourse was addressed.

The Final Solution of the Problem

We will now cast a glance at the relation to the wrath of God and to Satan, into which man has fallen through the temptation of the old serpent. Tempted by Satan, he is himself fallen into the realm of wrath and become a servant of Satan. He is in his grasp. All calamity that befalls him is divine punishment, either proceeding directly from the wrath of God or worked by the wrath-spirit, Satan. But in prospect of the future atonement, which was to free man from the wrath of God and from the power of wrath in which Satan holds him, it was possible for man even under the Old Testament to realize this deliverance by virtue of an apprehension of the grace flowing from God's purpose of redemption. Whoever has been made free by this grace is changed from an object of the divine wrath to an object of the divine love, and nothing that befalls him in this condition proceeds from the wrath of God--all [proceeds] from His love. This love cannot, however, manifest itself so brightly as it would so long as sin remains in the man and in the world. It is only able to manifest itself as loving wrath, *i.e.*, as love controlling and making wrath serviceable to itself.

Thus Job's suffering is a dispensation of love, but brought about by the wrath-spirit and with every appearance of wrath. It is so with every trial and chastisement of the righteous. And it cannot be otherwise. For *trial* is designed to be for man a means of overcoming the evil that is external to him, and *chastisement* of overcoming the evil that is within him. There is a conflict between evil and good in the world which can issue in victory to the good only, so that the good proves itself in distinction from the evil, withstands the assault of evil, and destroys the evil that exists bound up with itself; only so, that the good as far as it is still mixed with the evil is refined as by fire, and more and more freed from it.

This is the twofold point of view from which the suffering of Job is to be regarded. It was designed, first of all, that Job should prove himself in opposition to Satan in order to overcome him. And since Job does not pass through the trial entirely without sinning, it has the effect at the same time of purifying and perfecting him. In both respects the history of Job is a passage from the history of God's own conflict with the evil one, which is the substance of the history of redemption and ends in the triumph of the divine love. And Gaupp well says: In the book of Job, Satan loses a cause which is intended only as prelude to the greatest of all causes, since judgment is gone forth over the world, and the prince of darkness has been cast forth. Accordingly the church has always recognized in the passion of Job a type of the passion of Jesus Christ. James (5:11) even compares the patience of Job and the issue of the Lord's sufferings. And according to this indication, it was the custom after the second century to read the book of Job in the churches during passion-week. The final solution of the problem which this marvelous books sets forth is

then this: the suffering of the righteous, in its deepest cause, is the conflict of the seed of the woman with the seed of the serpent, which ends in the head of the serpent being trampled underfoot. It is the type or copy of the suffering of Christ, the Holy God, who has himself borne our sins, and in the constancy of His reconciling love has withstood, even to the final overthrow, the assault of wrath and of the angel of wrath.

The real contents of the book of Job is the mystery of the Cross: the Cross on Golgotha is the solution of the enigma of every cross; and the book of Job is a prophecy of this final solution.

Chapter 1

"And his sons went and feasted in the house of him whose day it was, and sent and called for their sisters to eat and drink with them. And it happened, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and dismissed God from their hearts. Thus did Job continually." (1:4,5)

The seven sons took it in turn to dine with one another the week round, and did not forget their sisters in the loneliness of the parental home, but added them to their number. There existed among them a family peace and union which had been uninterruptedly cherished. But early on the morning of every eighth day, Job instituted a solemn service for his family, and offered sacrifices for his ten children that they might obtain forgiveness for any sins of frivolity into which they might have fallen in the midst of the mirth of their family gatherings.

The writer might have represented this celebration on the evening of every seventh day, but he avoids even the slightest reference to anything Israelitish; for there is no mention in Scripture of any celebration of the Sabbath before the time of Israel. The sacred observance of the Sabbath, which was consecrated by God the Creator, was first expressly enjoined by the Sinaitic Thora. Here the family celebration falls on the morning of the *Sunday*--a remarkable prelude to the New Testament celebration of Sunday in the age before the giving of the law, which is a type of the New Testament time after the law.

There were ten whole sacrifices offered by Job on each opening day of the weekly round, at the dawn of the Sunday; and one has therefore to imagine this round of entertainment as beginning with the firstborn on the first day of the week. "Perhaps," says Job, "my children have sinned, and bidden farewell to God in their hearts." Job is afraid lest his children may have become somewhat unmindful of God during their mirthful gatherings. In Job's family, therefore, there was an earnest desire for sanctification, which was far from being satisfied with mere outward propriety of conduct. Sacrifice (which is as old as the sin of mankind) was to Job a means of grace, by which he cleansed himself and his family every week from inward blemish. As head of the family, he faithfully discharged his priestly vocation, which permitted him to offer sacrifice as an early Gentile servant of

God.

The writer has now made us acquainted with the chief person of the history which he is about to record, and in verse 6 begins the history itself.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh; and Satan came also in the midst of them." (1:6)

So long as he is not finally vanquished and condemned, he has access to God, and thinks to justify himself by denying the truth of the existence and the possibility of the continuance of all piety. God permits it. For since everything happening to the creature is placed under the law of free development, evil in the world of spirits is also free to maintain and expand itself, until a spiritual power comes forward against it by which the hitherto wavering conflict between the principles of good and evil is decided.

In order now that the truth of His testimony to Job's piety, and this piety itself, may be tried, Yahweh surrenders all Job's possession, all that is his except himself, to Satan.

"Then Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy hand; only upon himself put not forth thy hand. And Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh." (1:12)

Notice well: The divine permission appears at the same time as a divine command, for in general there is not a permission by which God remains purely passive; wherefore God is even called in Scripture *creator mali* (the evil act as such only excepted), Isa. 45:7. Further, the divine arrangement has not its foundation in the sin which still clings to Job. For in the praise conferred upon Job, it is not said that he is absolutely without sin. Universal liability to sin is assumed not only of all the unrighteousness, but even of all the righteousness, of Adam's race. Thirdly, the permission proceeds, on the contrary, from God's purpose to maintain, in opposition to Satan, the righteousness which in spite of the universal liability to sin is peculiar to Job. And if we place this single instance in historical connection with the development of the plan of redemption, it is a part of the conflict of the woman's seed with the serpent, and of the gradual degradation of Satan to the lake of fire. After Yahweh's permission, Satan retires forthwith. The license is welcome to him, for he delights in the work of destruction. And he hopes to conquer. For after he has experienced the unlimited power of evil over himself, he has lost all faith in the power of good, and is indeed become himself the self-deceived father of lies.

"Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh." (1:21)

The first three messengers Job has heard [while] sitting and in silence. But at the news of the death of his children brought by the fourth, he can no longer overcome his grief. The intensity of his feeling is indicated by rising up, his torn heart by the rending of his mantle, the conscious loss of his dearest ones by cutting off the hair of his head. He does

not, however, act like one in despair, but humbling himself under the mighty hand of God falls to the ground and prostrates himself, *i.e.* worshiping God, so that his face touches the earth. *"In all this Job sinned not, nor attributed folly to God."* Satan has now exhausted his utmost power, but without success.

Chapter 2

"And Satan answered Yahweh, and said, Skin for skin, and all that man hath will he give for his life: stretch forth yet once Thy hand, and touch his bone, and his flesh, truly he will renounce Thee to Thy face!" (2:4)

The meaning of the words of Satan is this: One gives up one's skin to preserve one's skin; one endures pain on a sickly part of the skin for the sake of saving the whole skin; one holds up the arm to avert the fatal blow from the head. The second clause is climacteric: a man gives skin for skin; but for his life, his highest good, he willingly gives up everything without exception that can be given up and life itself still retained. This principle derived from experience, applied to Job, may be expressed thus: Just so, Job has gladly given up everything, and is content to have escaped with his life. *"And Yahweh said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.' "* Job has not forfeited his life. Permission is given to place it in extreme peril, and nothing more, in order to see whether or not in the face of death he will deny the God who has decreed such heavy affliction for him.

"Then Satan . . . smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown." (2:7)

The description of this disease calls to mind Deut. 38:35 with 27, and is, according to the symptoms mentioned further on in the book, *elephantiasis* (so called because the limbs become jointless lumps like elephants' legs). Artapan says that an Egyptian king was the first man who died of elephantiasis. Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, was afflicted with it in a very dangerous form. The disease begins with the rising of tubercular boils, and at length resembles a cancer spreading itself over the whole body, by which the body is so affected that some of the limbs fall completely away. Scraping with a potsherd will not only relieve the intolerable itching of the skin, but also remove the matter. Sitting among ashes is on account of the deep sorrow in which Job is brought by his heavy losses, especially the loss of his children. The Septuagint adds that he sat on a dunghill outside the city. In addition to the four losses, a fifth temptation in the form of a disease incurable in the eye of man is now come upon Job; a natural disease but brought on by Satan, permitted and therefore decreed by God.

"Then his wife said to him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die." (2:9)

What experience of life and insight the writer manifests in introducing Job's wife as the

mocking opposer of his constant piety! Job has lost his children, but this wife he has retained for he needed not to be tried by losing her; he was proved sufficiently by having her. She is further on once referred to, but even then not to her advantage. Why, asks Chrysostom, did the devil leave him this wife? Because he thought her a good scourge by which to plague him more acutely than by any other means. Moreover, the thought is not far distant that God left her to him in order that when, in the glorious issue of his sufferings he receives everything doubled, he might not have this thorn in the flesh also doubled. What enmity towards God, what uncharitableness towards her husband is there in her sarcastic words, which, if they are more than mockery, counsel him to suicide! But he repels them in a manner becoming himself. *"Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not also receive evil?"* By this answer which Job gives to his wife, he has repelled the sixth temptation, for, *"In all this Job sinned not with his lips."* The temptation to murmur was now already at work within him, but he was its master so that no murmur escaped him.

"When Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place . . . and they knew him not . . . And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights; and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his pain was very great." (2:11-13)

They saw a form which seemed to be Job, but in which they were not able to recognize him. Then they weep and rend their outer garments, and catch up dust to throw up towards heave that it may fall again upon their heads. The casting up of dust on high is the outward sign of intense suffering, and, as von Gerlach rightly remarks, of that which causes him to cry to heaven.

Ewald erroneously thinks that custom and propriety prescribed this seven days' silence; it was the force of the impression produced on them and the fear of annoying the sufferer. But their long silence shows that they had not fully realized the purpose of their visit. Their feeling is overpowered by reflection, their sympathy by dismay. It is a pity that they let Job utter the first word, which they might have prevented by some word of kindly solace; for becoming first fully conscious of the difference between his present and former position from their conduct, he breaks forth with curses.

Chapter 3

Job's first longer utterance now commences by which he involves himself in the conflict, which is his seventh temptation or trial.

"After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. . . . Perish the day wherein I was born . . . Why did I not die from the womb, come forth from the womb and expire? . . . Why is light given to the wretched, and life to the sorrowful in soul? . . . To the man whose way is hidden, and whom Eloah hath hedged round? . . . I dwelt not in security, nor rested, nor refreshed myself: then trouble cometh." (3:1-26)

Why does the writer allow Job (who but a short time before, in opposition to his wife, has manifested such wise submission to God's dealings) all at once to break forth in such despair? Does it not seem a though the assertion of Satan were about to be confirmed? Much depends upon one's forming a correct and just judgment respecting the state of mind from which this first speech proceeds. To this purpose, consider: (1) That Job nowhere says that he will have nothing more to do with God; he does not renounce his former faithfulness. (2) That, however, in the mind of the writer (as may be gathered from 2:10) this speech is to be regarded as the beginning of Job's sinning. If a man on account of his sufferings wishes to die early, or not to have been born at all, he has lost his confidence that God, even in the severest suffering, designs his highest good; and this want [lack] of confidence is sin.

There is, however, a great difference between a man who has in general no trust in God, and in whom suffering only makes this manifest in a terrible manner, and the man with whom trust in God is a habit of his soul, and is only momentarily repressed and, as it were, paralyzed. Such interruption of the habitual state may result from the first pressure of unaccustomed suffering. It may then seem as though trust in God were overwhelmed, whereas it has only given way to rally itself again. It is, however, not the greatness of the affliction in itself which shakes his sincere trust in God, but a change of disposition on the part of God which seems to be at work in the affliction. The sufferer considers himself as forgotten, forsaken, and rejected of God, as many passages in the Psalms and Lamentations show. Therefore he sinks into despair; and in this despair expression is given to the profound truth (although with regard to the individual it is a sinful weakness) that it is better never to have been born, or [better] to be annihilated, than to be rejected of God. In such a condition of spiritual and, as we know from the prologue, of Satanic temptation is Job. He does not despair when he contemplates his affliction, but when he looks at God through it, who, as though He were become his enemy, has surrounded him with this affliction as with a rampart.

In this condition of entire deprivation of every taste of divine goodness, Job breaks forth in curses. He has lost wealth and children, and has praised God. He has even begun to bear an incurable disease with submission to the providence of God. Now, however, when not only the affliction but God himself seems to him to be hostile, we hear from his mouth neither words of praise (the highest excellence in affliction) nor words of resignation (duty in affliction), but words of despair. His trust in God is not destroyed, but overcast by thick clouds of melancholy and doubt.

It is indeed inconceivable that a New Testament believer, even under the strongest temptation, should utter such imprecations, or especially such a question of doubt as in verse 20, *Wherefore is light given to the miserable?* But that an Old Testament believer might very easily become involved in such conflicts of belief may be accounted for by the absence of any express divine revelation to carry his mind beyond the bounds of the present. Concerning the future at the period when the book of Job was composed and the hero of the book lived, there were longings, inferences, and forebodings of the soul; but there was no clear, consoling word of God on which to rely. The truth--that the suffering

of this present time is not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed in us--was still silent. The proper disposition of mind, under such veiling of the future, was then indeed more absolute, as faith committed itself blindfold to the guidance of God. But how near at hand was the temptation to regard a troublous life as an indication of the divine anger, and doubtingly to ask why God should send the light of life to such! They knew not that the present lot of man forms but the one half of his history. They saw only in the one scale misery and wrath, and not in the other the heaven of love and blessedness to be revealed hereafter by which these are outweighed. They longed for a present solution of the mystery of life because they knew nothing of the possibility of a future solution.

Thus it is to be explained that not only Job in this poem, but also Jeremiah in the book of his prophecy (20:14-18) curses the day of his birth. He curses the man who brought his father the joyous tidings of the birth of a son, and wishes him the fate of Sodom and Gomorrha. He wishes for himself that his mother might have been his grave and asks, like Job, "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, and that my days should be consumed in shame?"

Without applying to this lyric piece either the standard of pedantic moralizing, or of minute criticism as poetry, the intense melancholy of this extremely plaintive prophet may have proceeded from the following reasoning: After I have lived ten long years of fidelity and sacrifice to my prophetic calling, I see that it has totally failed in its aim. All my hopes are blighted. All my exhortations to repentance, and my prayers, have not availed to draw Judah back from the abyss into which he is now cast, nor to avert the wrath of Yahweh which is now poured forth. Therefore it had been better for me never to have been born. This thought affect the prophet so much the more since in every fiber of his being he is an Israelite and identifies the weal and woe of his people with his own; just as Moses would rather himself be blotted out from the book of Life than that Israel should perish, and Paul was willing to be separated from Christ as anathema if he could thereby save Israel. What wonder that this thought should disburden itself in such imprecations! Had Jeremiah not been born, he would not have had occasion to sit on the ruins of Jerusalem. But his outburst of feeling is notwithstanding a paroxysm of excitement, for, though reason might drive him to despair, faith would teach him to hope even in the midst of downfall. And in reality, this small lyric piece in the collective prophecy of Jeremiah is only as a detached rock over which, as a stream of clear living water, the prophecy flows on more joyous in faith, more certain of the future.

In the book of Job it is otherwise. For what in Jeremiah and several of the psalms is compressed into a small compass--the darkness of temptation and its clearing up--is here the substance of a long entanglement dramatically presented, which first of all becomes progressively more and more involved and to which this outburst of feeling gives the impulse. As Jeremiah, had he not been born, would not have sat on the ruins of Jerusalem, so Job, had he not been born, would not have found himself in this abyss of wrath. Neither of them known anything of the future solution of every present mystery of life. They know nothing of the future life and the heavenly crown. This it is which, while it justifies their despair, casts greater glory round their struggling faith.

The first speaker among the friends who now comes forward is Eliphaz, probably the eldest of them. In the main they all represent one view, but each with his individual peculiarity: Eliphaz with the self-confident pathos of age, and the mien of a prophet; Bildad with the moderation and caution befitting one poorer in thought; Zophar with an excitable vehemence, neither skilled nor disposed for a lasting contest. The skill of the writer, as we may here at the outset remark, is manifested in this--that what the friends say, considered in itself, is true; the error lies only in the inadequacy and inapplicability of what is said to the case before them.

Chapters 4 and 5 **Eliphaz' First Speech**

"If one attempts a word with thee, will it grieve thee? . . . Think now: who ever perished, being innocent?! . . . Is a mortal just before Eloah, or a man pure before his Maker? . . . Call now,--is there any one who will answer thee? And to whom of thy holy ones wilt thou turn? . . . For evil cometh not forth from the dust, and sorrow sprouteth not from the earth . . . Behold, happy is the man whom Eloah correcteth; so despise not the chastening of the Almighty!" (Job 4:2-5:17)

All that Eliphaz says, considered in itself, is blameless. He censures Job's vehemence, which was certainly not to be approved. He says that the destroying judgment of God never touches the innocent, but certainly the wicked; and at the same time expresses the same truth as that placed as a motto to the Psalter in Psalm 1, and which is even brilliantly confirmed in the issue of the history of Job.

These are eternal truths, that between the Creator and creature, even an angel, there remains an infinite distance, and that no creature possesses a righteousness which it can maintain before God. Not less true is it that with God murmuring is death, and that it is appointed to sinful man to pass through sorrow. Moreover, the counsel of Eliphaz is the right counsel: I would turn to God, etc. His beautiful concluding exhortation, so rich in promises, crowns his speech.

It has been observed that if it is allowed that Eliphaz expresses a salutary spiritual design of affliction, all coherence in the book is from the first destroyed. But in reality it is an effect producing not only outward happiness, but also an inward holiness which Eliphaz ascribes to sorrow. It is therefore to be asked how it consists with the plan of the book. There is no doctrinal error to be discovered in the speech of Eliphaz, and yet he cannot be considered as a representative of the complete truth of Scripture. Job ought to humble himself under this; but since he does not, we must side with Eliphaz.

He does not represent the complete truth of Scripture; for there are, according to Scripture, three kinds of suffering which must be carefully distinguished. The godless one, who has fallen away from God, is visited with suffering from God; for sin and the punishment of sin are necessarily connected as cause and effect. This suffering of the godless is the effect of the divine justice in punishment. It is chastisement under the

disposition of wrath, though not yet final wrath. It is punitive suffering. On the other hand, the sufferings of the righteous flow from the divine love, to which even all that has the appearance of wrath in this suffering must be subservient, as the means only by which it operates. For although the righteous man is not excepted from the weakness and sinfulness of the human race, he can never become an object of the divine wrath so long as his inner life is directed towards God and his outward life is governed by the most earnest striving after sanctification. According to the Old and New Testaments, he stands towards God in the relation of a child to his father (only the New Testament idea includes the mystery of the new birth not revealed in the Old Testament); and consequently all sufferings are fatherly chastisements.

But this general distinction between the sufferings of the righteous and of the ungodly is not sufficient for the book of Job. The sufferings of the righteous even are themselves manifold. God sends affliction to them more and more to purge away the sin which still has power over them, and rouse them up from the danger of carnal security; to maintain in them the consciousness of sin as well as of grace, and with it the lowliness of penitence; to render the world and its pleasures bitter as gall to them; to draw them from the creature and bind them to himself by prayer and devotion. This suffering which has the sin of the godly as its cause has, however, not God's wrath, but God's love directed towards the preservation and advancement of the godly as its motive. It is the proper disciplinary suffering. It is this of which Paul speaks, 1 Cor. 11:32. This disciplinary suffering may attain such a high degree as entirely to overwhelm the consciousness of the relation to God by grace. And the sufferer (as frequently in the Psalms) considers himself as one rejected of God, over whom the wrath of God is passing. The deeper the sufferer's consciousness of sin, the more dejected is his mood of sorrow; and still God's thoughts concerning him are thoughts of peace and not of evil. He chastens, not however in wrath, but with moderation (Jer. 10:24).

Nearly allied to this suffering, but yet as to its cause and purpose distinct, is another kind of the suffering of the godly. God ordains suffering for them in order to prove their fidelity to himself and their earnestness after sanctification, especially their trust in God and their patience. He also permits Satan, who impeaches them, to tempt them, to sift them as wheat, in order that he may be confounded and the divine choice justified--in order that it may be manifest that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers are able to separate them from the love of God and to tear away their faith from God, which has remained steadfast on Him notwithstanding every apparent manifestation of wrath. The godly will recognize his affliction as such suffering when it comes upon him in the very midst of his fellowship with God, his prayer and watching, and his struggling after sanctification. Such suffering, according to a common figure, is for the godly what the smelting-furnace or the fining-pot is to precious metals. A rich reward awaits him who is found proof against the trial, temptation, and conflict, and comes forth from it as pure refined gold. Suffering for trial is nearly allied to that for chastisement insofar as the chastisement is at the same time trial; but distinct from it insofar as every trial is not also chastisement (*i.e.* having as its purpose the purging away of still existing sin).

A third kind of the suffering of the righteous is testimony borne by suffering--reproach,

persecution, and perhaps even martyrdom, which are endured for the sake of fidelity to God and His word. While he is blessed who is found proof against trial, he is blessed in himself who endures this suffering; for every other suffering comes upon man for his own sake, this for God's. In this case there is not even the remotest connection between the suffering and the sinfulness of the sufferer.

Without a knowledge of these different kinds of human suffering, the book of Job cannot be understood. "Whoever sees with spiritual eyes," says Brentius, "does not judge the moral character of a man by his suffering, but his suffering by his moral character." Just the want [lack] of this spiritual discernment and inability to distinguish the different kinds of suffering is the mistake of the friends, and likewise, from the very first, the mistake of Eliphaz. Convinced of the sincere piety of his friend, he came to Job believing that his suffering was a salutary chastisement of God, which would at last turn out for his good. Proceeding upon this assumption, he blames Job for his murmuring and bids him receive his affliction with a recognition of human sinfulness and the divine purpose for good. Thus the controversy begins. The causal connection with sin, in which Eliphaz places Job's suffering, is after all the mildest. He does not go further than to remind Job that he is a sinner, because he is a man.

But even this causal connection (in which Eliphaz connects Job's sufferings, though in the most moderate way, with previous sin deserving of punishment) is his *πρωτον ψευδος* [first untruth]. In the next place, Job's suffering is indeed not chastisement but trial. Yahweh has decreed it for His servant, not to chasten him but to prove him. This it is that Eliphaz mistakes; and we also should not know it but for the prologue and the corresponding epilogue. Accordingly, the prologue and epilogue are organic parts of the form of the book. If these are removed, its spirit is destroyed.

But the speech of Eliphaz, moreover, beautiful and true as it is when considered in itself, is nevertheless heartless, haughty, stiff, and cold. For (1.) it does not contain a word of sympathy, and yet the suffering which he beholds is so terribly great. His first word to his friend after the seven days of painful silence is not one of comfort but of moralizing. (2.) He must know that Job's disease is not the first and only suffering which has come upon him, and that he has endured his previous afflictions with heroic submission. But he ignores this and acts as though sorrow were now first come upon Job. (3.) Instead of recognizing therein the reason of Job's despondency, that he thinks that he has fallen from the love of God and become an object of wrath, he treats him as self-righteous; and to excite his feelings, presents an oracle to him which contains nothing but what Job might sincerely admit as true. (4.) Instead of considering that Job's despair and murmuring against God is really of a different kind from that of the godless, he classes them together; and instead of gently correcting him, presents to Job the accursed end of the fool who also murmurs against God, as he has himself seen it. Thus, in consequence of the false application which Eliphaz makes of it, the truth contained in his speech is totally reversed. Thus delicately and profoundly commences the dramatic entanglement. The skill of the poet is proved by the difficulty which the expositor has in detecting that which is false in the speech of Eliphaz. The idea of the book does not float on the surface. It is clothed with flesh and blood. It is submerged in the very action and history.

Chapters 6 and 7 **Job's First Answer**

"Oh that my vexation were but weighed, and they would put my suffering in the balance against it! . . . What is my strength, that I should wait, and my end, that I should be patient? . . . My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and vanish without hope. . . . Am I a sea or a sea-monster, that thou settest a watch over me? . . . And why dost Thou not forgive my transgression, and put away my iniquity? For now I will lay myself in the dust, and Thou seekst for me, and I am no more." (Job 6:2-7:21)

Here Job's second speech ends. It consists of two parts, which the division of chapters has correctly marked. The first part is addressed to the friends (nowhere specially to Eliphaz), because Job at once considers the address of Eliphaz as at the same time an expression of the thoughts and disposition of the two others who remain silent. In the second part he turns direct to God with his complaints, desponding inquiries, and longing for the alleviation of his sufferings before his approaching end. The correct estimate of this second speech of Job depends upon the right understanding of that of Eliphaz. It is not to be supposed that Job in this speech makes too much of his dignity and merit, as that he intends expressly to defend his innocence, or even enter into the controversy. For Eliphaz does not at present go so far as to explain his suffering as the suffering commonly inflicted as punishment. When Job (6:10) incidentally says that he does not disown the words of the Holy One, it does not imply that his sufferings may be chastisement. On the contrary, Job even allows the possibility that he should sin, but since his habitual state is fidelity to God, this assumption is not sufficient to account for his suffering. And he does not see why God should so unmercifully visit such sinfulness instead of pardoning it (7:20,21).

It is not to be objected that he who is fully conscious of sin cannot consider the strictest divine punishment even of the smallest sin unjust. The suffering of one whose habitual state is pleasing to God, and who is conscious of the divine favor, can never be explained from and measured according to his infirmities. The infirmities of one who trusts in God, or the believer, and the severity of the divine justice in the punishment of sin have no connection with one another. Consequently, when Eliphaz bids Job regard his affliction as chastisement, Job is certainly in the wrong to dispute with God concerning the magnitude of it. He would rather patiently yield, if his faith could apprehend the salutary design of God in his affliction. But after his affliction once seems to him to spring from wrath and enmity and not from the divine purpose of mercy, after the phantom of a hostile God is come between him and the brightness of the divine countenance, he cannot avoid falling into complaint of unmercifulness. For this the speech of Eliphaz is in itself not to blame. He had most feelingly described to him God's merciful purpose in this chastisement, but he is to blame for not having taken the right tone.

The speech of Job is directed against the unsympathetic and reproving tone which the friends, after their long silence, have assumed immediately upon his first manifestation of anguish. He justifies to them his complaint (ch. 3) as the natural and just outburst of his intense suffering, desires speedy death as the highest joy with which God could reward his

piety, complains of his disappointment in his friends from whom he had expected affectionate solace, but by whom he sees he is now forsaken, and earnestly exhorts them to acknowledge the justice of his complaint (ch. 6). But can they? Yes, they might and should. For Job thinks he is no longer an object of divine favor; an inward conflict, which is still more terrible than hell, is added to his outward suffering. For the damned must give glory to God because they recognize their suffering as just punishment. Job, however, in his suffering sees the wrath of God and still is at the same time conscious of his innocence. The faith which, in the midst of his exhaustion of body and soul, still knows and feels God to be merciful and can call him "my God," like Asaph in Ps. 73,--this faith is well-nigh overwhelmed in Job by the thought that God is his enemy, his pains the arrows of God. The assumption is false, but on this assumption Job's complaints (ch. 3) are relatively just, including what he himself says, that they are mistaken, thoughtless words of one in despair. But that despair is sin, and therefore also those curses and despairing inquiries!

Is not Eliphaz, therefore, in the right? His whole treatment is wrong. Instead of distinguishing between the complaint of his suffering and the complaint of God in Job's outburst of anguish, he puts them together without recognizing the complaint of his suffering to be the natural and unblameable result of its extraordinary magnitude, and as a sympathizing friend falling in with it. But with regard to the complaints of God, Eliphaz, acting as though careful for his spiritual welfare, ought not to have met them with his reproofs, especially as the words of one heavily afflicted deserve indulgence and delicate treatment; but he should have combated their false assumption. First, he should have said to Job, "Thy complaints of thy suffering are just, for thy suffering is incomparably great." In the next place, "Thy cursing thy birth and thy complaint of God who has given thee thy life might seem just if it were true that God has rejected thee. But that is not true; even in suffering He designs thy good. The greater the suffering, the greater the glory." By this means Eliphaz should have calmed Job's despondency so as to destroy his false assumption. But he begins wrongly. And consequently what he says at last so truly and beautifully respecting the glorious issue of a patient endurance of chastisement makes no impression on Job. He has not fanned the faintly burning wick, but his speech is a cold and violent breath which is calculated entirely to extinguish it.

After Job has defended the justice of his complaints against the insensibility of the friends, he gives way anew to lamentation. Starting from the wearisomeness of human life in general, he describes the greatness of his own suffering, which has received no such recognition on the part of the friends. It is a restless, torturing death without hope (7:1-6). Then he turns to God: O remember that there is no second life after death, and that I am soon gone forever; therefore I will utter my woe without restraint (7:7-11). Thus far (from 6:1 onwards) I find in Job's speech no trace of blasphemous or sinful despair. When he says (6:8-12), How I would rejoice if God, whose word I have never disowned, would grant me my request and end my life, for I can no longer bear my suffering,--I cannot with Ewald see in it despair rising to madness, which (7:10) even increases to frantic joy. For Job's disease was indeed really in the eyes of men as hopeless as he describes it. In an incurable disease, however, imploring God to hasten death and rejoicing at the thought of approaching dissolution is not a sin, and is not to be called despair inasmuch as one does

not call giving up all hope of recovery despair.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the book of Job is an oriental book, and therefore some allowance must be made for the intensity and strength of conception of the oriental nature; then, that it is a poetical book, and that frenzy and madness may not be also understood by the intensified expression in which poetry (which idealizes the real) clothes pain and joy; finally, that it is an Old Testament book, and that in the Old Testament the fundamental nature of man is indeed sanctified but not yet subdued. The spirit shines forth as a light in a dark place; but the day, the ever constant consciousness of favor and life, has not yet dawned. The desire of a speedy termination of life (6:8-12) is in 7:7-11 softened down even to a request for an alleviation of suffering, founded on this--that death terminates life forever.

In the Talmud (*b. Bathra*, 16, *a*) it is observed on this passage that Job denies the resurrection of the dead. But Job knows nothing of a resurrection of the dead; and what one knows not, one cannot deny. He knows only that after death, the end of the present life, there is no second life in this world. [There is] only a being in *Sheol*, which is only an apparent existence = no existence, in which all praise of God is silent, because He no longer reveals himself there as to the living in this world (Ps. 6:6, 30:10, 88:11-13, 115:17). From this chaotic conception of the other side of the grave, against which even the psalmists still struggle, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had not been set forth at the time of Job, and of the author of the book of Job. The restoration of Israel buried in exile (Ezek. 37) first gave the impulse to it. And the resurrection of the Prince of Life, who was laid in the grave, set the seal upon it. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was first of all the actual overthrow of Hades.

This great change in the destiny of the dead was incomplete, and the better hope which became brighter and brighter as the advent of death's Conqueror drew near was not yet in existence. For if after death (or what is the same thing, after the descent into Sheol) there was only a non-existence for Job, it is evident that on the one hand he can imagine a life after death only as a return to the present world (such a return does, however, not take place); on the other hand, that no divine revelation said anything to him of a future life which should infinitely compensate for a return to the present world. And since he knows nothing of a future existence, it can consequently not be said that he denies it. He knows nothing of it, and even his dogmatizing friends have nothing to tell him about it. We shall see by-and-by how the more his friends torment him, the more he is urged on in his longing for a future life. But the word of revelation, which could alone change desire into hope, is wanting. The more tragic and heart-rending Job's desire to be freed by death from his unbearable suffering is, the more touching and importunate is his prayer that God may consider that now soon he can no longer be an object of His mercy.

Thus far we can trace nothing of frenzy and madness. And of despair, [we can trace it] only insofar as Job has given up the hope of his restoration; not however of real despair, in which a man impatiently and forcibly snaps asunder the bond of trust which unites him to God. If the poet had anywhere made Job to go to such a length in despair, he would have made Satan to triumph over him.

Now, however, the last two strophes follow in which Job is hurried forward to the use of sinful language: *"Am I a sea or a sea-monster,"* etc. (7:12-16); and, *"What is a man, that thou accountest him so great,"* etc. (7:17-21). We should nevertheless be mistaken if we thought there were sin here in the expressions by which Job describes God's hostility against himself. It is, moreover, not Job's peculiar sin that he thinks God has changed to an enemy against him; that is the view which comes from his vision being beclouded by the conflict through which he is passing, as is frequently the case in the Psalms. His sin does not even consist in the inquiries, *How long?* and *Wherefore?* The Psalms in that case would abound in sin. But the sin is that he dwells upon these doubting questions, and thus attributes apparent mercilessness and injustice to God. And the friends constantly urge him on still deeper in this sin the more persistently they attribute his suffering to his own unrighteousness. Jeremiah (Lamentations 3), after similar complaints, adds: *"Then I repeated this to my heart, and took courage from it: the mercies of Yahweh, they have no end; His compassions do not cease,"* etc. Many of the Psalms that begin sorrowfully end in the same way--faith at length breaks through the clouds of doubt.

But it should be remembered that the change of spiritual condition which, e.g. in Ps. 6, is condensed to the narrow limits of a lyric composition of eleven verses, is here in Job worked out with dramatic detail as a passage of his life's history. His faith, once so heroic, only smolders under ashes. The friends, instead of fanning it to a flame, bury it still deeper, until at last it is set free from its bondage by Yahweh himself, who appears in the whirlwind.

Chapter 8 ***Bildad's First Speech***

"How long wilt thou utter such things, and the words of thy mouth are a boisterous wind? Will God reverse what is right, or the Almighty reverse what is just? When thy children sinned against Him, He gave them over to the hand of their wickedness." (8:2-4)

Bildad begins harshly and self-confidently. He means that Job's speeches are like the wind in their nothingness, and like a boisterous wind in their vehemence. Bildad sees the justice of God, the Absolute One, which ought to be universally acknowledged, impugned in them. In order not to say directly that Job's children had died such a sudden death on account of their sin, he speaks conditionally. If they have sinned, death is just the punishment of their sin. God has not arbitrarily swept them away, but has justly given them over to the destroying hand of their wickedness (a reference to the prologue which belongs inseparably to the whole).

"If thou seekest unto God, and makest supplication to the Almighty, if thou art pure and upright; surely! He will care for thee, and restore the habitation of thy righteousness; and if thy beginning was small, thy end shall be exceeding great." (Job 8:5-7)

"Behold! God despiseth not the perfect man, and taketh not evil-doers by the hand. While He shall fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing, they who hate thee shall be clothed with shame, and the tent of the ungodly is no more." (Job 8:20-22)

We have seen that Job in his second speech charges God with the appearance of injustice and want of compassion. The friends act as friends by not allowing this to pass without admonition. After Job has exhausted himself with his complaints, Bildad enters into the discussion in the above speech. He defends the justice of God against Job's unbecoming words. His assertion that God does not swerve from the right is so true that it would be blasphemy to maintain against him that God sometimes perverts the right. And Bildad seems also to make the right use of this truth when he promises a glorious issue to his suffering, as a substantial proof that God does not deal unjustly towards him; for Job's suffering does actually come to such an issue, and this issue in its accomplishments destroys the false appearance that God had been unjust or unmerciful towards him. Bildad expresses his main point still more prudently, and more in accordance with the case before him, when he says, *"Behold! God does not act hostilely towards the godly, neither does He make common cause with the evil-doer"* (ver. 20)--a confession which he must allow is on both sides the most absolute truth. By the most telling figures he portrays the perishableness of the prosperity of those who forget God, and paints in glowing colors on this dark background the future which awaits Job. What is there in this speech of Bildad to censure, and how is it that it does not produce the desired cheering effect on Job?

It is true that nothing that God sends to man proceeds from injustice; but it is not true that everything that He sends to him comes from His justice. As God does not ordain suffering for the hardened sinner in order to *improve* him because He is *merciful*, so He does not ordain suffering for the truly godly in order to *punish* him because He is *just*. What we call God's attributes are only separate phases of His indivisible holy being,--*ad extra*, separate modes of His operation in which they all share,--of which, when in operation, one does not act in opposition to another. They are not, however, all engaged upon the same object at one time. One cannot say that God's love manifests itself in action in hell nor His anger in heaven; nor His justice in the afflictions of the godly and His mercy in the sufferings of the godless.

Herein is Bildad's mistake: that he thinks his commonplace utterance is sufficient to explain all the mysteries of human life. We see from his judgment of Job's children how unjust he becomes, since he regards the matter as the working out of divine justice. He certainly speaks hypothetically, but in such a way that he might as well have said directly that their sudden death was the punishment of their sin. If he had found Job dead, he would have considered him as a sinner whom God had carried off in His anger. Even now he has no pleasure in promising Job help and blessing. Accordingly from his point of view he expresses himself very conditionally--*If thou art pure and upright*. We see from this that his belief in Job's uprightness is shaken, for how could the All-just One visit Job with such severe suffering if he had not deserved it! Nevertheless Bildad thinks it possible that Job's heart may be pure and upright (ver. 6), and consequently his present affliction may not be peremptory punishment but only disciplinary chastisement. Job must--such is

Bildad's counsel--give God glory and acknowledge that he deserves nothing better. And thus humbling himself beneath the just hand of God he will be again made righteous, and exalted.

Job cannot, however, comprehend his suffering as an act of divine justice. His own fidelity is a fact, his consciousness of which cannot be shaken. It is therefore impossible for him to deny it for the sake of affirming the justice of God, for truth is not to be supported by falsehood. Hence Bildad's glorious promises afford Job no comfort. Apart from their being awkwardly introduced, they depend upon an assumption the truth of which Job cannot admit without being untrue to himself. Consequently Bildad, though with the best intention, only urges Job still further forward and deeper into the conflict.

But does, then, the confession of sin on the part of constantly sinful man admit of his regarding the suffering thus appointed to him not merely not as punishment, but also not as chastisement? If a sufferer acknowledges the excessive hideousness of sin, how can he, when a friend bids him regard his affliction as a wholesome chastisement designed to mortify sin more and more,--how can he receive the counsel with such impatience as we see in the case of Job? The utterances of Job are, in fact, so wild, inconsiderate, and unworthy of God, and the first speeches of Eliphaz and Bildad on the contrary so winning and appropriate, that if Job's affliction ought really to be regarded from the standpoint of chastisement, their tone could not be more to the purpose nor exhortation and comfort more beautifully blended. Even when one knows the point of the book, one will still be constantly liable to be misled by the speeches of the friends. It requires the closest attention to detect what is false in them. The poet's mastery of his subject and the skill with which he exercises it manifests itself in his allowing the opposition of the friends to Job, though existing in the germ from the very beginning, to become first of all in the course of the controversy so harsh that they look upon Job as a sinner undergoing punishment from God, while in opposition to them he affirms his innocence and challenges a decision from God.

The poet, however, allows Bildad to make one declaration from which we clearly see that his address, beautiful as it is, rests on a false basis and loses its effect. Bildad explains the sudden death of Job's children as a divine judgment. He could not have sent a more wounding dart into Job's already broken heart. For is it possible to tell a man anything more heart-rending than that his father, his mother, or his children have died as the direct punishment of their sins? One would not say so even if it should seem to be an obvious fact, and least of all to a father already sorely tried and brought almost to the grave with sorrow. Bildad, however, does not rely upon facts; he reasons only *a priori*. He does not know that Job's children were godless. The only ground of his judgment is the syllogism, Whoever dies a fearful sudden death must be a great sinner; God has brought Job's children to such a death; ergo, etc. Bildad is zealously affected for God, but without understanding. He is blind to the truth of experience in order not to be drawn away from the truth of his premise. He does not like to acknowledge anything that furnishes a contradiction to it. It is this same rationalism of superstition or credulity which has originated the false doctrine of the *decretum absolutum*. With the same icy and unfeeling rigorism with which Calvinism refers the divine rule, and all that happens upon earth, to

the one principle of absolute divine will and pleasure, in spite of all the contradictions of Scripture and experience, Bildad refers everything to the principle of the divine justice, and, indeed, divine justice in a judicial sense.

There is also another idea of justice beside this judicial one. Justice is in general God's dealings as ruled by His holiness. Now there is not only a holy will of God concerning man, which says *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, but also a purpose for the redemption of unholy man springing from the holy love of God to man. Accordingly justice is either the agreement of God's dealings with the will of His holiness manifest in the demands of the law, apart from redemption, or the agreement of His dealings with the will of His love as graciously manifested in the gospel; in short, either retributive or redemptive. If one, as Bildad, in the first sense says God never acts unjustly, and glaringly maintains it as universally applicable, the mystery of the divine dispensations is not made clear thereby but destroyed. Thus also Job's suffering is no longer a mystery; Job suffers what he deserves. And if it cannot be demonstrated, it is to be assumed in contradiction to all experience. This view of his affliction does not suffice to pacify Job in spite of the glorious promises by which it is set off. His conscience bears him witness that he has not merited such incomparably heavy affliction. And if we indeed suppose what we must suppose, that Job was in favor with God when this suffering came upon him, then the thought that God deals with him according to his works, perhaps according to his unacknowledged sins, must be altogether rejected.

God does not punish His own. And when He chastises them, it is not an act of His retributive justice but of His disciplinary love. This motive of love, indeed, belongs to chastisement in common with trial. And the believer who clearly discerns this love will be able to look upon even the severest affliction as chastisement without being led astray, because he knows that sin has still great power in him. And the medicine, if it is designed to heal him, must be bitter. If, therefore, Bildad had represented Job's affliction as the chastisement of divine love, which would humble him in order the more to exalt him, then Job would have humbled himself, although Bildad might not be altogether in the right. But Bildad, still further than Eliphaz from weakening the erroneous supposition of a hostile God which had taken possession of Job's mind, represents God's justice (to which he attributes the death of his children instead of His love) as the hand under which Job is to humble himself. Thereby the comfort which Job's friend offers becomes to him a torture, and his trial is made still greater; for his conscience does not accuse him of any sins for which he should now have an angry instead of a gracious God.

But we cannot even here withhold the confession that the composition of such a drama would not be possible under the New Testament. The sight of the suffering of Christ and the future crown has a power in calming the mind, which makes such an outburst of sorrow as that of Job impossible even under the strongest temptation. "If the flesh should murmur and cry out, as Christ even cried out and was feeble," says Luther in one of his consolatory letters (Rambach, *Kleine Schriften Luthers*, S. 627), "the spirit nevertheless is ready and willing, and with sighings that cannot be uttered will cry: Abba, Father, it is Thou; Thy rod is hard, but Thou art still Father; I know that of a truth." And since the consciousness of sin is as deep as the consciousness of grace, the Christian will not

consider any suffering so severe but that he may have deserved severer on account of his sins, even though in the midst of his cross he be unable clearly to recognize the divine love. Even such uncharitable, cold-hearted consolation as that of Eliphaz and Bildad, which bids him regard the divine trial as divine chastisement, cannot exasperate him since he is conscious of the need for even severer divine chastisement. He need not therefore allow the uncharitableness of the friend to pass without loving counter-exhortations.

[Hengstenberg writes:] "It was good that under the Old Covenant the cords of sinful conviction were not strung too tightly, as the full consolation was still not to be found. The gulf closed up again when the sufferings were gone." Such is the actual connection. And this development of the work of redemption in the history of mankind is repeated in the individual experience of every believer. As the individual, the further he progresses in the divine life, becomes the more deeply conscious of the natural depravity of man and acquires a keener and still keener perception of its most subtle working, so in the New Testament, with the disclosure of actual salvation, a deeper insight into sin is also given. When the infinite depth and extent of the kingdom of light is unveiled, the veil is for the first time removed from the abyss of the kingdom of darkness. Had the latter been revealed without the former in the dispensation before Christ, the Old Testament would have been not only what it actually was in connection with the then painful consciousness of sin and death--a school of severe discipline preparatory to the New Testament, a school of ardent longing for redemption--but would have become an abyss of despair.

Chapters 9 and 10 **Job's Second Answer**

"Yea, indeed, I know it is thus, and how should a man be just with God! Should he wish to contend with God, he could not answer Him one of a thousand. The wise in heart and mighty in strength, who hath defied Him and remained unhurt? . . . Behold, He taketh away, who will hold Him back? Who will say to Him: What doest Thou? . . . If when I called He really answered, I could not believe that He would hearken to me; He would rather crush me in a tempest, and only multiply my wounds without cause . . . For He is not a man as I, that I should answer Him, that we should go together to judgment. There is not an arbitrator between us who should lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take away his rod from me, and let His terrors not stupify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him, for not thus do I stand with myself." (Job 9:2-35)

"I will say to Eloah: Condemn me not; let me know wherefore Thou contendest with me! . . . Thy hands have formed and perfected me altogether round about, and Thou hast now swallowed me up! Consider now, that Thou hast perfected me as clay, and wilt Thou turn me again into dust? . . . Are not my days few? then cease and turn from me, that I may become a little cheerful, before I go to return no more into the land of darkness and of the shadow of death." (Job 10:2-21)

In this speech Job for the first time assents to the principle on which the attack of the

friends is founded. It is primarily directed against Bildad but applies also to Eliphaz, for the two hold the same opinion.

The maxim of the friends is: God does not pervert right, *i.e.* He deals justly in all that He does. They conclude from this that no man, no sufferer, dare justify himself. It is his duty to humble himself under the just hand of God. Job assents to all this, but his assent is mere sarcasm at what they say. He admits that everything that God does is right and must be acknowledged as right. Not, however, because it is right in itself, but because it is the act of the absolute God against whom no protest uttered by the creature, though with the clearest conviction of innocence, can avail. Job separates goodness from God, and regards that which is part of His very being as a product of His arbitrary will. What God says and does must be true and right even if it be not true and right in itself. The God represented by the friends is a God of absolute justice; the God of Job is a God of absolute power. The former deals according to the objective rule of right; the latter according to a freedom which, because removed from all moral restraint, is pure caprice.

How is it that Job entertains such a cheerless view of the matter? The friends, by the strong view which they have taken up, urge him into another extreme. On their part, they imagine that in the justice of God they have a principle which is sufficient to account for all the misfortunes of mankind, and Job's in particular. They maintain, with respect to mankind in general (Eliphaz by an example from his own observation, and Bildad by calling to his aid the wisdom of the ancients), that the ungodly, though prosperous for a time, come to a fearful end; with respect to Job, that his affliction is a just chastisement from God, although designed for his good. Against the one assertion Job's own experience of life rebels, against the other his consciousness rises up with indignation. Job's observation is really as correct as that of the friends. For this history of the past and of the present furnishes as many illustrations of judgments which have suddenly come upon the godless in the height of their prosperity, as of general visitations in which the innocent have suffered with the guilty by whom these judgment have been incurred. But with regard to his misfortune, Job cannot and ought not to look at it from the standpoint of the divine justice.

If, then, Job's suffering were not so severe and his faith so powerfully shaken, he would comfort himself with the thought that the divine ways are unsearchable, since on the one hand he cannot deny the many traces of the justice of the divine government in the world (he does not deny them even here), and on the other hand is perplexed by the equally numerous incongruities of human destiny with the divine justice. (This thought is rendered more consolatory to us by the revelation which we possess of the future life, although even in the later Old Testament times the last judgment is referred to as the adjustment of all these incongruities; *vid.* the conclusion of Ecclesiastes.) His own lot might have remained always inexplicable to him, without his being obliged on that account to lose the consciousness of the divine love and that faith like Asaph's which, as Luther says, struggles towards God through wrath and disfavor as through thorns, yea, even through spears and swords.

Job is passing through conflict and temptation. He does not perceive the divine motive

and purpose of his suffering, nor has he that firm and unshaken faith which will keep him from mistaken views of God, although His dispensations are an enigma to him. But as his first speech (ch. 3) shows, he is tormented by thoughts which form part of the conflict of temptation. The image of the gracious God is hidden from him. He feels only the working of the divine wrath and asks, Wherefore doth God give light to the suffering one? And when the friends, who know as little as Job himself about the right solution of this mystery, censure him for his inquiry and think that in the propositions--[1] man has no righteousness which he can maintain before God and [2] God does not pervert the right--they have found the key to the mystery, the conflict becomes fiercer for Job; because the justice of God furnishes him with no satisfactory explanation of his own lot or of the afflictions of mankind generally. The justice of God, which the friends consider to be sufficient to explain everything that befalls man, Job can only regard as the right of the Supreme Being. And while it appears to the friends that every act of God is controlled by His justice, it seems to Job that whatever God does *must* be right by virtue of His absolute power.

This principle, devoid of consolation, drives Job to the utterances so unworthy of him--that in spite of his conviction of his innocence he must appear guilty before God, because he must be speechless before His terrible majesty; that if, however, God would only for once so meet him that he could fearlessly address Him, he would know well enough how to defend himself (ch. 9). After these utterances of his feeling, from which all consciousness of the divine love is absent, he puts forth the touching prayer: Condemn me not without letting me know why Thou dost condemn me! (10:1-7). As he looks back, he is obliged to praise God as his Creator and Preserver for what He has hitherto done for him (10:8-12). But as he thinks of his present condition, he sees that from the very beginning God designed to vent His wrath upon him, to mark his infirmities, and to deprive him of all joy in the consciousness of his innocence (10:13-17). He is therefore compelled to regard God as his enemy, and this thought overpowers the remembrance of the divine goodness. If, however, God were his enemy, he might well ask, Wherefore then have I come into being? And while he writhes as a worm crushed beneath the almighty power of God, he prays that God would let him alone for a season ere he passes away into the land of darkness, whence there is no return (10:18-22).

Brentius remarks that this speech of Job contains *inferni blasphemias*, but also adds that in passages like 10:8-12 faith raises its head even in the midst of judgment. This is true. The groundwork of Job's faith remains even in the fiercest conflict of temptation, and is continually manifest. We should be unable to understand the book unless we could see this *fidei scintilla*, the extinction of which would be the accomplishment of Satan's design against him, glimmering everywhere through the speeches of Job. The unworthy thoughts he entertains of God, which Brentius calls *inferni blasphemias*, are nowhere indulged to such a length that Job charges God with being his enemy, although he fancies Him to be an enraged foe. In spite of the imagined enmity of God against him, Job nowhere goes so far as to declare enmity on his part against God. He does not turn away from God but inclines to Him in prayer. His soul is filled with adoration of God, and with reverence of His power and majesty. He can clearly discern God's marvelous works in nature and among men, and His creative power and gracious providence, the workings of which he

has himself experienced. But that mystery, which the friends have made still more mysterious, has cast a dark cloud over his vision so that he can no longer behold the loving countenance of God. His faith is unable to disperse this cloud, and so he sees but one side of the divine character--His almightiness. Since he consequently looks upon God as the Almighty and the Wrathful One, his feeling alternately manifests itself under two equally tragic phases. At one time he exalts himself in his consciousness of the justice of his cause, to sink back again before the majesty of God to whom he must nevertheless succumb. At another time his feeling of self-confidence is overpowered by the severity of his suffering, and he betakes himself to importunate supplication.

It is true that Job, so long as he regards his sufferings as a dispensation of divine judgment, is as unjust towards God as he believes God to be unjust towards him. But if we bear in mind that this state of conflict and temptation does not preclude the idea of a temporal withdrawal of faith, and that, as Baumgarten aptly expresses it, the profound secret of prayer is this--that man can prevail with the Divine Being--, then we shall understand that this dark cloud need only be removed and Job again stands before the God of love as His saint.