

God Answered Not By Whisper But Whirlwind

By David Burris

"If I complain that I am suffering unjustly, it is no answer to say, 'Can you make a hippopotamus?'" - George Bernard Shaw



created by the Bible Project

Look Who's Talking

ERIC LYONS, M.Min.



As we study and defend the Bible, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with an inspired record that contains numerous un-inspired statements. Even though “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), not everything that the inspired writers recorded was a true statement. For example, after God created Adam, He told him not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest he die (Genesis 2:17). Yet, when the serpent approached Eve, he “informed” her that she would **not** die if she ate of this forbidden fruit (3:4).

Obviously, Satan was not inspired by God to say “You will not surely die.” In fact, as we learn earlier, he actually lied (John 8:44). However, when Moses recorded the events that took place in Eden hundreds of years later, he wrote by inspiration of God (cf. Luke 24:44; John 5:46). When Jesus healed a demoniac, some Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons, not by the power of God but by the power of “Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 12:24). Like Moses, Matthew did not write a lie, but merely reported a lie. The inspired writers of the Bible are in no way responsible for inaccurate statements that are recorded therein. Whether the statements were true or false, they just reported them accurately.

When giving a defense for a particular truth the Bible teaches (cf. 1 Peter 3:15), or when refuting the scriptural error that someone else may be teaching (cf. Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2), we must keep in mind who is doing the talking. The above examples are rather basic: Satan’s statement and the Pharisees’ allegations clearly were false. But what about when statements are made by individuals who do not seem “as bad” as these?

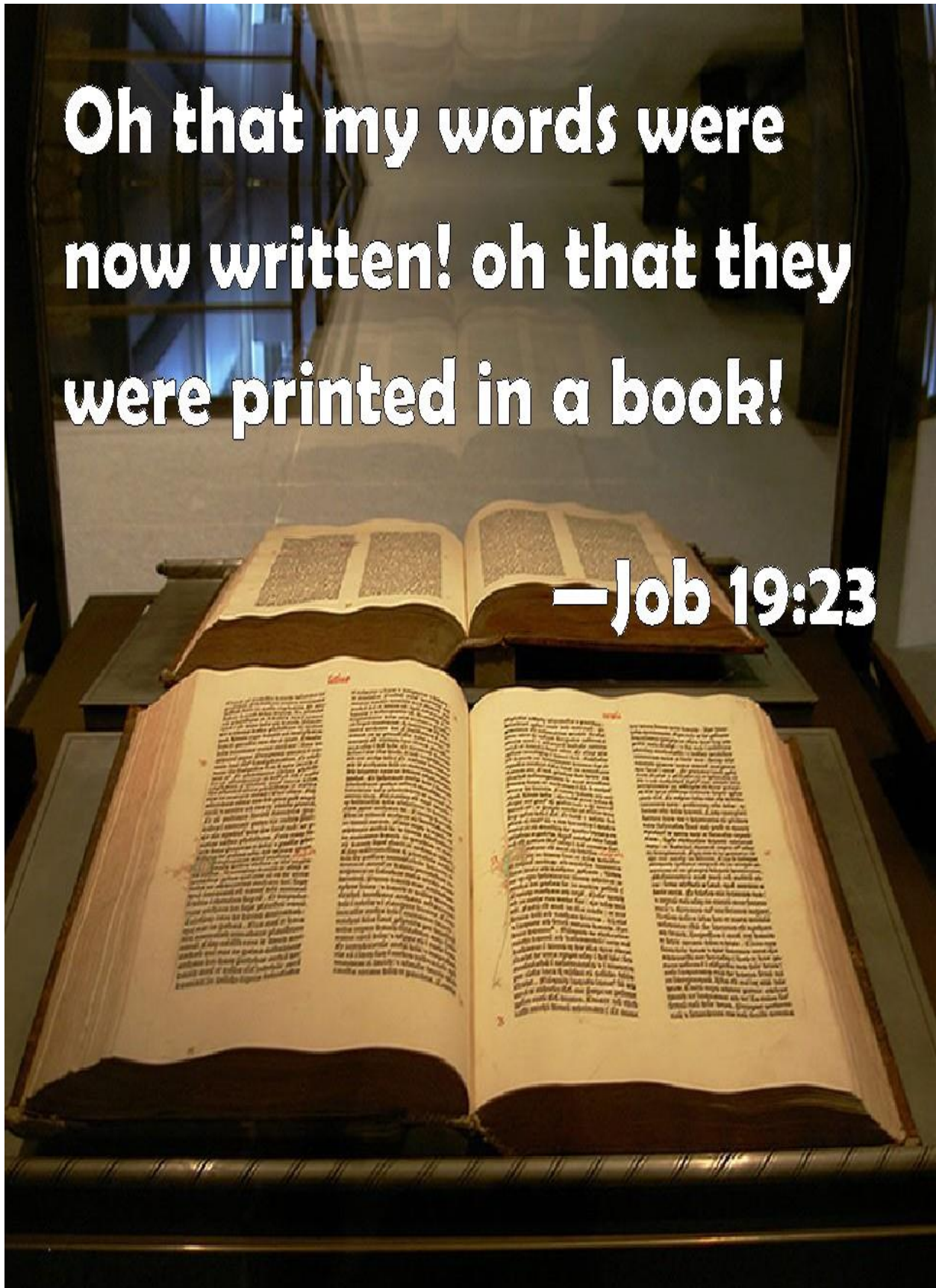
Oftentimes when attempting to defend a certain doctrine, a person will quote a verse from the book of Job and say, “See, that’s what it says...the book of Job says...therefore my doctrine is proven true.” Not long ago I read an article by a gentleman who was defending a doctrine by citing various verses in the book of Job. This man never indicated who made the statements; he simply cited all of them as being true statements. Those who “defend the truth” in such a way totally disregard one of the fundamental rules of interpretation, i.e., knowing who is speaking. One who studies Job must realize that it is an inspired book that also contains many **un**inspired statements. For instance, we know that Job’s wife was incorrect when she told him to, “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). We also know that many statements made by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were incorrect. Nine of the 42 chapters in Job were speeches by these “miserable comforters” (16:2) whom God said had “not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has” (42:7). Clearly then, one never should quote these men and claim it as an inspired truth.

Finally, we must understand that even though Job was “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (1:1), there is no indication his speeches were inspired. Neither He nor anyone else in the book ever claimed his statements were “given by inspiration of God.” In fact, when Jehovah finally answered Job out of the whirlwind, the Almighty asked: “Who is this who darkens counsel by **words without knowledge?**” (38:2, emp. added). Obviously, God never would have asked such a rhetorical question had Job been inspired. Prior to the Lord’s speeches, Elihu twice accused Job of the very same thing (34:35; 35:16). Later, Job even said himself: “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, **which I did not know**” (42:3, emp. added; cf. 30:16-23). Clearly, then, these passages indicate that Job’s speeches were not inspired.

The honest Christian desires to defend the Word of God with every legitimate weapon in the apologetic arsenal. However, we only hurt the cause of Christ when we employ arguments that are backed by un-inspired statements. When studying your Bible or when teaching and defending one of its many truths, always remember to **look who’s talking**. - *Apologetics Press*

**Oh that my words were
now written! oh that they
were printed in a book!**

— Job 19:23



eNigMa

THE BOOK OF JOB MAY BE THE
FIRST TEXT TO EXPLICITLY
ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHAOTIC
NATURE OF SUFFERING!

MCMXC a.D.

eNigMa

THE CHAOS IN QUESTION
ISN'T PHYSICAL BUT MORAL
A RUPTURE IN THE ORDER
OF MEANING AND JUSTICE!

MCMXC a.D.

Forms of the Problem of Evil

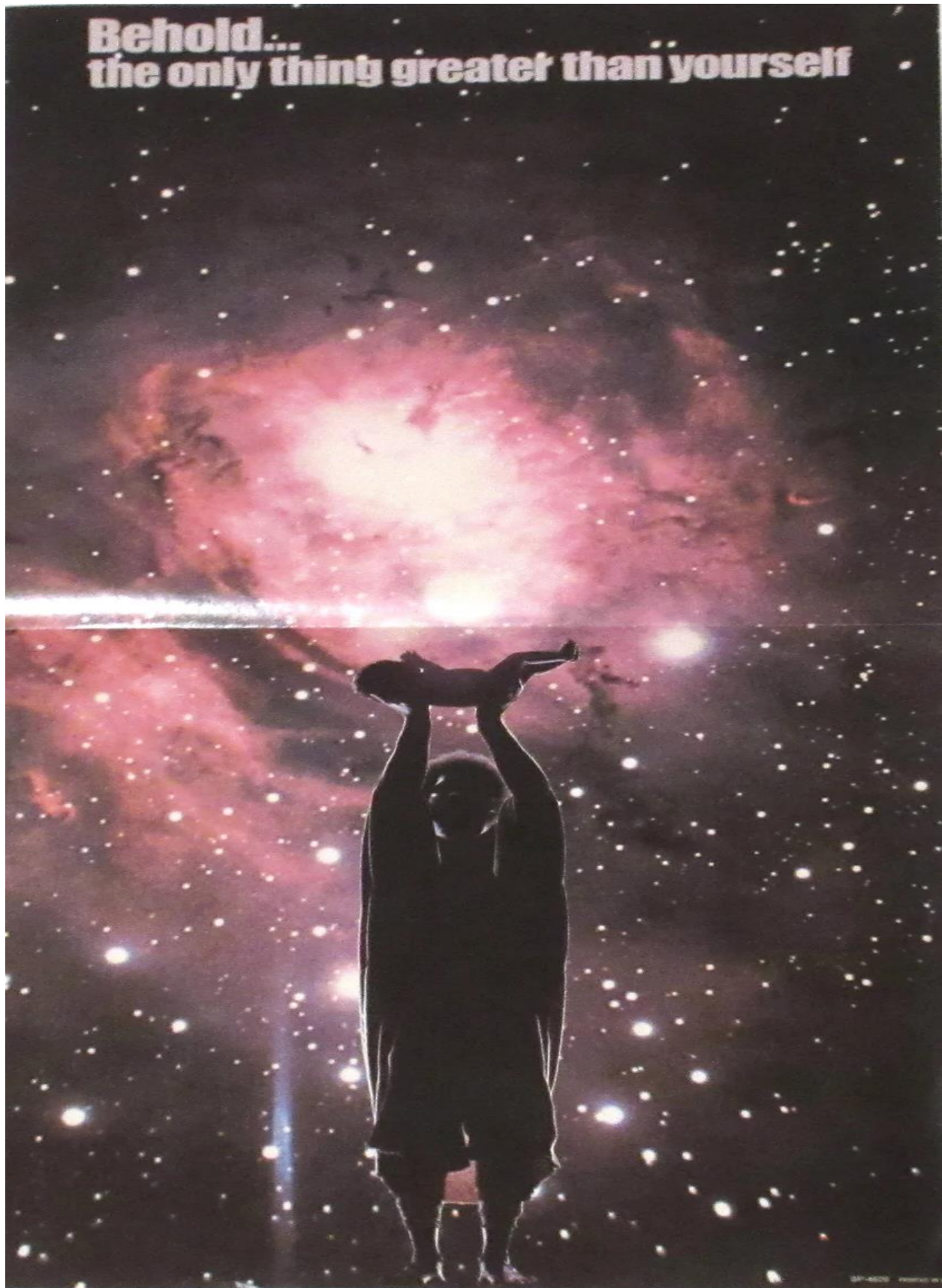
Gratuitous Evil

- The only *morally sufficient* reason God has to permit evil is:
 - The permitted evil is necessary for the attainment of a greater good.
 - The permitted evil is necessary to prevent an equally bad or worse evil.
- Atheists argue gratuitous evil *does* exist, therefore God does not exist. Theists answer gratuitous evil *does not* exist.

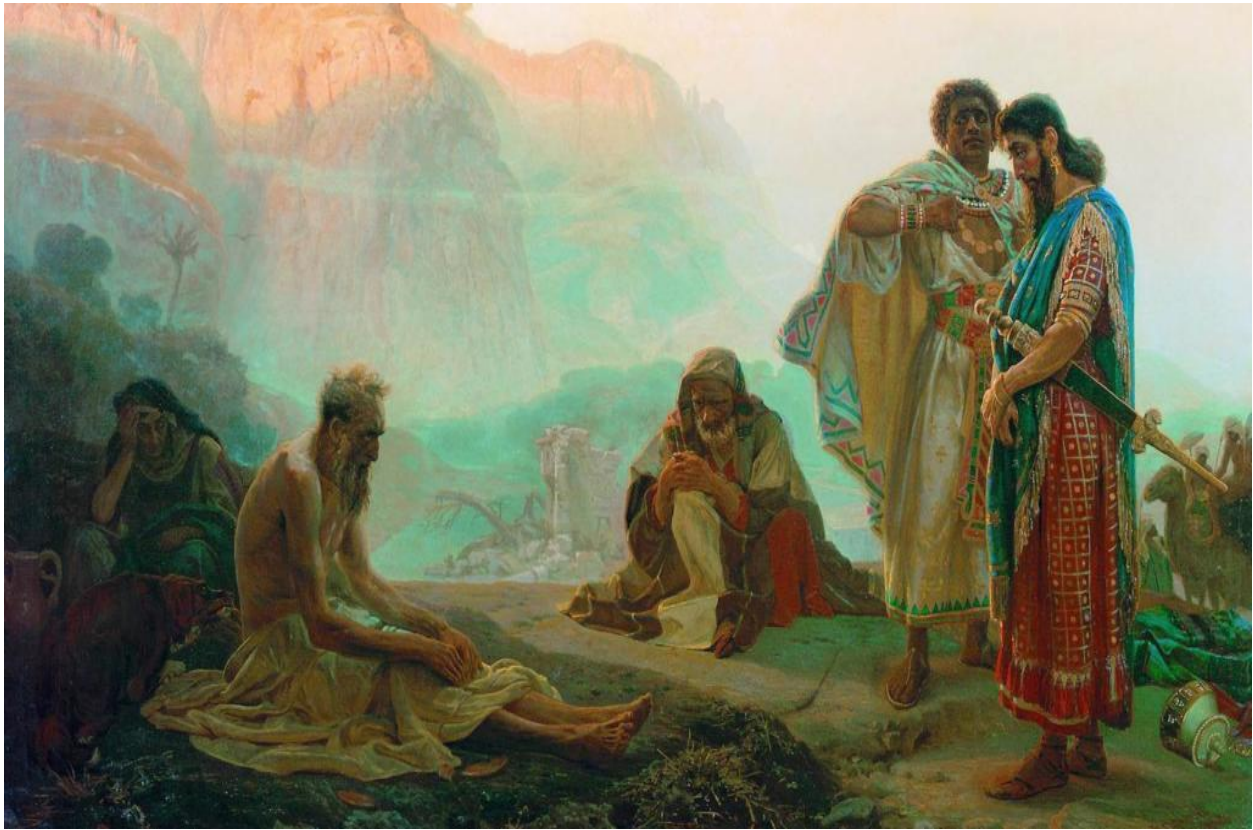
Forms of the Problem of Evil

Argument Against Gratuitous Evil

- A theist's argument against existence of gratuitous evil:
 - 1. God's perspective and God's mind allows God to grasp good that lies beyond our ken.
 - 2. Those greater goods for which God permits evil and suffering are, to a large extent, beyond our ken.
 - 3. Therefore, our inability to see the point of evil and suffering is not unexpected – because the greater goods that justifies them are often beyond our ken.



Sitting On The Dungheap & Searching For Answers!



Lecture On The Book Of Job by Professor J. Rufus Fears

- ✓ “But he was a man with a reputation, and friends came to comfort him. Whenever you are having big troubles and people come to comfort you, you know why they are really there. It’s called *schadenfreude*, isn’t it? To make themselves feel good by seeing how miserable you are; and there is little real comfort in the words of people who come to you in those circumstances.”

➤ **“You see, dear Watson, it is not difficult to construct a series of inferences, each dependent upon its predecessor and each simple in itself. If, after doing so, one simply knocks out all the central inferences and presents one’s audience with the starting-point and the conclusion, one may produce a startling, though possibly a meretricious, effect.” -- The Dancing Men**

The Philosophy of Job's "So-Called" Friends

Eliphaz, apparently the eldest and most sedate of the group, opened the discussion. In his first speech he presented his philosophy of suffering, which was the wisdom of the ancients. His position can be summed up in a word: It is the wicked who suffer; they suffer because of their sin. Suffering is punitive. If men will return to God, and do that which is right, their prosperity will return unto them. In the form of syllogism the position of Eliphaz would be:

1. Suffering is the result of sin.
2. Although apparently Job, you have been a good man, yet you suffer.
3. Therefore, since you suffer, you have sinned.

Eliphaz is saying likewise which is the inescapable consequence of his doctrine, that God controls the world by the principle of good for good, and bad for bad. Job is receiving bad; therefore, he has been bad.

In his second speech Eliphaz becomes more intense in his accusation of Job. The wisdom of Eliphaz is not his, but the fathers' – it cannot be wrong. In his speech his accusation is more direct; he has nothing to say about Job's having been a good man. The premise of this speech is the same as the former, only more intense:

1. Only the wicked are cut off speedily.
2. You, Job, have been cut off speedily.
3. Therefore, you are a wicked man.

In the third speech of Eliphaz there is no change in his position. There is only a stronger accusation, charging Job with great wickedness, and appealing to him to confess his sin and return to God. There is much truth in what he says, but his premise and application are wrong. His premise is that all suffering is punitive, the result of the individual's sin. His application is that Job suffers due to sin; thus, Job's a sinner.

Bildad assumes the same position as that of his elder associate. In his first speech he accuses Job's children of sinning, while he simply iterates and reiterates the charges of his predecessor, incriminates and re-incriminates Job as a sinner. In his second speech he does not more than depict the awful lot of sinners. His premise and conclusions are the same as of Eliphaz:

1. The lot of sinners is terrible.
2. Your lot, Job, is terrible.
3. Therefore you must be a terrible sinner.

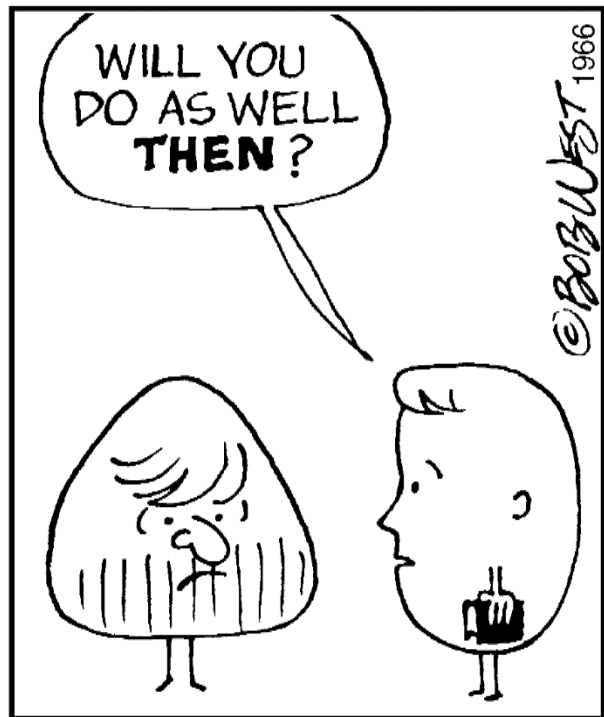
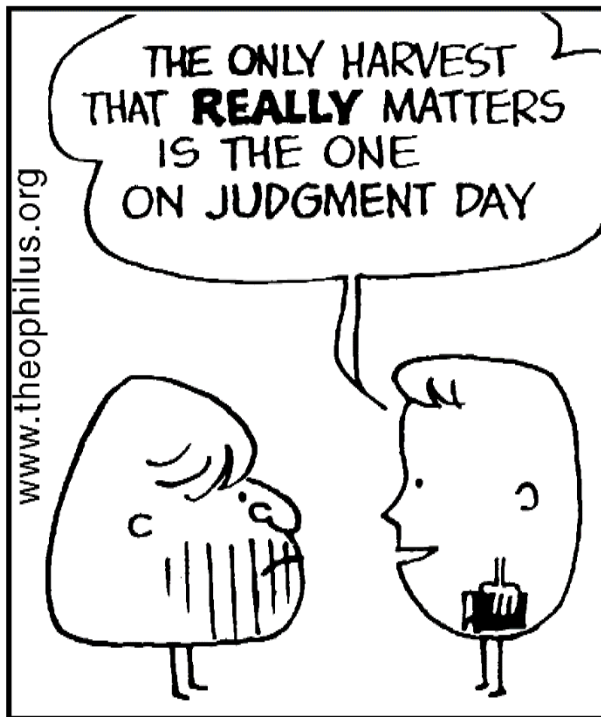
Zophar is the most direct, harsh and blunt of all the friends. He charges that Job's suffering is not even so great as it should be: "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (11:6b). Not only has Job committed the former sin which brought the calamity upon him, but, according to Zophar, he has added to it by denying that he had sinned. Wherefore he has charged God with letting him suffer when he has not sinned.

The only change in the position of the friends is the concession made by Zophar. In his final speech he modifies his position to allow that if the wicked should prosper, it would be for a short time only.

"Knowest thou not," says he, "that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment? (20:5)

THEOPHILUS

The Final Harvest



JOB'S FRIENDS: Their Concept Of Contract

- Rare Type Relationship Covenant
Was The Royal Grant As Given To Old Testament Patriarchs & Figures – i.e. Abraham, Noah, David, etc.
- Usual Understanding Of Covenant
Was The Suzerainty-Vassal Model With Contracted Responsibilities & Mutual Obligations To One Another

JOB'S Civil Lawsuit

- **And is it conceivable for a Biblical figure to sue God?**
 - In the Book of Job, Satan challenges God to test the devotion and piety of the righteous man Job. Job loses all of his worldly goods, his children and servants, as well as his health. Does he accept his fate or curse God? According to Biblical scholar Edward L. Greenstein, Job sues God. By comparing Biblical language to Near Eastern legal texts, it becomes clear that Job understood the ancient legal system well. He knows that he cannot call witnesses in a lawsuit against God. So, lacking witnesses, he swears an exculpatory oath, as was standard in such legal cases in the ancient Near East. He swears to his own innocence and lists numerous wrongs that he has not committed. In doing so, Job challenges God to provide evidence against him & prove his guilt.

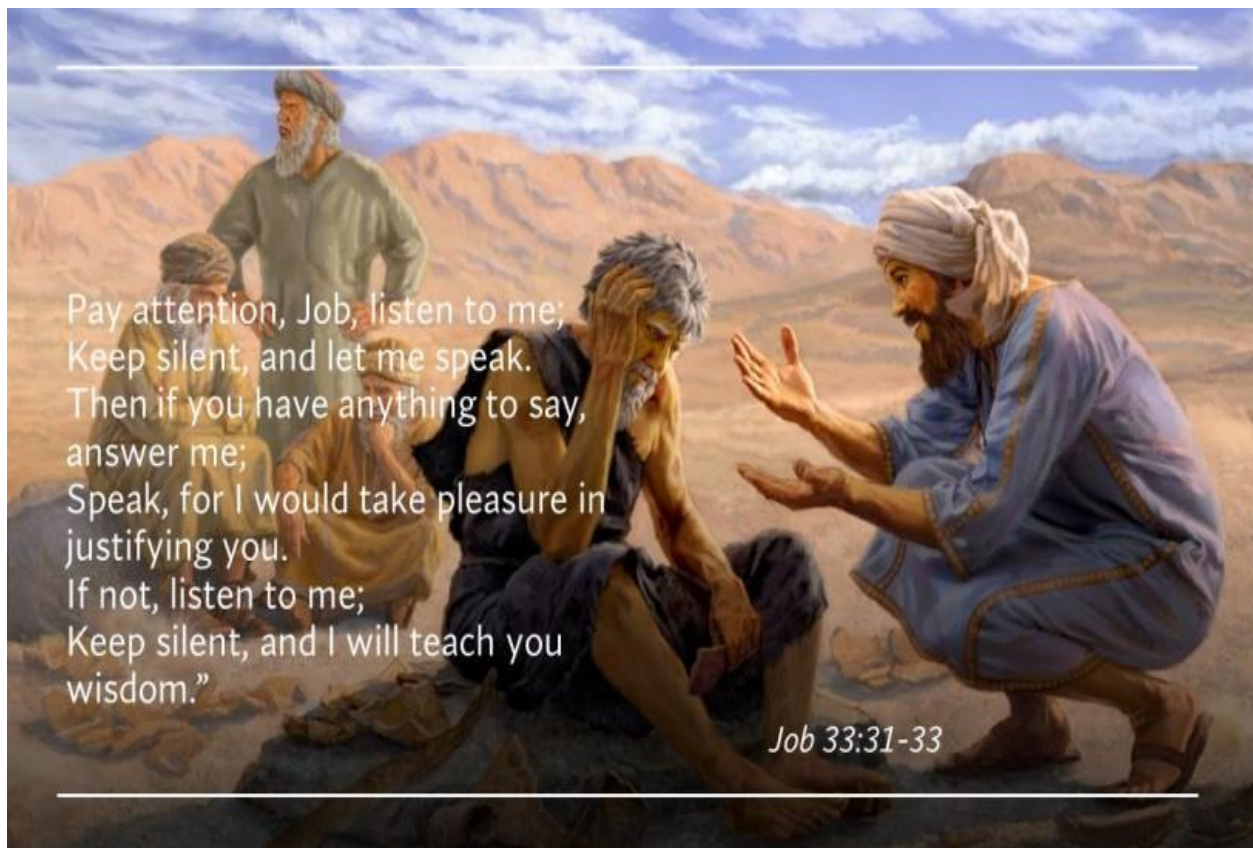
The Old Friends Counsel Justice @Legality – Tradition – Experience
Young Elihu Claims Permissive Will - Second Cause - Indirect Agency

**GOD'S PERFECT WILL
JUDICIAL WILL, AND
PERMISSIVE WILL**

Second Cause. Since all things were known to God from the beginning of the world, and come to pass according to the immutable counsel of his will, it necessarily follows that, in respect of the foreknowledge and decree of God, all things come to pass infallibly. But, by his providence, he orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes. Every part of the material world has an immediate dependence on the will and power of God, in respect of every motion and operation, as well as in respect of continued existence; but he governs the material world by the *laws of nature*, and in Scripture *the ordinances of Heaven*, and agreeably to these laws, so far as they relate to second causes, certain effects uniformly and necessarily follow certain causes. The providence of God is also concerned about the volitions and actions of intelligent creatures; but his providential influence is not destructive of their rational liberty, for they are under no compulsion, but act freely; and all the liberty which can belong to rational creatures is that of acting according to their inclinations. Though there is no event contingent with respect to God, 'who declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;' yet many events are accidental with regard to us, and with respect to second causes." – *Dictionary*

Only Elihu Is Even Halfway Helpful: Right About God But Wrong About Job!

Suddenly, a new voice is heard. Elihu, a young man who has been listening in silence all this time, finally spoke up because he was angry with both Job and his friends (32:2). Job 32:12 I gave you my full attention. But not one of you has proved Job wrong; none of you has answered his arguments. Elihu did not believe any of them were right. He believed Job was wrong because he justified himself at the cost of criticizing God. He believed the friends were wrong because they had accused Job of sin but could not prove it or answer Job's arguments. Elihu's speech expresses a view closer to the truth than the friends had expressed and it properly corrects some of Job's mistakes, yet it still does not fully reach the truth. Elihu's speech also prepares the way for God's speech (38-42). Elihu is not right in all that he says, but he helps introduce some helpful ideas.



“There he was sitting in silence, listening very carefully to the ongoing debate between four aged men held in high regard by their community. The highly charged topic of dispute between the four old friends was whether or not sin was the root cause for all of the calamity that had befallen one of them. Three of them, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, insist that a transgression against God had been committed, and thus all the terrible events that transpired had ensued as retributive punishment from heaven. Hence, they vehemently persisted in their attempts to convince their friend to repent of his wickedness so that God’s wrath may be appeased, although not a single sin has been specifically identified as the source of his woes by any of them in their accusations (**Job 4- Ch 25**). The accused, Job from the land of Uz, strongly disagrees with his three companions arguing that he has been a man of integrity, upright before God, and is outraged that he has to defend his honor from these friends whom he supposed had arrived to comfort and strengthen him during his duress (**Job 13:4, 16:1-2, 21:27-34**). Job was disheartened to uncover that ‘*I am one **mocked by his friends***’ (**Job 12:4**). The entire time he was present, Elihu “*paid **close attention** to*” every word these four seniors had spoken (**Job 32:12a**). It was enough for him to have an intense reaction to the outcome of the conversation (**Job 32:2, 3, and 5**). It is important to comprehend that Elihu’s wrath was kindled equally toward all four men, albeit for distinct reasons. It is also crucial not to make the mistake of thinking that Elihu’s reaction was from disappointment that Job and his three accusers ended their dialogue in an impasse, thus depicting him as a spectator whose sole purpose was to watch four aged men argue with each other for amusement. Rather, let us pay attention that Scripture declares that he responded vigorously toward Job “*because **he had justified himself** rather than God.*”

*Against Job's other three friends his wrath was also aroused, because **they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job**" (Job 32:2-3). Elihu sagely, justly, and correctly surmised the outcome of their dispute because he practiced temperance and humility by accepting that "because they were **years older than he**, Elihu **had waited** to speak to Job" (Job 32:4).*

Heaven's spotlight reveals in Elihu's example the value of showing respect for one's elders by listening intently to what they have to say (cf. **Leviticus 19:32**). Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, instructed the young Timothy, "*Do not rebuke **an older man**, but **exhort him as you would a father**, younger men as brothers, **older women as mothers**, younger women as sisters, **with all purity**" (1st Timothy 5:1-2). It must be noted that the inspired Paul is not prohibiting Timothy from correcting an older man or woman, but he is teaching him about the proper demeanor and approach he must ensure to have when it becomes necessary to address their error. "A servant of the Lord must **not quarrel but be gentle to all**, able to teach, patient, **in humility correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they **may know the truth**, and that they **may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2nd Timothy 2:24-26). This was exactly what Elihu practiced when he chose to address the errors he perceived from his elders (Job 32:10-14). Elihu displays great respect for all four men as he first establishes the purpose for his silence up to that moment (Job 32:6-7). He continues to honor the gray haired by choosing his words very carefully, approaching them with meekness and humility, disallowing his roused wrath to take control of his reason (cf. **Proverbs 14:29, James 1:19-20**). It is evident from Holy Scripture that it was not Elihu's intention to humiliate any of these four men by making himself look superior in wisdom to their folly.*

Elihu's need to speak up was first to indicate to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar that "*surely not one of you convinced Job, **or answered his words***" (Job 32:12b). He then turns to Job and repeats Job's self-defense of being upright before God and among his peers back to him, to which Elihu humbly responds, "*Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, **for God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words***" (Job 32:8-13). The younger member of the group was wise and righteous in his discourse with all four men. Elihu was making sure not to repeat their mistake of answering Job's matter without having all of the proper information that would help explain the why of his situation (Proverbs 18:13). Instead, he avoided speaking about why Job was being afflicted, and focused on Job's self-righteous attitude & his three friend's unfounded accusations. There is little doubt that Elihu was [mostly] in the right when it is observed that Jehovah God speaks to Job immediately after he is finished speaking (cf. Job 38-41).

Furthermore, he is not reproved by the LORD when He is done speaking to Job, for it is written, "*the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has*" (Job 42:7-8).

It is valuable to realize the purpose for Holy Writ providing Elihu's approved example is to dissipate the notion that a long life guarantees heavenly wisdom, and that it would be incorrect or improper to accept direction from a young person simply due to their short life (1st Timothy 4:12). Elihu explains it best as he espoused to his elders, "*Great men **are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice***" (Job 32:8-9). Elihu wisely concluded that it is godly fear leading to wisdom and not necessarily one's life experience (James 3:13-18)." - Obed Pineda

LA VISTA CHURCH OF CHRIST

WHY DID ELIHU TELL JOB THAT HIS SUFFERING WAS A CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD?

Question:

In [Job 33:19](#) Elihu tells Job that his pain and suffering are a chastisement from God. **What did Job do to cause God to put this sickness upon him to start with?**

Answer:

Elihu scolds Job for complaining God has caused him to suffer without explaining why. "*Why do you complain against Him that He does not give an account of all His doings?*" ([Job 33:13](#)). There are times that God does explain, but people don't pay attention. "*Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds*" ([Job 33:14-15](#)). But what God is doing through suffering is teaching men ([Job 33:16](#)), stopping them from doing wrong ([Job 33:17](#)), and keeping them from pride ([Job 33:17](#)) in order to keep them from death ([Job 33:18](#)). Elihu is not saying that any of these reasons are the ones that explain why Job is suffering, but that suffering can have good results in the lives of men from God's viewpoint.

"Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with unceasing complaint in his bones; so that his life loathes bread, and his soul favorite food. His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones which were not seen stick out. Then his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those who bring death" ([Job 33:19-22](#)).

Elihu is saying that a man may suffer greatly, even to the point of nearly dying. Again, Elihu is not saying that the man is Job, though Job is greatly suffering. Elihu is setting up an example for his next point: that suffering is worth it if it saves a man.

"If there is an angel as mediator for him, one out of a thousand, to remind a man what is right for him, then let him be gracious to him, and say, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom'; let his flesh become fresher than in youth, let him return to the days of his youthful vigor; then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, that he may see His face with joy, and He may restore His righteousness to man. He will sing to men and say, 'I have sinned and perverted what is right, and it is not proper for me. He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light'" ([Job 33:23-28](#)).

Therefore, suffering is a tool used by God to save and teach men. *"Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life" ([Job 33:29-20](#)).* See [Hebrews 12:5-14](#), which talks about this same subject.

Apparently, Job draws his breath to object, but Elihu tells him to stay silent and listen because Elihu is trying to bring Job back in line with righteousness ([Job 33:31-33](#)). He then proceeds to quote Job's arguments that were incorrect and proves where Job made his mistakes. A storm comes up while Elihu is speaking (Job 37) and God takes over proving to Job how little he understood (Job 38-39), which led to the question: *"Then the LORD said to Job, 'Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it'" ([Job 40:1-2](#)).* Job admits he has no answer. *"Then Job answered the LORD and said, 'Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more'" ([Job 40:3-5](#)).*

God continues to press His point and Job admits that he was wrong. *"Then Job answered the LORD and said, 'I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore, I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes" ([Job 42:1-6](#)).*

God then tells Job's friends that they misspoke when they accused Job of sinning. But read [Job 42:7-9](#) carefully and notice that is the three friends. Elihu, the fourth to speak, is not among their number. That is because as a prophet of God, speaking God's words to Job, Elihu had not misspoken as Job and his three friends had done.

GOD ECHO'S ELIHU UNTO JOB FROM THE WHIRLWIND

HE SENDS THE RAIN

TO PARCHED LANDS,

illuminates

THE DARKNESS

with lightning.

THESE ARE THE SYMBOLS

of his sovereignty,

HIS GENEROSITY,

HIS LOVING CARE.

JOB 36: 27-33

— *michaelaevanow.com* —

Benson Commentary @God Answers Job

Job 38:1. *Then the Lord answered Job* — No sooner had Elihu uttered the words last mentioned, but there was a sensible token of the presence of that dreadful majesty of God among them, spoken of [Job 38:22](#), and Jehovah began to debate the matter with Job, as he had desired; *out of the whirlwind* — Out of a dark and thick cloud, from which he sent a terrible and tempestuous wind, as the harbinger of his presence. The LXX. render the clause, **δια λαιλαπος και νεφων**, *perturbinem et nubes, by a tempest and clouds*. It is true, the Chaldee paraphrast, by the addition of a word, has given a very different exposition of this text, thus: *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind of grief*; taking the word סערה, *segannah*, rendered *whirlwind*, not in a literal, but in a metaphorical sense: as if the meaning were only this: that amidst the tumult of Job's sorrows, God suggested to him the following thoughts, to bring him to a sense of his condition. The matter is viewed in nearly the same light by a late writer in a periodical work, styled *The Classical Journal*, who contends that this Hebrew word properly means *trouble*, and may be rendered *whirlwind* only when it is applied to the elements, denoting the troubled state of the atmosphere; but when it has reference to man, it can have no such signification. In answer to this it must be observed, that many passages occur in the Old Testament, in which the word evidently means, and is rightly translated, *whirlwind*, or *tempest*, as that writer himself acknowledges; but probably not one can be found, at least he has not produced one, in which, as a noun, it means merely *trouble*, nor can it with propriety be so translated here, on account of the preposition מן, *min*, which properly means *a, ab, de, e, ex, from, or out of*, and not *because of*, as he proposes rendering it: for surely it would be improper to read the passage, “The Lord answered Job out of his trouble, &c.” Accordingly the generality of expositors agree to understand it of a sensible and miraculous interposition of the Deity appearing in a cloud, the symbol of his presence, not to dispute, but absolutely to decide the controversy.

God appeared and spoke to him in this manner, says Poole, 1st. Because this was his usual method of manifesting himself in those times, and declaring his will, [Exodus 19:13](#); [Numbers 9:15](#); [1 Kings 19:11](#); [Ezekiel 1:4](#); 2d, To awaken Job and his friends to a more serious & reverent attention to his words; 3d, To testify his displeasure both against Job and them; and, lastly, that all of them might be more deeply and thoroughly humbled, and prepared to receive and retain the instructions which God was about to give them. “There arose,” says Bishop Patrick, “an unusual cloud, after the manner of God’s appearing in those days, and a voice came out of it, as loud as a tempest, which called to Job.”

“Nothing can be conceived more awful than this appearance of Jehovah; nothing more sublime than the manner in which this speech is introduced. Thunders, lightnings, and a whirlwind announce his approach: all creation trembles at his presence: at the blaze of his all-piercing eye every disguise falls off; the stateliness of human pride, the vanity of human knowledge, sink into their original nothing. The man of understanding, the men of age and experience; he who desired nothing more than to argue the point with God; he that would maintain his ways to his face; confounded and struck dumb at his presence, is ready to drop into dissolution, and repents in dust and ashes.

“All the human beings through the story, and Job especially, have been asking questions of God. A much more trivial poet would have made God enter in some sense in order to answer the questions. By a touch truly to be called inspired, when God enters, it is to ask a number of questions on His own account. In this drama of skepticism God Himself takes up the role of skeptic. He does, for instance, what Socrates did. He turns rationalism against itself. He seems to say that if it comes to asking questions, He can ask some question which will fling down & flatten out all conceivable questioners. The poet by an exquisite intuition has made God ironically accept a kind of equality with His accusers. He’s willing to regard it as it were a fair intellectual duel: “Gird up now thy loins like man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me” (38:3). The everlasting adopts an enormous and sardonic humility. He is quite willing to be prosecuted. He only asks for the right which every prosecuted person possesses; he asks to be allowed to cross-examine the witness for the prosecution. And He carries further the corrections of the legal parallel. For the first question, essentially speaking, which He asks of Job is the question that any criminal accused by Job would be most entitled to ask. He asks Job who he is. And Job, being a man of candid intellect, takes a little time to consider, and comes to the conclusion that he does not know.

In dealing with the arrogant asserter of doubt, it is not the right method to tell him to stop doubting. It is rather the right method to tell him to go on doubting, to doubt a little more, to doubt every day newer and wilder things in the universe, until at last, by some strange enlightenment, he may begin to doubt himself.” – *G. K. Chesterton*

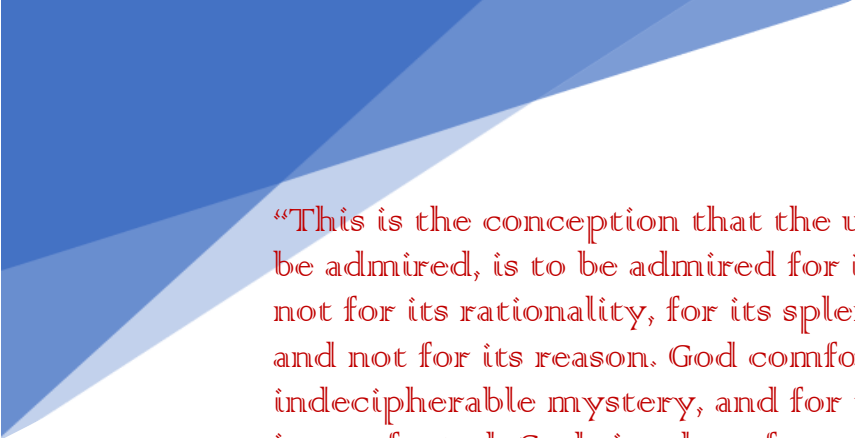
THE INTERPOSITION OF JEHOVAH.—And now Jehovah Himself interposes for the comfort of His servant. At first sight it might almost seem that the Lord is bent on crushing Job altogether; but it is not so. He addresses Job's demand for an opportunity of contending with Him (Cap. 38:3), and the charge of injustice which Job has laid against Him. He aims at making Job realize that both his demand and his accusation are impatient and presumptuous, and this He does by forcing him to recognize that in the world of nature, which he knows is the work of God's hands, there are many mysteries he cannot solve, facts and forces he cannot understand, and that it all demands in its government a wisdom and power to which he cannot even approach. By those manifestations of the Divine majesty Job is humbled, and repents in dust and ashes.

Where then is the comfort? God does not explain His providence: He does not throw any light at all on the reason of Job's calamities: He does not remove any of Job's perplexity. But the very fact that he speaks at all is full and sufficient consolation for the poor tortured soul. Job felt himself abandoned of God; he thought God was his enemy. And now the voice out of the cloud—no matter what it says—itself assures him that the Almighty still stands his Friend. And thus he is not only led back into that "humility which is man's truest exaltation," but is constrained to exclaim, "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee."

Jehovah's answer is neither a logical refutation of Job's charges nor a vindication of the Divine Providence: it is a word addressed not to the intellect but to the heart. It has not the effect of solving difficulties, but rather of giving that assurance of the Divine wisdom and goodness which makes the difficulties unimportant. It does not make clear to man's thought the reason for God's action, but rather "flushes all the channels of thought and life with a deeper sense of God Himself."¹

¹ Aitken, J. (n.d.). [The Book of Job](#). (M. Dods & A. Whyte, Eds.) (pp. 39–41). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.





“This is the conception that the universe, if it’s to be admired, is to be admired for its strangeness & not for its rationality, for its splendid unreason and not for its reason. God comforts Job with indecipherable mystery, and for the first time Job is comforted. God simply refuses to answer, and somehow the question is answered. Job flings at God one riddle, God flings back at Job a hundred riddles, and Job is at peace. **He is comforted with conundrums!**”

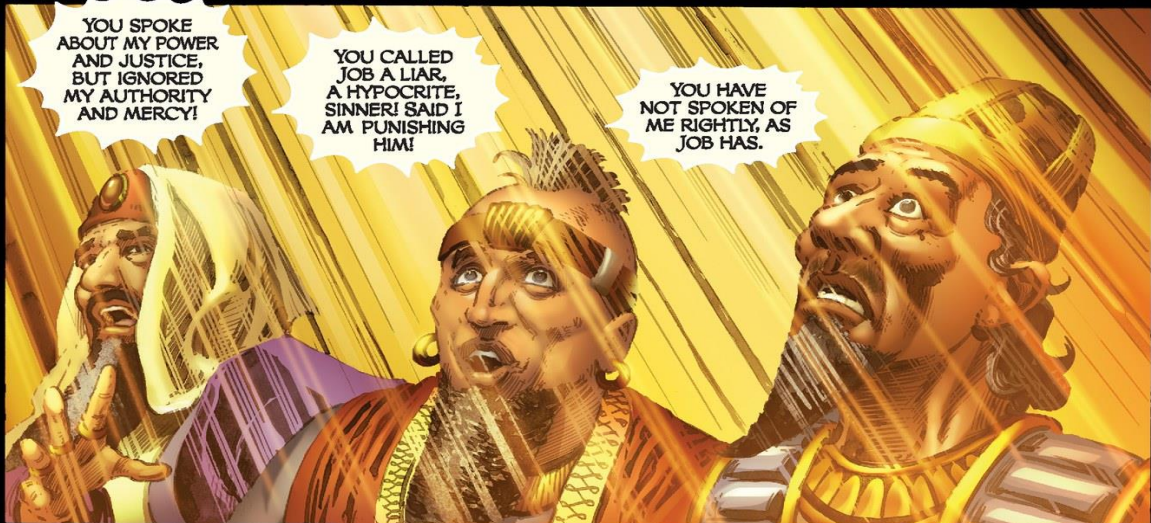
For the grand and enduring idea in the poem, as suggested above, is that if we are to be reconciled to this great cosmic experience it must be as something divinely strange and divinely violent, a quest, or a conspiracy, or some sacred joke.

The last chapters of the colossal monologue of the Almighty are devoted in a style superficial enough to detailed description of two monsters. Behemoth and Leviathan may, or may not be, the hippopotamus and the crocodile. But, whatever they are, they are evidently embodiments of the enormous absurdity of nature. They typify that cosmic trait which anyone may see in the Zoo Gardens, the folly of the Lord, which is wisdom. And in connection with one of them, God is made to utter a splendid satire upon the prim and orderly piety of the vulgar optimist. “Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? Wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?” That is the main message of the book of Job. Whatever this cosmic monster may be, a good animal or a bad animal, he is at least a wild animal and not a tame animal; it is a wild world and not a tame world.” – G. K. Chesterton



WHILE I HAVE
SPOKEN TO JOB
TO CORRECT HIM,
IT IS NOT BECAUSE
HE ANGERED
ME.

YOU,
HOWEVER,
HAVE.



YOU SPOKE
ABOUT MY POWER
AND JUSTICE,
BUT IGNORED
MY AUTHORITY
AND MERCY!

YOU CALLED
JOB A LIAR,
A HYPOCRITE,
SINNER! SAID I
AM PUNISHING
HIM!

YOU HAVE
NOT SPOKEN OF
ME RIGHTLY, AS
JOB HAS.

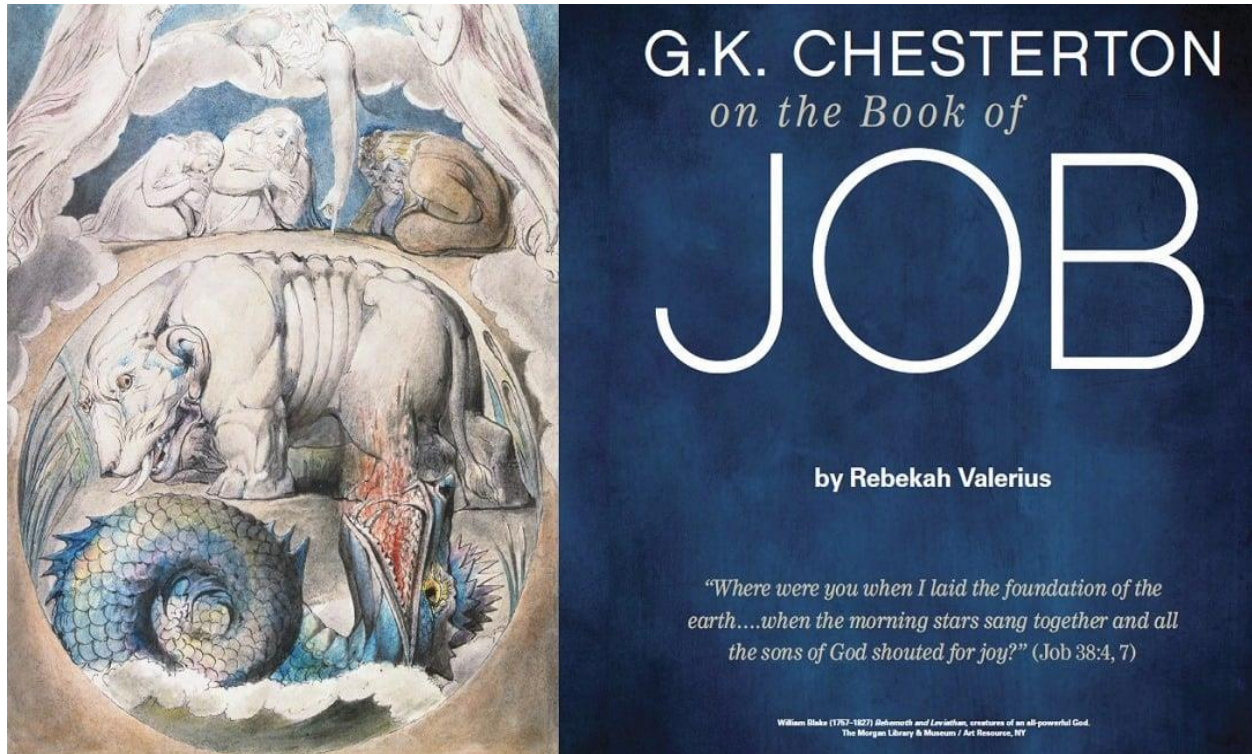


EACH OF
YOU OFFER UP
SEVEN BULLS AND
SEVEN RAMS AS A
BURNT OFFERING
TO ME.

I WILL
ACCEPT JOB'S
PRAYER ON YOUR
BEHALF AND I WILL
NOT GIVE YOU WHAT
YOU DESERVE.

REPENT.

From Christian Research Journal - This Chesterton Overview - The Last Chapters Of Job:



“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth when the morning stars sang together & all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Every cosmology is a theodicy or anti-theodicy. Every philosophy endeavors either to explain suffering or to explain it away. In other words, like the infamous elephant in the room, the problem of evil looms large in our attempts to understand existence. For the modern materialist, evil and suffering are illusions — evolutionary ploys that ensure survival in an indifferent universe. For the ancient pagan, suffering was the result of man’s failure to keep the gods happy, human existence being granted only as far as it served divine needs. For pagan and materialist alike, suffering is ultimately meaningless and existence is *not* a great good. There were no shouts of joy at the Big Bang.

G.K. Chesterton came to see that the only creed that was capable of challenging the meaninglessness of the materialist view must begin from the foundation that existence is good — that *something* is always better than *nothing* — even if it means a degree of suffering. “Our attitude towards existence,” he wrote, “if we have suffered deprivation, must always be conditioned by the fact that deprivation implies that existence has given us something of immense value.” Arguably, the goodness of existence is the grounding premise and the primary theme in his writing. “At the back of our brains,” he wrote, there lies “a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence.”

It is this element of joy that led many of his contemporaries to dismiss him as a superficial optimist — someone who was able to maintain the goodness of existence only by ignoring its pain. “The real paradox about Mr. Chesterton,” wrote one critic, “is that, with a tender overflowing affection for all sentient things, he seems almost completely ignorant of the existence of sorrow and suffering.”

Therefore, it might come as a surprise that Job, the book that plunges headlong into the problem of unjust suffering and where the central character curses the day he was born, was Chesterton’s favorite book of the Bible.

Chesterton’s Work on Job

In two extended essays, Chesterton writes on Job exclusively: “Leviathan and the Hook” (1905) and “An Introduction to Job.” In various other works, we find Chesterton returning to the ancient poem again and again. He refers to it as an “inexhaustible religious classic,” writing that “centuries hence the world will still be seeking for the secret of Job, which is in a sense the secret of everything.” Chesterton could not help but join in on the search.

Chesterton and Cosmic Justice

Chesterton observes that the book of Job stands out in all antiquity because of its unique views on justice. Pagans believed the operations of the cosmos were reduced to a simplistic retribution principle: suffering was an indication that one had offended the gods in some way. Piety for polytheists centered on keeping the needy gods happy, mainly through ritualistic performance, something referred to by scholars as **The Great Symbiosis**. It was in one's best interest to serve the gods, for prosperity would result. This is what the Challenger implies in the prologue of Job when he asks, "Does Job fear God for no reason?" In essence, he is asking if righteousness is its own reward, a question virtually unheard of in the ancient world.

In the pagan view, maintaining one's innocence in face of suffering was futile, for the capricious gods could not care less about personal righteousness. Justice aside, power must be appeased. Chesterton notes that Job's friends affirm this view, for "all that they really believe is not that God is good but that God is so strong that it is much more judicious to call Him good." It is important to see that these defenders of the Great Symbiosis receive God's harshest rebuke: "My anger burns against you for you haven't spoken of what's right." Chesterton remarks that this rebuke "may have saved [the Jews] from an enormous collapse and decay."⁹

For when once people have begun to believe that prosperity is the reward of virtue their next calamity is obvious. If prosperity is regarded as the reward of virtue it will be regarded as the symptom of virtue. Men will leave off the heavy task of making good men successful. They will adopt the easier task of making out successful men good.

This is the nemesis of the wicked optimism of the comforters of Job. If the Jews could be saved from it, the book of Job saved them.

Justice cannot be reduced to a simple equation, and for Chesterton, this was precisely what made existence so exquisite. He writes that “the true secret and hope of human life is something more dark than it would be if suffering were a mark of sin.” Instead, the book of Job communicates that the cosmos has not been imbued with God’s justice alone (if it were, who of us would survive?).

Chesterton and Cosmic Riddles

“The book of Job is chiefly remarkable,” writes Chesterton, “for the fact that **it does not end in a way that is conventionally satisfactory.**” **The book seizes the simple justice formula of Proverbs — namely, that the wicked suffer and the righteous prosper — and summarily turns it on its head.** As readers, we are left dazed by the operation, and when God finally enters the scene, His words do little to put justice back in its proverbial place.

In the prologue of Job, we learn Job is chosen to suffer not because he is the worst of men but because he is the best: “**Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?**” Adding to our dissatisfaction, God **then refrains from sharing this information with Job.** George Bernard Shaw, the famous playwright, summarized well the angst we feel: **“If I complain that I am suffering unjustly, it is no answer to say, ‘Can you make a hippopotamus?’”**

Yet Chesterton reminds us that it is God's evasive reply that brings comfort to Job, not his friends' exhausting attempts to make sense of his suffering. Verbally speaking the enigmas of Jehovah seem more darker and more desolate than the enigmas of Job; yet **Job was comfortless before the speech of Jehovah and is comforted after it.** He has been told nothing, but he feels the terrible and tingling atmosphere of something which is too good to be told.

The riddles of God are more satisfying than solutions of man.

In God's response, Chesterton found a **refuge from oversimplified solutions to the problem of evil, most of which simply explain it away (like the materialist) or implicate God (like Job's comforters).** God reserves His fiercest rebuke to the "solutions of man" that purport to fully explain the cosmos: "God says, in effect, that if there is one fine thing about the world, as far as men are concerned, it is that it cannot be explained." Though it is a pleasure to seek to understand creation, we must keep at the back of our minds the reality of our finitude, especially when it comes to matters of cosmic justice.

Chesterton and Cosmic Joy

Chesterton classed Job as one of the greatest poems ever composed, primarily because of its enigmatic ending. "A more trivial poet," he observed, "would have made God enter in some sense or other in order to answer the questions." Yet the book of the Bible which God gives His longest speech will not resort to a *deus ex machina* resolution. Instead, in God's "colossal monologue," He catalogues the many works of His hands, unfolding "before Job a long panorama of created things."

G. K. Chesterton writes,

“Job puts forward a note of interrogation; God answers with a note of exclamation. Instead of proving to Job that it is an explicable world, He insists that it is a much stranger world than Job ever thought it was.”

Chesterton goes on to say that the genius of the poem is shown in how **God’s descriptions of Creation imply not only it is wonderful, but that it is good, its formation being an occasion for shouts of joy.**

He writes of the poet’s rendering of God’s speech:

“He has contrived to let fall here and there in the metaphors in the parenthetical imagery, sudden and splendid suggestions that the secret of God is a bright and not a sad one — semi-accidental suggestions, like light seen for an instant through the cracks of a closed door.”

Comfort in Suffering

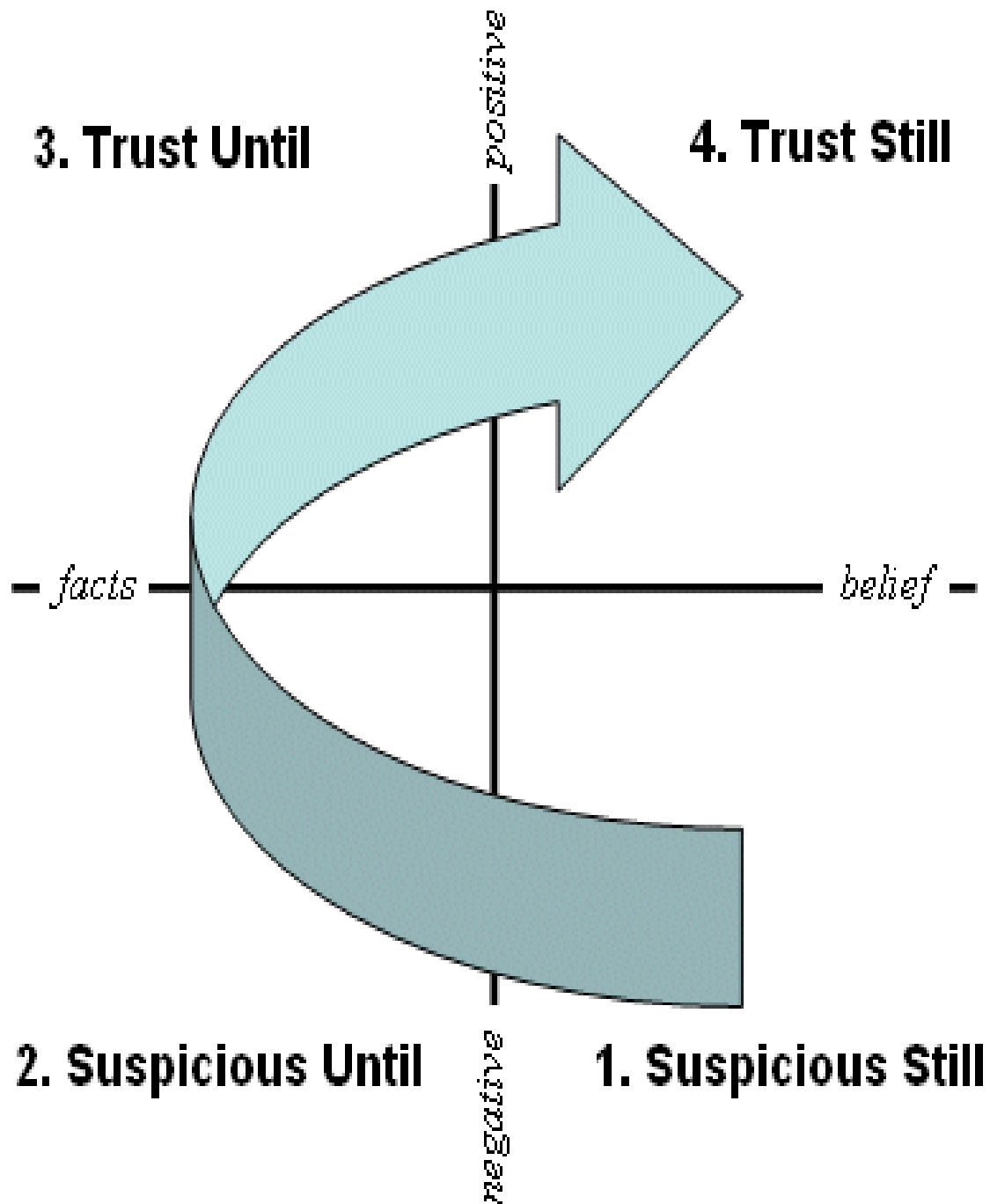
The book of Job tells us that all human attempts to resolve the problem of evil are inescapably oversimplified. This is at the heart of God’s question: Is Job — made a little lower than the angels, indeed, but infinitely farther removed in wisdom from God than the hippopotamus is from him — wise enough to govern the universe? Chesterton notes that Job, being an honest man, is silenced by this question. But Job’s also comforted in knowing that the world is more complex than any human explanation can account for, especially when it comes to matters of suffering.

The workings of the cosmos are far more intricate, and they do not run according to God's justice alone, but in accordance with all of His attributes — His mercy and grace, as well as His love.

We must rest in God's wisdom - how He laid foundation of our world. And in the innocent suffering of the man Job, Chesterton concludes, the foundation was also laid for the **“high and strange...paradox of the best man in the worst fortune” that is at the heart of the gospel of our salvation.** The Book of Job prepares us for the most extraordinary of all riddles — that comfort can be given through a God that suffered, encouraging us to take heart through our own tribulations.

Although Job Was Not Tempted Beyond What He Could Bear His Tests Were As None Other:

- **Circumstantially, through his relationships and possessions.**
- **Constitutionally, inside his own physical body.**
- **Lastly, He was tested theologically in his loyalties.**
- **In The End, He maintained his integrity and is regarded as an approved example for us today!**



- There is no book in the Bible quite like the book of Job. It is a tale of a man who loses everything: his ten children, his entire fortune and eventually his health. It is not a tale of a *wicked* man who suffers incalculable loss, in which case we might be able to justify it as a tale of someone receiving his just deserts. No! Three times we are informed at the very outset that Job was “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). This is not a case of “Why do bad things happen to *bad* people?” Such circumstances are in part explained by recourse to God’s justice. The question that looms large in the opening chapter of the book of Job is of another kind altogether: Why do bad things happen to *godly* people? The sheer extent of Job’s suffering seems question something at the very heart of God himself.
- It is not possible to resort to a solution that identifies Satan as the cause of all evil in the universe, thereby removing God from any involvement and culpability, because in the story of Job, it is God who seems firmly in charge of the ensuing events. It is God who summons Satan into his presence to give an account of his doings (Job 1:6). Additionally, it is at the Lord’s suggestion that Job is made a target for Satan’s attention: “Have you considered my servant Job?” (Job 1:8; 2:3). It is the dilemma that the prophet Amos poses: “Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?” (Amos 3:6). It clearly was the way Job viewed it: “Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!” (Job 19:21).
- **The “solution” that God is good but not sovereign, though resorted to frequently, was not one that sounded plausible to Job.** This, according to Rabbi Harold Kushner, was Job’s problem. In his famous book written in 1981, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, he wrote: “God wants the righteous to live peaceful, happy lives, but sometimes even He can’t bring that about. It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims.” More recently, in an increasingly popular view known as Open Theism, similar views have been expressed limiting God’s power in an attempt to maintain human freedom. Gregory Boyd, for example, has written,

“God must work with, and battle against, other created beings. While none of these beings can ever match God’s own power, each has some degree of genuine influence within the cosmos.”

- According to these views, when Job concluded, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21), and, “Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10), he was wrong to attribute his suffering to the sovereignty of God! But to be more consistent with the data of Scripture we must conclude that in the traumatic war between God and “cosmic powers” (Eph. 6:12) in which Christians are often the battleground, Satan must get permission to touch one of God’s own (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31–32). Whatever problems arise (and genuine problems do arise), a “solution” posed at the expense of God’s sovereignty is one that fails to do justice to the data of Scripture.
- In the end, Job is never given an explanation for his suffering other than that it is beyond him to comprehend. He is reduced to laying his hand over his mouth as a sign of his submission to a higher will that he must trust even when he does not understand (Job 40:4). Nowhere does God say to him that the desperate circumstances in which he found himself were outside of God’s control to change, that he must consider the complexity of the supernatural world in which powerful forces of darkness are at work and to which even the sovereign God must yield. At no point does God abdicate his rule. He never takes his hand away from the tiller. He remains in control even in the darkest of circumstances.
- Thomas, D. W. [What Is Providence?](#) (p. 14). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing

“If I complain that I am suffering unjustly, it is no answer to say, ‘Can you make a hippopotamus?’” – George Bernard Shaw

Robert Frost "A Masque of Reason" (last chapter of Job not released)

(I hope You know the game called twenty questions.)

One at a time, please. I will answer Job first.

I'm going to tell Job why I tortured him
And trust it won't be adding to the torture.

I was just showing off to the Devil, Job,

As is set forth in chapters One and Two.

That was his look out. I could count on you.

I wanted him forced to acknowledge so much.

I gave you over to him, but with safeguards.

I took care of you. And before you died
I trust I made it clear I took your side
Against your comforters in their contention
You must be wicked to deserve such pain.

God What I mean to say:

Your comforters were wrong!

