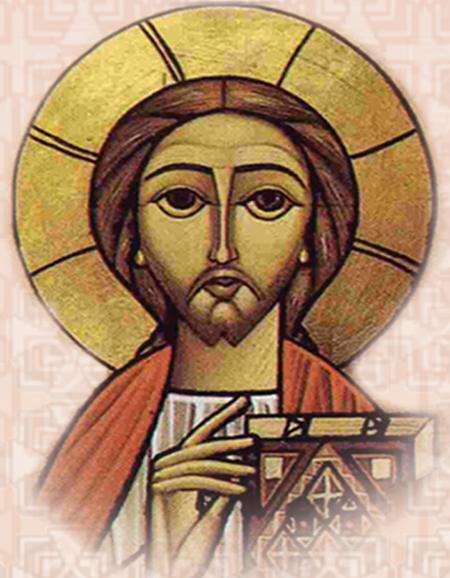


A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF Job

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

A PRTRISTIC COMMENTARY

**The Book
Of
JOB**

(PART 1)

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

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THE POETIC AND WISDOM BOOKS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

In the five **books of Moses**, man discovering the care of the holy God for him, desires to become as holy as He is Him. But, as there is no man who could completely keep the law, all have fallen under the curse of the law; and there was a great need for a Savior who can save the souls from corruption.

In the **historical books**, the believer realizes the plan of God, the Controller of history; who prepares mankind to receive the coming Savior; who in His love becomes a Son to David; submissive to the time which He has created.

Now, in the **poetic and wisdom books**, the believer is introduced to the spiritual concept of worship, being a relationship of mutual love, together with the sanctification of every emotion and talent, so that the believer, with his whole being, would be for the Lord, and would enjoy His amazing heavenly beloved One.

In the **book of Job**, man, in the midst of his bitter strife, in the valley of suffering and tears, sees how he can go beyond the world of men, to behold a battle, to his account, between His Lord God and the devil; which would end with the exaltation of the believer, and the rise of his heart above temporal things, to be brought into the divine bosom.

In the **book of Proverbs**, the father and the mother provide their son with their experience in the Lord, through proverbs that he can know by heart; to become for him, spiritual landmarks along his spiritual, as well as his temporal paths in life. These proverbs are needed by all: the great king, the simple poor hired hand; by the learned and the illiterate.

The **book of Ecclesiastes**, sings a poem that reveals the reality of the present world, being "*vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and grasping for the wind*"; not to dampen the happiness of the believer, but to spare him the probability of uniting with vanity, to become himself vanity; and to lead him to unite with the heavenly truth, to live forever.

Then came the **book of Sirach** to reveal the believer's life in proverbs, considered as an extension and an interpretation of what came in the book of proverbs.

And the **book of Wisdom** to portray the need for the union with the wisdom of God, like the union of the bride with her groom; to be a companion to the believer, to make him walk with the righteousness of God; and reject evil.

While the **book of Psalms** is the book of the suffering and sweet Psalmist, that shows how the suffering in the life of the believer could turn into a song that fills his soul with sweetness and peace in the Lord; and presenting sacrifices of praise, the subject of pleasure to God.

Finally, in the **book of the Song of Songs**, the soul rises by the Spirit of God to His divine bosoms, to enjoy an eternal wedding that would never get old.

THE POETIC AND WISDOM BOOKS:

The **wisdom** in Hebrew is translated as (the cleverness of life). The Jews consider the wisdom, not as bare philosophical thoughts, but as possibilities of life. That is why God is the Center and the Origin of wisdom (Proverbs 1: 7). The books of wisdom include the following:

- 1- Common-folk proverbs that help man to lead a holy daily life in the Lord.
- 2- Analogies with spiritual meanings.
- 3- Discussions that deal with the problems of life.

CHRIST, OUR TRUE WISDOM:

1- Suffering, is the school of wisdom, or the battle of wisdom, that is well demonstrated in the book of Job.

- ❖ Let your sufferings become books that give you advice.
- ❖ There is joy that is grief; as it hides a kind of misery. And there is a beneficial misery, which is the fountain of joy of the new world.

Mar. Ephram, the Syrian

- ❖ Suffering for the sake of Christ is a grace, is a gift of grace, a free grace. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the gift of grace, as it is more amazing than the power of raising the dead, and of performing wonders. By the later powers, I become in debt, while by the former; namely, by suffering, Christ is in debt to me. Therefore, it is befitting for us, not only to refrain of being ashamed, but to rejoice for gaining this gift¹.
- ❖ God measures the suffering by the need for it.
- ❖ The house of grief, teaches compassion and wisdom.
- ❖ Grief and death are born from sin; And they devour it.
- ❖ Grief is intentionally given to us; to cure us of sin.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The Son of God suffered to make us sons of God; While the son of man (we humans), refuses to suffer, To have his sonhood to God continue.

Cyprian, the martyr

- ❖ Without temptations, no one will be saved

St. Oghris

2- Suffering does not make man lose his peace or his inner joy. It has actually made David “the sweet Psalmist of Israel”, as is demonstrated in his book of Psalms.

3- The wise Solomon presents to us the wisdom to raise us above the earth, and to bring us into the divine bosoms:

- ❖ **In the book of Proverbs**, he confirms that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God.
- ❖ Acquiring the fear of God, and realizing His compassionate fatherhood, the believer is guided along all aspects of his life; and the world in his sight would become very small; would be seen by him as “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and grasping for the wind*”; and he would realize that there is nothing new in the world, that may satisfy his soul. That is the subject of **the book of Ecclesiastes**.
- ❖ Finally, the soul ascends the ladder of the wisdom to find Him, who satisfies her; the heavenly Groom; the divine wisdom Himself; to praise Him with **the Song of Songs**; the praise of eternal wedding.

As such, the books of wisdom begin by the battle of suffering and struggle against the enemy of wisdom; and end by the joyful song of the wedding. They begin by the proclamation of the need for the Savior, the Leader of the battle against the devil, and the incessant Grantor of wisdom; and end by Him bearing us above all the events of the world, to bring us into the secret place of His wedding, to partake of His

¹ *Homilies on Philippians, homily 4.*

eternal glories. They are Messianic books, whose Center is Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF 'JOB'

A BOOK FOR ALL TIMES:

The book of Job is a book for all times; dealing with the problem of suffering that man endures without understanding what is behind it. This book provides us with a model of how the righteous should patiently endure physical sufferings; according to the words of the apostle James: *“My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord”* (James 5: 10, 11).. Job’s temptations reveal to us the ways of God’s dealings with men.

'JOB', THE GENTILE:

'Job' and his friends were from the East; lived on the border of the Arabian Peninsula and the land of Edom; known as the land of the wise men, the land of 'Os'. The name 'Os' is derived of the word meaning (to give a sermon); as the people of that region were known for giving sermons full of wisdom.

Most probably, he appeared in the days of Jacob; as there is no mention in this book, of the Exodus; Job undertook the priestly role in his family; and there is no mention of pagan worships, other than that of the celestial bodies, which was one of the oldest.

'Os' was the firstborn of Nahor, the brother of Abraham; he and his descendants worshipped God, that God was called “the God of Nahor” (Genesis 31: 53). Some believe that he was a descendent of Abraham, although not by Sarah; but by 'Keturah', his second wife, whose children were sent away by Abraham eastward to the east country (Genesis 25: 6). Generally, although 'Job' was not an Israelite, but a Gentile; yet there was no one like him in piety. The book of 'Job' reveals that there were people, righteous before God, who were not of the children of Israel.

❖ Although Esau was rejected, yet not all his descendants were likewise. No doubt, that there were several non- believers among the descendants of Jacob; As well as several good and faithful ones among the descendants of Esau; like 'Job', a descendent of Esau, for example¹.

Father Ambrosiaster

The meaning of the Hebrew name 'Job' is not precisely known. Some believe that it means a (repentant), a (tempted), a (patient), a (target of enmity), and even a (hated man); It is also believed, that he was so called after passing through those temptations; when his friends turned against him. Some believe that the name 'Job' is derived of the Hebrew word (beloved); while others believe it to be derived of the Arabic word meaning (he who returned to God)

Others believe – according to what came in the messages of 'Tel-el-Amarnah'; as well as according to some old Egyptian and Hetite texts – that it was a name common in the second thousand years BC; and that the original meaning of the name was 'Where is my father?'; 'fatherless'; or 'orphan'.

¹ *Commentary on Paul's Epistles (Rom. 9: 10).*

In the Septuagint text, there is a remark that 'Job', according to tradition, was 'Jobab', the second king of Edom, as is mentioned in (Genesis 36: 33).

HOW DOES THIS BOOK LOOK LIKE?

Although the book of 'Job' is one of the divine books; Yet it includes an extensive debate between its characters; which, although not representing the words of God Himself, yet were inspired by God.; Some parts of that debate, although. not approved by God, as expressed by His words, saying: "***Who is this who darkens counsel, by words without knowledge?***" (Job 38: 2); Yet, are included in the book for our benefit.

The book, in a superb style, introduces to us "*a man, blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil*" (Job 1: 1); A man who lived happily among his children and his household, before God allowed Satan to strike him, to make him lose his wealth, his sons and daughters, And to struck him with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Yet, in all that, he endured, humbly submitted to the will of God, saying: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord*" (Job 1: 21); "*Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?*" (Job 2: 10). "*And in all this 'Job' did not sin with his lips*" (Job 2: 10).

To 'Job', came three of his friends to comfort him: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. After silently sitting with him on the floor for seven days and seven nights, 'Job' opened his mouth to reveal the bitterness inside him. A debate started then between 'Job' and his friends; 'Job' confirming that he is innocent, and quite astonished before the evil things pouring on him; Whereas his friends, on the other hand, acted as faithful representatives of the traditional Jewish Theology at that time; which indicated that God, in the present life, punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous according to their deeds. Tribulations that come on the former, are proofs of past sins they must have committed. That debate extended over three phases, with each one of the three friends talking successively, followed by a response from 'Job'. Then, in came Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, to introduce evidences that justify God's ordinances toward His creatures. Finally, God made His appearance out of the whirlwind, amid an awesome atmosphere, and paraded before Job some amazing facts and certain secrets of the universe; and asked 'Job', saying:

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Tell Me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

To what were its foundations fastened?

Or who laid its cornerstone? (Job 38; 4-6)

To that, 'Job' found no answer, prostrated himself, and repented in dust and ashes (42: 6). Although, in the bitterness of his soul, he uttered some unbecoming harsh words; Yet he kept leaning on God; and felt guilty for what he said.

Finally, the Lord restored Job's losses, and gave him twice as much as he had before. He lived one hundred and forty years; saw his children and grandchildren for four generations; then died old and full of days (42: 16).

QUESTIONS AROUND THE BOOK:

Studies of the present form and style of the book of 'Job', have aroused several questions, of which are the following:

What is the relationship between the introduction and the poetic debate at the end of the book?

Are there more than one different document for the talks of Jehovah in the book? Are these talks an integral part of the book, or they were added to it later on?

Are the talks of Elihu authentic?

Were the poet of wisdom added to the book later on?

Does the absence of a third talk by Zophar mean that it was lost; Or is it intended to be as such?

There are an extensive array of views, as well as different answers to these questions, by different scholars.

THE GOAL OF THIS BOOK:

If the book of 'Esther' proclaims God's care for His people in the land of captivity; The book of 'Job', proclaims His care for a Gentile individual, who loved God, and was worthy of including his name and story in the Holy Book. It also reveals certain aspects of the secret of suffering in the life of saints; and demonstrates the difference between the comforts of men and those of God.

This book presents to us the person of 'Job' as a living example of the believer who trusts in God's care, despite his ignorance of what is hidden. Although He is considered as righteous in the sight of God, Yet he is not without sin or faults.

In his book with the title 'The prayers of Job and David', **St. Ambrose** clarified the goal of this book, saying:

❖ In different ways, the Holy Book demonstrates that it is imperative for man to go through several troubles in the present world; and to have several comforts as well. In the midst of all these things, a Spirit, characterized by a strong will, alertness, and awareness of the truth, would positively overcome all afflictions, and would look forward to the divine promises of eternal joy.

Comforts would certainly surpass afflictions and troubles; providing peace amid the prevailing difficulties, and hope for the coming things; as according to the words of the apostle Paul: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8: 18).

Yes, it is not worthy to be compared with the comforts; let alone with the fruits of redemption¹.

❖ Accordingly, the prophet David truly testified in all his works, especially in psalm 41 (42), that he was hastening toward glory; saying: "*When shall I come and appear before God?*" (Psalm 42: 2). In this psalm, he portrays in an eloquent way, the troubles caused by man's weakness on one side; and the comforts given by God on another side. In it as well, David prays on our behalf; as though God has forgotten the abundance, and the grace He granted to man, His special work; has forsaken man, whom He intended to protect and to honor; and has cast him to perdition, broken down by various weaknesses (Psalm 42: 10- 11).

'Job' did the same thing before 'David'; but while the later concentrated more on the moral lessons, the former did the same, yet more aggressively and violently. That is why, I put it in my heart to contemplate in their prayers; because in them both, **there are a portray of human life**, a defense of the case of man, beside a

¹ *De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:1:1.* ترجمة جرجس كامل

demonstration of the distinguished position of human nature. We should certainly care for those prayers, taking into consideration these aspects, in this succession¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Let us now follow the example of the unique 'Job' in his uprightness, piety, and evil-shunning; who aroused the jealousy of Satan, who aimed all the weapons he masters; and rained his arrows on this hero like hail, who received them all without kneeling down. If we gather all the tribulations and woes of this world: from poverty, to sickness, to loss of children, to enemy's revenge, to friends' denial, to hunger, to ridicule, to false accusations... etc.; and pour them over the head of one man, as they did over the righteous Job's, we can appreciate his real value and the extent of his perseverance².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ This is what we learn from Job's case. God puts those who can endure temptations even to death, as a role model before the weak³.
- ❖ Man can learn perseverance from 'Job': In a moment he went from riches to utter poverty; and from being a father of good children to deprivation of children. And yet, he stayed in control of himself without collapsing. He even kept his countenance toward his friends who came to comfort him, but instead they trampled him under their feet, making his troubles even worse⁴.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ I do not know how I call this righteous man:
Shall I call him a gladiator? He is definitely more superior, winning so many crowns¹
Shall I call him a rock? I see him harder than a rock!
Shall I call him a warrior? He is braver in his consistence!
Shall I call him a tower of wisdom?
Shall I call him a tree? He is more generous!
Shall I call him a fruit? He is more beautiful and sweet!
Shall I call him a treasure? He is richer!
I indeed **cannot find a suitable title to call such a saint**⁵.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ I stand here to commend, not only 'Job'; as I know many 'Jobs' among you to commend; New 'Jobs' of the same caliber of perseverance and courage⁶.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Satan used against the blessed 'Job' all his evil ways, trying to seduce him to evil; He not only deprived him of his temporal needs, but tried to terrify him by unexpected deprivations, like the death of his seven sons and three daughters, by inflicting upon him ugly ulcers and unbearable ailments from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. Yet 'Job' remained through all that steadfast and never blasphemed the Lord⁷.

¹ *De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:1:3.* ترجمة جرجيس كامل

² *Letters to Olympias, 8.*

³ *The Long Rules, Question 55.*

⁴ *Letters 2: 3.*

⁵ *Sermons, 131: 1.*

⁶ *Epistle 20 to his sister, 14.*

⁷ *Cassian: Conference 6:4:2.*

❖ Through all those temptations, Satan did not get any benefit; whereas ‘Job’ alone got all the benefit, because he endured with perseverance¹.

❖ We read how ‘**Job**’, **on the positive aspect**, was crowned with victory; because as a father of seven sons and three daughters; he used to offer every day sacrifices to the Lord for the sake of their purification, being keen for them to be accepted and beloved by God, much more than he is; Being rich of great wealth, he opened his door before every stranger; was “*eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*” (Job 29: 15); clothed the shoulders of the Labored with the wool of his sheep; was a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widows; and never rejoiced for the fall of an enemy. And on the negative aspect,, he remained on such life of virtue, and even to a greater extent, when he overcame the tribulations that dwelt upon him; and in a moment, lost his whole riches and all his children; As a father he might be swept away by grief; But, as a true minister of God, he rejoiced in the will of his Creator.

Having become poor, after being extensively rich; weak, after being strong; despised, after being reputable and honorable; In all that, he kept his mind intact with no disturbance.

And finally, having been deprived of everything, he “*took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself*

while he sat in the middle of the ashes” (Job 2: 8); sighing bitterly and shedding hot tears; Yet, he never fell into despair, protested, nor blasphemed his Creator².

Father Theodore

FEATURES OF THE BOOK:

Beside being a book inspired by God; It is as well, one of the most superb pieces of literature in the history of the world³; and one of the greatest pieces of poetry poetry known in the old and the new literature; In its original language, it is read as a well-built and intact episode, characterized by a distinct harmony of its personalities with its context, in a high level.

1- The key of the book lies in the verses (1: 9-11; 2: 4-5); in which **Satan believes that man serves God for the sake of His gifts**; and that, if these gifts are taken away, and are replaced with afflictions, he will give god his back.

2- Of the most prominent points presented by this book, **is revealing the concept of the doctrine of faith**. Although Job’s three friends have been philosophers, theologians, knowledgeable, religious, and aware of the attributes of God, and in particular of His divine justice; Yet their knowledge was theoretical and mental. The theological facts, they presented, were mostly true and important; Yet they did not enjoy the divine truth and secrets as a life, in their daily behavior. Their doctrines were dry , spiritless, and even destructive for them and for those around them.

3- The impression and the language of the book; beside what it contained of the customs and thoughts of the time, reveal its ancient nature. Job’s long life reveals that he might be one of the fathers before the era of the prophet Moses. It contains no reference to the Levite system of sacrifices and priesthood; nor even to the existence of the nation of Israel. All this led the majority of scholars to believe that it is the oldest book of the Holy Scripture.

¹ Cassian: Conference 6:9:1.

² Cassian: Conference 6:10.

³ Rev. J. Stafford Wright: Bible Study Books: Job, 1968, p. 27.

4- **God loves debate:** The book of 'Job' presents to us a superb portrait of God's dealings with His creation. Although He is the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth; Yet, He, honoring the freedom of will, gave even Satan, the adversary, a chance for a free debate. Despite testifying to the righteousness of His servant 'Job', God patiently listened to Satan's accusations against him, in order that Satan would eventually discover it by himself. And despite what Job's debate sometimes bore of some blame to God, Yet, God works in the open and frank heart.

In this book, whether in His debate with Satan or with 'Job', God does not appear as One fond of just giving commands to be followed with no objection. As a Father, God teaches us how to deal even with our adversaries; how to listen with longsuffering to our children and our subordinates, and how to give them the chance to express themselves freely.

5- **God is always close to His children, especially when they are in the furnace of temptations;** whether in His apparent or in His hidden works. He sometimes hides His presence among His children, in order to justify their faith. Although He is never a source of suffering, tribulation, or affliction; Yet, he allows them to come to justify His saints.

❖ Beloved brethren, Do you find the temptation tough? Let us endure them; As he, who avoids the spears or dust of the battle, will ever get the crown! Does the enemy deceive you? Do not you get any benefit from his war against you?

Although these temptations are actually evil, yet they are mixed with weakness. Let us then, not scream loudly because of such little suffering; As by this attitude, we would be in debt; and would deprive ourselves of getting the eternal reward of the righteous.

You are the children of those who confessed Christ. You are till blood against sin. Put the examples of those before your eyes, close and dear to your souls. Be courageous for the sake of your Christianity.

Had any of us his skin peeled out of his body... had his house confiscated... was led into captivity... was put in prison... Therefore, what is the size of our so-called sufferings?!... I really doubt that the source of our suffering is the fact that we have never actually suffered; and that we are far from being worthy to suffer with Christ¹.

St. Basil the Great

❖ Narrow is the road that brings us to life; yet, great and splendid will be the reward; as we enter into it with glory².

St. Cyprian

6- This poetic book clearly presents to us the following five facts:

a- An idea about **the science of primitive theology:** In this book, a very clear, direct, respectable, and spiritually eloquent research, deals with the existence of God, His glorious attributes, His perfect and un-describable wisdom, His un-resistible might, His un-describable glory; His un-paralleled justice, and His un-expressible greatness.

b- It presents to us a **sample of the piety of certain Gentiles.** 'Job' was not of the people of God; he was not an Israelite, nor a proselyte; And yet, he was un-paralleled in piety.

¹ Letter, 240. ترجمة دكتورة ايغا ادوارد بدمياط

² Ep. 61: 5.

c- It presents to us an interpretation of two long-disputed problems; namely, the sometimes **success of that come to the wicked and the tribulations that dwell upon of the righteous**. But **St. Augustine** puts our heart at ease, telling us that, the chaff, sometimes found mixed with the wheat, would not harm it, nor reduce its value; as the time will eventually come, when it will be separated from the wheat, which would be consumed by fire. [This chaff will not lead the wheat of God to perdition; who, although a minority by comparison, yet they are considerably abundant. *“He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other:”* (Matthew 24: 31). The elect will cry out, saying: *“Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men”* (Psalm 12: 1); To them God will say: *“He who endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matthew 24: 13)¹].

d- It presents to us a great example of **perseverance and the close connection to God**, amid the tough tribulations.

e- It presents to us a **symbol of the Lord Christ**. As, generally speaking, ‘Job’ suffered greatly, and humbled himself, he eventually was rewarded by great glory; So Christ abased Himself to lift us up. **St. Jerome** says that ‘Job’ was a symbol of Christ, who *“for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross”* (Hebrew 12: 2); was temporarily persecuted by men and by Satan; and seemed as though was forsaken by God; Yet He eventually resurrected from the dead, to intercede on behalf of His own, who added affliction to His afflictions.

7- **The “blamelessness” of ‘Job’**: **St. John Chrysostom** was particularly impressed by two personalities in the Holy Book: the righteous ‘Job’ from the Old Testament; and the apostle Paul from the New Testament.

He dearly loved them to the extent that whenever he referred to one of them in the middle of dealing with a certain topic, he could not help but forget his original topic, speak profusely about that amazing personality, then would apologize for interrupting his original talk, and resume his discussion ‘Job’ was “blameless”. The word “blameless”, in the language of the book, means (upright); namely, walking straight, with no deceit or falsity. He was upright in his dealings, faithful in his promises; not only with people, but before God who testified to his blamelessness. The secret of this was the fact that he *“feared God and shunned evil”* (Job 1: 1). He is mentioned in the Holy Book as one of three blessed men; namely, Noah, Daniel, and Job (Ezekiel 14: 14-20).

St. Augustine, often quoted the words of St. Ambrose, saying: [There is no one in this world without sin²]. Yet we are called to be perfect saints through our practical living fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

❖ It is not the one who calls himself a saint, who is truly a saint; but he, who believes in the Lord Jesus, and who lives according to His teachings³.

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

❖ Every believer is a saint, despite being one who lives in this world. The apostle says: *“The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband”* (1 Corinthians 7: 14). See how faith evaluates sanctity. So, if we see someone in affliction, we are committed to give him a hand. We should not be zealous only toward those who dwell in solitude on the

¹ Ep. 93:33.

² St. Augustine: On the Grace of Christ 54.

³ Epistle to Philippians 4:21.

mountains, who truly are saints according to their faith; but we should also be as such toward the others who live in the world, who may be saints according to both faith and behavior. Thus we should not only go to a monk cast in prison; and disregard a layman in the same situation; because the latter is likewise a saint and a brother¹.

- ❖ He, Himself, made us saints; Yet, we are invited to remain as such A true saint is he who lives in faith, and leads a blameless life².

St. John Chrysostom

8- 'Job' and self-righteousness: Some believe that the only danger in Job's blamelessness and holiness, was his awareness of it. As thoughts of self-righteousness has filled his life for such a long time; that the Tempter found in him something to blame; and made 'Job'.

These words are not an unwarranted charge against the righteous Job'; but are based upon many of his sayings and behavior. Since the beginning, the Holy Book mentions that 'Job' used to offer sacrifices on behalf of his children, but not on his own behalf; which hints to his belief that he is not in need like they were. Actually, 'Job' considered himself righteous among a prodigal and a twisted generation. But, eventually, he discovered the truth about himself, and humbly sat in the middle of ashes.

'Job' held fast to his righteousness as a prophet in the Old Testament, who bore to us a symbol, though a minor one, of the blamelessness of Christ, who is alone without sin.

- ❖ God alone is the Righteous One, and who justifies; He grants man the righteousness.

Some people seek to prove their own righteousness; namely, they assume that their goodness is their own, and not a divine gift; by which "*they have not submitted to the righteousness of God*" (Romans 10: 3); because they are haughty and assume that they can please God by themselves and not by what is God's³.

St. Augustine

9- Life looked easy and joyful to 'Job'; He was living in a paradise, and never entered the garden of Gethsemane; He was as though, he set for himself a tent on the Mount of transfiguration! He was as though living close to the tree of life; and was not used to carry the cross. He was one of those who wish to enter into the kingdom of God through the wide door and along the spacious road; But God intended for him to try the narrow door and road, the cross and the Golgotha; to experience the grieves and to get the blessings of the afflictions.

10- 'Job's friends could not comfort him because:

a- They did not come to comfort, but to judge him

b- They did not realize, nor experience, the real meaning of temptations.

c- Their words were human and not from God.

11- The tendencies of 'Job's friends;

a- Eliphaz, in his sayings, followed the way **of personal experience** (Job 41: 28).

b- Bildad, tough and violent, leaned toward **the human tradition of the former age** (Job 8: 8).

¹ In Hebr. hom 10: 7.

² Hom. On Ephes. Hom 1.

³ City of God 17: 4.

c- Zophar, followed **the old literal way of the law** (Job 11: 14-15).

d- Elihu, was spiritually a **symbol of the divine Intercessor**.

12- God rebukes 'Job', saying to him: "*Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*" (Job 38: 1). Here, God admonishes Job for complaining against his judgment; as though He intends to say to him:

* **O Job**, If you have knowledge of the secrets of the universe and the unseen creation, you would not complain against My judgment.

* **O Job, I wish** to mute Satan who prosecutes you, to bring you over to join Me in eternity as one who is justified, and on whom Satan has no authority.

* Everything Satan has taken away from you, in his evil envy, I shall restore to you, double as much. Is this in your sight an unjust judgment?!

What hinders the work of God's Spirit in us, is that we intend to force our will on Him; and not to submit to His will. I wish we could learn to live in the splendor of submission to the divine will.

❖ "**Glory to God in every thing**". I shall never stop saying this, whatever happens to me.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ We know from several sources that nothing would ever happen without the will of God. He, who believes that God is the Reason, the Wisdom, the perfect Goodness, and the Truth; And that He would never allow for anything bad to happen to us; would realize that there would be no factor of chance nor chaos in God's ordinances... They would be always convenient for us. We should know that all things happen for the best.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

13- **Satan will never despair of opposing God in His children**; But the more he persists, the more his cup of evil will Fill, the more consummate will be his defeat; and his opposition will turn into blessings for the children of God.

❖ How the book of 'Job' describes him is fearful and terrifying (Job 40: 18; 41: 4): 'His bones are like beams of bronze; his ribs are like bars of iron; his belly is like polishing stone,... etc'. He is the great and capable prince of the satanic legions. But the true and unique God calls him: "*a little fox*" (Song 2; 15); and mockingly calls all his hosts by the same name "*little foxes*"; and provokes the hunters against them¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

❖ Do not ever fear the threats of Satan; he is as paralyzed as nerves of the dead².

Hermas

THE FRAME IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN AND ITS VALUE:

Having been one of the great stories in the Hebrew literature, caused the story of 'Job' to be of such wide popularity in the whole world. It deals with a certain problem that, for long generations, has troubled the nations; which is:

A- **The traditional teaching concerning the divine dealings with man:** In the Old Testament, we see God, while dealing with the people as a whole, does not disregard the individual. Jeremiah (31: 29-30) and Ezekiel (14: 12; 18: 1), talked

¹ *Commentary on Song of Songs, homily 5.*

² *Hermas: The Shepherd, Command 12:6:2.*

about the personal responsibility of man, and the divine dealings with him, whether it is a reward for good deeds, or a punishment for evil ones, according to his personal behavior. The Lord says on the tongue of Hezekiel: "*The soul who sins shall die*" (Hezekiel 15: 2-4). That teaching, based on steadfast basis, proclaims that God, the Just (Jeremiah 17: 10; Psalm 36: 7), deals with everyone according to his own deeds (Proverb 24: 3). And as the Hebrew people then, were not clearly believing in the resurrection of the dead and the eternity of the soul; were not preoccupied with another life after death, and did not care for God's justice in a second world, they believed that it has to be carried out here in this one; namely, God gives man his wage in this world; will make the righteous happy, and the wicked miserable.

B- The daily experience contradicts this theory: There are righteous men who are inflicted as though they are wicked; And there are wicked ones who are rewarded as though they are righteous. And, according to the book of Ecclesiastes: "All men shall have one destiny – the righteous and the wicked" .

As that caused the believers to have some doubt when they see the wicked safe and secure, Wise men, trying to convince the righteous not to follow the lead of the oppressor, and to choose none of his ways (Proverb 3: 31; 23: 17; Psalm 37: 1), Tell him that suffering has a special place in God's plan; as it helps in the redemption of sins; that tribulation is not a punishment from God, but is rather a grace from Him, "*for whom the Lord loves, He corrects*" (Proverb 3: 11-12), And it gives the believer strength and purity; like fire that purifies the gold. That way the righteous would be sure that he will eventually gets out of tribulation, and resume his life with double happiness; whereas, on the wicked, God "*will rain coals, fire, and brimstone and a burning wind*" (Psalm 11: 21); and his descendants will face misery.

Wise men tried to defend God's justice, and to convince the believers that they will be the ultimate winners at the end; Yet they forgot all about today; That is why, the book of 'Job' came to open their eyes on what would happen to men in this world; and to open their hearts to faith in God, who intends to lift us up to the level of free giving; and of absolute faith, that goes according to the word of God, despite the surrounding darkness.

The suffering of 'Job' that resulted from Satan's allegations against Job's piety, and from the divine permission to him to tempt Job; is not an evidence of a divine curse on 'Job', as his friends tried to prove; But is rather an evidence of a divine trust in him; and a challenge by God to prove to Satan the righteousness of 'Job'. The book of 'Job' is an eloquent interpretation of the inadequacy of the human mind to answer all questions. The appearance of Job's friends, has led to debate, false hope, and despair; Whereas that of God, has led to submission, faith, and courage. Man's word is incapable of going through the darkness of Job's mind; Whereas that of God has brought forth an abiding light. The book of Job, looking forward to the Lord Christ, has aroused problems, and sighs of pain; all of which could be only dealt with by the Lord Jesus. The void in the human heart, could never be filled, by anyone except Jesus Christ.

THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK, AND WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN:

The following are certain views concerning the name of the author of this book:

1- Some scholars believe that this book **is written at the same time those events happened**, by 'Job' himself, or 'Elihu', one of his four friends.

2- Several fathers believe that it was written by **the prophet Moses** while he was in Midian, to comfort his people he left in Egypt, fallen in bondage; and to tell them to trust that the Lord will eventually work for them. The high priest in Israel, later on, used to read the book of 'Job' for comfort, on the day of 'Yum Kepur'¹.

3- Some believe that **'Elihu' is the author; but Moses wrote the first two chapters and the last one**; As God was called 'Jehovah' in these three chapters, but only once in the whole debates (Job 12: 9). This name was not known to the early fathers before Moses (Exodus 6: 3); who knew God by the name 'Shadai' (the Mighty), mentioned more than thirty times in this book.

It is obvious that this book was written before the time of the prophet Moses; as it did not refer to the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt; nor referred to the Law.

It was not directed to a specific people; But as it was found among the books of the Old Testament, inspired by God; some believe that it was written as a lesson for the Jewish people about the exalted care of God for His beloved children in the midst of their sufferings and temptations. Yet, because of the collective impression of the book, it is believed to address every human of any race. It is a book for every era, and for every nation; needed by all humanity all the time, to feel god's care and interest toward man.

4- Some believe that the author of this book **is one of the Hebrews, knowledgeable in the literature of their land**; a prominent poet, and a deep thinker, who was open on God's secret, bound to an exalted ethical model, and aware of the misery and the affliction in which men live.

5- Luther, Franz Delitzsch, and other scholars prefer to think that this book was **written by King Solomon**, who cared for dealing with the actual problems of life; and whose book of Proverbs bore the same lines of thought of the book of 'Job'. Both books care for the wisdom, as an essential and vital factor in the life of the believer; And this conforms to the openness of the personality of Solomon on the other peoples and nations.

6- Some believe that **either Isaiah, Hezekiel, or Baruch, Jeremiah's friend, is the author of this book**. Some believe that it is written at the time of captivity, directly before or after it; probably in the days of Manasseh. Those who adopt this view depend on that this book came to confront the doubt of some in the care of God, who allowed for the defeat of Israel, and the large scale of tribulations that happened to them. Yet some other scholars rejected this view, as the book does not deal with the problem of suffering or catastrophes on the level of the congregation or the people, but only on that of the individual; And because what the book included, whether concerning the look at God, or the behaviorism, is not more progressive than what it was in the days of Solomon. Some believe that the exalt personality of 'Job' could be compared to that of Melchizedek, whom Abraham encountered after his battle with the five kings.

7- Unfortunately, **some critics believe that the book of 'Job' was not written by a single author**; That the introduction (1: 1-2; 13), and the end (42: 7-17), include a folkloric episode that concerns someone exalted, who lived in the land of 'Os', and became well famed in the East. That episode came to be on the tongues of wise men during the second thousand years, and reached the land of Canaan in the days of Samuel, David, and Solomon; during the eleventh and the tenth centuries BC;

¹ Yoma i. 4 (18 b).

namely before the captivity. When the catastrophe came upon Jerusalem in the year 587 BC, and Judah lost everything; their loss led them to wonder about the significance of their existence; and of their belief in God's righteousness, holiness, and justice. A poet who came back among the second batch of captives, wrote a prophetic form of poem (3: 1-31-40; 38: 10- 42: 6); presenting a certain character, who suffered and did not know the reason of his suffering; and three friends debating with him on the significance of existence, the justice of man and that of God (31: 35-37). Then came a student of the author of the book of 'Job', and added the speech of Elihu (23: 1-37; 34), to defend God, and to demonstrate the value of suffering in the life of man.

As there were uncountable men who felt bitterness (Lamentations 3: 15), and anger toward a God who did not fulfill His promises, they are told the story of 'Job' who suffered the way the children of Judah did. As those people believed that they have certain rights toward God; the book of 'Job' proclaimed to them that God is not a merchant, to whom you give, and from whom you take; True faith teaches us the free giving.

THE BOOK OF JOB IN THE RABBINICAL LITERATURE¹:

The book of 'Job' was not one of the books to be collectively read in the Jewish Synagogues, like the five books of Moses and the prophets; or in the religious occasions and feasts, like the five books of 'Megilot' (Parchments): the Song of songs, Ruth, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the book of Ecclesiastes, and of Esther. But it was a book for personal reading, dealing with a deep topic, preferred by the cultured educated category.

Because of the importance of the book of 'Job', the 'Talmudists' paid much interest to the main character of the book. All the Rabbis, with the exception of two, confirm that 'Job' was an actual historical character; and yet, they differed concerning the exact date in which he lived; as well as his nationality:

1- 'Bar Kappara' believes that he lived in the days of Abraham.

2- 'Abba Kahana' believes that he lived in the days of Jacob, and that he was married to his daughter Dinah.

3- 'R. Levi' says that he lived in the days of Jacob's children; and said on the tongue of 'Yose b. Halafta' that 'Job' was born in the days Jacob went to Egypt, and died in the days of the exodus of the Israelites from there.

Some believe that what happened to 'Job' was because Pharaoh sought the counsel of Jethro, Balaam, and Job, concerning what he should do, in order to limit the number of the people of Israel; and that God struck 'Job' with afflictions when he stood speechless. This story came in the book of 'Sefer ha-Yashar'² as follows: ['Job' was one of the eunuchs of Pharaoh who counseled him to order the killing of the male Israelite children (Exodus 1: 16). And when Pharaoh saw in a vision a warning of the birth of a certain 'helper', he again sought the counsel of 'Job', who responded in a vague way, saying, '**The king should do what pleases him**'³]. Some believe that the prophet Moses encountered 'Job' during the time he wondered in the wilderness, before returning to Egypt to rescue his people from the bondage of Pharaoh.

¹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia, NY, 1904, vol. 7, p. 193 ff.*

² *Section "Shemot", P 110 a, ed. Leghorn, 1870.*

³ *Sefer ha - Yashar L. C. P 111a,*

4- 'Levi b. Lahama' believes that 'Job' lived in the days of Moses, who wrote that book. Whereas some rabbis believe that 'Job' was one of the servants of Pharaoh, who feared the word of God (Exodus 9: 20).

5- 'Raba' believes that 'Job' lived in the days of the spies sent by Moses to examine the land of Canaan; And that he was a pious Gentile prophet.

6- Some Rabbis believe that 'Job' was an Israelite, and one of those who returned from captivity.

THE BOOK OF JOB IS AN ACTUAL HISTORIC EPISODE:

Although it is believed by some scholars that it is difficult to say for sure whether 'Job' was not a fictional character or not; yet there has to be an actual foundation for this story that gave it such a strong effect and influence. Living in the hearts of people, such like that, it could not be but a real character; Besides, it was not the nature of the Hebrew authors to create the characters of their novels from pure imagination, but they used to base them on actual facts.

1- The location where 'Job' lived was fixed by the province of 'Os', with which we shall deal in the first chapter.

2- The names of his friends: 'Eliphaz the Temanite', a descendant of Essau (Genesis 36: 11); 'Bildad the Shuhite', a descendant of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25: 2); 'Zophar the Naamathite', of some unknown origin; and 'Elihu' a descendant of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Genesis 22: 21)

3- As to the debate between God and Satan, the author got it through a divine proclamation, like many of the books of the prophets.

THE BOOK OF JOB AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURE:

Despite the reluctance of some Jewish scholars to accept the person of 'Job', because he was not an Israelite; Yet, being faithful to the word of God, they kept it as a holy Book, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; referred to by the apostle James (James 5: 11); and quoted by the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 3: 19; Job 5: 13).

Its position among the legal Hebrew Books, conforms to its great appreciation; being put in the third section, called in Hebrew 'Cotobhim', meaning, (the holy writings), known in Greek as the 'Hagiography' – after the book of Psalms and the book of Proverbs. But, in the Septuagint version, it was put at the beginning of the poetic books; a system followed by the modern versions.

The book of 'Job' is one of three books (together with the Psalms and the Proverbs), for which the scholars of Hebrew Theology (the captives), put a special system of enumeration, to demonstrate their poetic features.

THE HOSPITALITY OF JOB:

The Talmudists cared very much for the personality and piety of 'Job', and counted him as the most hospitable human; And that he, like Abraham, built a motel (hospice) on the crossroads, which had four doors, one on every direction, to make it easy for the passersby to enter into it. He was Known for his love and compassion toward the sick and the suffering, and his care for the fatherless. Like Abraham he worshipped God with piety, raising pure prayers; and like Melchizedek and Enoch, he was blameless, and far from any evil behavior.

And according to the Targom, the name of 'Job' was one of seven names engraved on the seven branches of the golden lampstand.

Because some Rabbinicals believed that his attributes made him surpass the person of Abraham, Some others tended to prove otherwise. 'Yohannan b. Zakkai'

said that Job's piety came out of fear of punishment; And according to 'R. N. Recension, despite Job's great hospitality, when he fell in grief, he tended to complain that he was oppressed; And claimed that God said to him: "Your hospitality has not yet reached half that of Abraham'.

The Talmudian literature wrongly tends to consider 'Job' a rebel who challenged God¹; which kept the Jewish people from saying in their prayers: "The God of 'Job'", the way they used to say: "**The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob**". And 'rabba' claims that 'Job' denied the resurrection².

BETWEEN THE LORD CHRIST AND 'JOB':

'John Howard Raven' says that the book of 'Job' is the best dramatic disposition of the sufferings of the righteous; unsurpassed in all the literature; That the suffering 'Job' is a shadow of the suffering and righteous Christ; And that the pouring blessings because the sufferings of 'Job', are shadows of the limitless blessings of the sufferings of Christ; which is supported by what came in (James 5: 11)³.

It is obvious that 'Job', who was not an Israelite, was aware of the divine promises concerning the salvation and the enjoyment of resurrection and glory with Him (Job 19: 25-27); which he orally received.

1- Both the Lord Christ and 'Job' have been exposed in their times, more than any body else, to temptations by Satan, and have overcome them.

2- Both the Lord Christ and 'Job', in their temptations, were forsaken by their friends.

3- In his response to his friends, 'Job' said, referring allegorically to the reconciliation done by the lord Christ: "*For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together. Not is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both*" (Job 9: 32-33). The Church, by reading from the book of 'Job' on Wednesday of the holy Bascha, intends to show us that the 'Mediator' referred to by 'Job' in his book, has already come in the Person of the Lord Christ, whose passion started by the betrayal of his disciple on Wednesday.

4- Both the Lord Christ and 'Job' had ultimately overcome the temptation. Jesus Christ, although crucified and died, Yet He was risen alive. And about 'Job', it is said: "*The Lord blessed the latter days of 'Job' more than his beginning, ,,he died old and full of days*" (Job 42: 12; 17).

5- Although 'Job' lived during the first era of the Old Testament, Yet he presented a clear example of the lord Christ, who delivered Himself to disgrace and shame, was oppressed by people and by Satan, died, buried, and risen, proclaiming the resurrection; and interceded for us by the honored blood. 'Job' likewise, interceded for his persecutors, and offered sacrifices on their behalf.

'Franz Delitzsch' says: [**The true inclusions of the book of 'Job' is the secret of the cross: the cross of the Golgotha is the solution for the riddle of every cross; The book of 'Job' is a prophecy about that ultimate solution⁴**].

THE 'RAARA' OF JOB:

It was said that the plant that 'Job' used in his bath water and was cured, was a sort of green peppermint herb; which some Copts traditionally gather from the banks

¹ *ba'at; Midr. Teh. XXVi.*

² *The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 7, P. 194.*

³ *John Howard Raven: Old Testament Introduction, N.Y., 1906, p. 275.*

⁴ *Commentary, vol. 1, p. 32.*

of rivers on Wednesday morning of the holy week of Bascha, to use it with their bath water, believing that it would heal their ailments.

‘JOB’ IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH:

- ❖ **On the first day of the Coptic month of ‘Thout’ (September)**, the Coptic Church celebrates the healing of ‘Job’ from his ailments, after he bathed in water; And on the second day of the month of ‘Pachons’ (May), it celebrates his departure from this world.
- ❖ His prophecies are read during the great lent; and he is mentioned in the rite of the sacrament of the Unction of the sick; to demonstrate to believers that no one should despair of the possibility of being cured of his ailment.
- ❖ **His name is included in the vespers:** In the ‘Commemoration of the saints we pray, saying: [Pray for us, O prophets and righteous; Pray for us O righteous ‘Job’; Pray for us O.....to God to forgive us our sins].
- ❖ And his name is also included in the Theotokia of Sunday, and in the song , in which the Church says: [Peace be on you, O Mary, who symbolizes the steadfastness of the righteous ‘Job’...].
- ❖ And in the Doxology of the holy lent, in which the church sings, saying: [Through fasting and prayers, God showed compassion on His servant ‘Job’, and cured him.
- ❖ **The commemoration of ‘Job’ on Wednesday of the holy Bascha**, known as ‘Job’s Wednesday, during which that righteous man is remembered as a symbol of the Lord Christ, in his severe suffering and temptations, as well as in the happy ending of His life. The church reads this of ‘Job’ on this very day (Wednesday), because on that day, the plot against the Lord Christ began.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE BOOK OF JOB:

Some scholars contradict the unity or integrity of the book for the following reasons;

1- Some claim **that the talks of Elihu (Chapters 32 to 37) seem to be added later;** because his name was not mentioned, neither in the introduction, nor in the end of the book; And because his debates were not much different from those of ‘Job’s three other friends; and came, unwarranted, blocking the harmony of that poetic piece; especially that Jehovah answered ‘Job’ and not Elihu (38: 1).

This could be explained as follows:

a- The name of Elihu was not mentioned in the introduction, because he did not take part in the debates until its final stage. And was not mentioned in the end of the book, because his role as a forerunner to Jehovah, to prepare the way in their minds, has been accomplished.

b- Although Elihu condemned ‘Job’ because of accusing God of injustice. Nevertheless, he tried to justify his position (32: 33).

c- His goal was not dealing with the problem of the suffering of the righteous, as much as it was to prepare the way for God’s talk with ‘Job’ through the whirlwind.

d- God answered ‘Job’ and not Elihu; as the subject of the book was the suffering of the righteous ‘Job’; And there was nothing in the talk of Elihu’ to condemn him for it.

e- Without the debate of Elihu, the respond from the whirlwind would be cut short¹.

2- Some critics believe that what came about the **tribulations of the wicked** (37: 7, etc.), is out of place, as it was not different from what came in chapter 20.

This could be answered by saying that the talk is in harmony with what came before it, and makes it clear. Because Job's three friends confirmed their enmity against him, with his broken down soul, he intended to chasten them for their unwarranted position. He was positively sure that God will interfere to restore his honor to him.

3- Some **claim that what came in chapter 28, concerning wisdom, interrupted the relationship between the two chapters 28 and 29**; and is different from what 'Job' has already said, concerning his suffering of grief and bitterness.

This could be explained by saying that, because the three friends assumed that they are men of wisdom, 'Job' intended to confirm to them that they are not; and they are instead, worthy of divine chastisement because of their unwarranted enmity against him. This chapter shows that 'Job', although passing through periods of bitter despair; yet on him, the sure hope of God's work, and of His salvation, shone.

4- Some scholars claim that both the **introduction and the end of the book were added on a later date**; But to answer this, we say that, without them both, the whole debate would be pointless; and there would be no solution for the problem.

5- Cheyne regarded the talks of the Almighty (Chapters 38-41); especially His description of 'behemoth' (40: 15; 41: 34); as a confusing element in the book. This could be answered by saying that the book bears an amazing literate harmony; and that if the talks of Jehovah from the whirlwind are omitted, the problem of suffering stays without solution; and the book would lose its best part².

THE GENERAL FRAME OF THE BOOK OF JOB:

A- Between heaven and earth (Chapters 1, 2):

❖ If God rejoices in His good children, and is proud of them (1: 8); The enemy, on the other hand, is consistent on complaining against them, hoping to have the chance to tempt them by suffering.

❖ God allows Satan to do that, to let him consummate his evil cup; and to justify his children.

1- Job before the temptation	1: 1-5
2- Satan and the suffering	1: 6; 2

B- Human comforts (Chapter 3):

When his friends came to comfort him; his soul got more embittered; cursed the day of his birth; desired death, and said to them: "*Miserable comforters are you all!*" (Job 16: 1). It did not stop at their inability to comfort him, but they condemned him, and aroused theoretical discussions that broke his soul.

C-Theoretical debates of the suffering: (Chapter 4-37):

1- **The first debate** (Chapters 4-14): Each debate ends with a request to 'Job' to repent.

2- **The second debate** (Chapters 15-21): Each debate deals with the suffering and the end of the wicked.

¹ John Howard Raven: *Old Testament Introduction, N.Y., 1906, p. 279.*

² John Howard Raven: *Old Testament Introduction, N.Y., 1906, p. 282.*

3- **The third debate** (Chapter 22-31): Like the first debate.

4- **The wise Elihu** (Chapter 32-37)

- ❖ Because the suffering in the mind of his friends is a sign of God's anger; they counted 'Job' as a wicked man and a hypocrite.
- ❖ Eliphaz the Temanite based his argument on lessons he learned in a dream or a vision; Bildad the Shuhite on old proverbs (8: 2-13); and Zophar the Naamathite on experience.
- ❖ 'Job' defended himself; And in Chapter 21, he presented a new proof, that the wicked mostly lead a comfortable life.
- ❖ Elihu, the wise young man, waited until the end to reveal that the suffering is intended to chasten the soul; proclaims the need for the Intercessor Redeemer for justification (33: 23-28); and reveals as well the exaltation of God's wisdom (37: 11-13).

D- God and the suffering (Chapter 38-42):

- ❖ God reveals to 'Job' that, being ignorant of several issues around him; how could he realize the secrets of God?!
- ❖ Chapter 38 includes information not known to man before the twentieth century.
- ❖ God clarifies His wisdom for allowing for 'Job' to be put to temptation:
 - 1- By it, 'Job' saw God. *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You"* (42: 5).
 - 2- By it, 'Job' was honored; And God commanded his friends to ask him to pray for them, and to intercede on their behalf.
 - 3- God restored to him double the blessings.
 - 4- God confirmed to him that his children are not dead.

DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF 'JOB':

1- Introduction	1 – 2
2- Lamentation of 'Job'	3
3- Poetic debates between 'Job' and his friends	4 – 31
a- The first round of debate	4 – 14
b- The second round of debate	15 – 21
c- The third round of debate	22 – 31
4- Poetic speech by Elihu	32 – 37
5- A poetic debate between God and 'Job'	38 – 42
a- God answers 'Job'	38 – 41
b- 'Job' responds to the divine word	42: 1- 6
6- 'Job' gets back double as much as he lost	42: 7– 17

N.B. THE MOST PROMINENT FATHERS WHO INTERPRETED THE BOOK OF 'JOB' ARE:

1- St. John Chrysostom:

Jean Chrysostome: Commentaire sur Job, tome 1 (Ch. 1-14), tome 2 (Ch. 15-21), trans. Into French, by Henri Sorlin (Source Chretienne, No 346, Paris 1988).

2- Pope Gregory (the Great)¹:

Morals on the book of 'Job', Oxford, London 1845, 1847 (John H. Parker J. Rivringion).

3- Father Hesychius of Jerusalem:

Hesychius de Jerusalem: Homelies sur 'Job'. Vol. 1, 2 by Charles Renoux, F. Graffin. Patrolog. Orientalis, tome 42, Fascicule 1, No 190. Fas 2- 191. Belgium 1983.

This father died about the year 450 AD; An author and an interpreter of the Holy Book, He started his early life as a monk, and in the year 412 AD he was ordained a priest in Jerusalem according to Theophan the Confessor. We know nothing about him except that he interpreted the whole Holy Book. And it appears from what remained of his interpretations and commentaries, that he followed the Alexandrian system in his works; and that he defended the Orthodox faith against the followers of Arius, Apolonarius, Mani, and others. He published a work called "The Centuries" under his name (most probably done by Fr. Hesychius of Sainai – in the sixth/seventh century). The Greek church celebrates him on the 25 th of March)².

¹ للتعرف على شخصيته وأفكاره وكتاباتاه راجع كتاب: "الرعاية"، 2004.

² راجع كتابنا: قاموس سير الأباء - حرف هـ.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB'

BY WHAT TITLE SHALL I CALL YOU, O RIGHTEOUS ONE?

- ❖ You lived a Gentile without a written law.
Yet, by the sweetness of Your piety, You surpassed many of the people of God.
You had no Holy Book, nor a guide, or helper;
Yet your heart was lifted up to share with the heavenly creature, their praises.
- ❖ Your life became an open Bible, to be read by every man.
To get in touch with God's love for mankind.
Your life testifies to God, who has no partiality.
Who loves every man, and desires the salvation of all.
Your name that surpassed many, has been written in the book of life.
You heard about God; then, with your eye you saw him.
I wonder, who among the men of God, can reach your rank?!
- ❖ Your life story is that of the open heart.
That of the true fatherhood for every man
When you were rich, you did not close your door before the needy.
And when you became poor, you opened the doors of hope before all who are
tempted.
- ❖ On a heap of ashes, you were more glorified than Adam your father in paradise.
You did not submit to your wife's seduction as your father Adam did.
But instead, you drew her to enjoy with you the goods and the blessings.
- ❖ In your struggle against the various temptations, you were crowned and glorified.
In your debate with your friends, you did not seek human comfort.
And in your debate with God, you humbled yourself to be glorified.
- ❖ Satan did not despair of opposing you.
But you were hidden in the Rock of ages.
Satan's arrows were broken, and he became in disgrace.
You became justified before God, and became glorified.
Your perseverance broke down all the tricks of the adversary.
- ❖ Blessed are you O 'Job'; You became a symbol of our Christ.
You were tempted and became crowned; As He was tempted, to crown all of us in
Him.
You were forsaken by your friends; and by His own, He was driven outside the
camp.
You interceded for your friends who attacked you.
And, by His precious blood, our Christ interceded for us, while we are His
enemies.
- ❖ After being like a dead man on a heap of ashes, you were raised up, rejoicing for
seeing your God.
Our Christ died and was buried; Then raised us up with Him, to behold the divine
bosoms.
Blessed are you, You who became an excellent example along the generations.
By what title should we call you, O righteous one?!

AN ANNEX TO THE DEBATES BETWEEN ‘JOB’ AND HIS FRIENDS

THE FIRST DEBATE (CH. 4 – 11)

ELIPHAZ (4 – 5);

- 1- He depended on **personal experience and a night vision**.
- 2- As he was the oldest of the three, he was always the first to talk.
- 3- **He prepared the atmosphere for his friends**, by presenting his theory, implying that there is a connection between sin and suffering; While righteousness brings forth temporal happiness, sin, on the other hand brings forth temporal tribulations; Then he applied his theory on ‘Job’.

In his first debate, he counted ‘Job’s suffering as corresponding to his evil; and blamed him for the following serious sins:

- a- His weariness (4: 2-11), for feeling that he is unjustly treated by God.
- b- His lack of perseverance (4: 12).
- c- Not repenting on his hidden sins (5: 8-27).

‘Job’s response (6–7):

- ❖ The presence of those philosophers, and hearing their theories, made him question God’s justice, without entering into a theological debate.
- ❖ He expressed his inner frustration, because, although he confesses his sins, yet he thinks that they are not that unusual.
- ❖ He rebuked his friends for their lack of compassion (6: 14-30).
- ❖ In the anguish of his spirit and the bitterness of his soul, He complained to God (& 1-21).

BILDAD 8:

- 1- He depended **upon human tradition, and the arguments of the old**.
- 2- He did not care for the misery of his friend.
- 3- He despised ‘Job’s defense
- 4- He disregarded Job’s criticism for their lack of compassion.
- 5- He confirmed the theory of Eliphaz (God’s justice).
- 6- He ended his speech by some short amiable words, though in an unfitting way (20-22).

Job’s response:

- ❖ Like his response to Eliphaz, he introduced himself to his friends; Then he addressed his talk to God.
- ❖ He mocked Bildad’s starting speech; then strongly contradicted his ending one.
- ❖ With strife, but with no blasphemy, he complained to God; then amiably admonished his friends.
- ❖ Even Satan could not make him blaspheme against God.

ZOPHAR 11:

- 1- He depended **upon the ancient literal law**.
- 2- In the name of the three friends, he violently accused ‘Job’, of wickedness.

3- He ended his speech by demonstrating the possibility of reform, and restoration of prosperity through repentance.

‘Job’s response (12-14):

- ❖ In his response to Eliphaz and Bildad, ‘Job’ strongly defended his innocence; something that frustrated the three friends.
- ❖ He attacked and criticized the ignorance of his friends.
- ❖ He demonstrated their right to comfort him, but not to attack him; Then he soon resorted back to God (13: 20-14: 21).
- ❖ Amid that appeal to God, hope shone in the soul of ‘Job’. It is obvious in his response here, **that his faith challenged the abyss by the spirit of hope and conquest.**

THE SECOND DEBATE (Chapters 15 to 21)

ELIPHAZ 15:

- 1- All the past confrontations have created an atmosphere of resentment instead of friendship.
- 2- Eliphaz, the aristocratic philosopher, forgot the basic principles of decency.
- 3- He practiced his role to demonstrate his philosophy and wisdom, and to add new charges against ‘Job’.

Job’s response (16-17):

‘Job’, lost interest in their vain debate, and moved to talk to God; saying to them: “*Miserable comforters are you all*” (Job: 16: 1).

BILDAD 18:

Degrading the integrity of “Job”, he counted him as tearing himself apart with his anger; bringing himself by himself into his own net, and walking into the snare of death; namely, falling under the tribulations of the wicked.

‘Job’s response (19):

Having fallen under such vicious condemnations by his friends, he found no other way but to resort to God, the heavenly and compassionate Friend (23-29).

ZOPHAR 20:

Having heard how ‘Job’ played on the strings of the right to salvation, as though, intending to arouse the angels; Zophar, in his second speech; having ears, but not hearing, he consummate what Bildad said in harmony, to sing together a poem about a wicked man, cast on a heap of trash -- ‘Job’ as they saw him.

‘Job’s response (20):

Having been struck by blindness, the accusers could not see Job’s righteousness and faithfulness, they condemned him on his tribulations, instead of trying to find an interpretation for them. But ‘Job’s eyes, now, being protected by a spirit of hope, are opened to see how, in this temporal life, the righteous may suffer, and the wicked may enjoy prosperity (26).

THE THIRD DEBATE (22 – 40)

ELIPHAZ 22:

In his final speech, shamelessly, and openly, he presented a summary of their charges. While pretending to defend God's justice in dealing with humans, they became allies to Satan; persisting that 'Job', to whom God testifies to be his faithful servant, like nobody else on earth, is a tool of Satan; And advised him to repent his sins.

'Job's response (23-25):

- ❖ Describing Eliphaz' charges as false and with no basis, he summarized what he said before (Chapter 21)
- ❖ He contemplates in God's unfathomable justice in dealing with him as a righteous man (Chapter 23); and with the wicked (Chapter 24).

BILDAD 25:

- 1- He avoided entering into another debate or answering 'Job' (24: 25).
- 2- He resumed what those philosophers said, that man could never be justified before God.
- 3- He gave a solemn, although pointless speech.

Job's response (26):

'Job' strongly responds, confirming God's wisdom in all His ways; but saying that, in what Bildad uttered, he was a tool of Satan, and not as a defendant of God.

JOB'S TEACHING TO THE SILENT FRIENDS(27-28):

With the end of debate and before the silence of his friends, 'Job' took the position of a teacher, and started to demonstrate that their accusations were inspired by Satan, and not from God.

A REBUUTAL BY 'JOB' (29 – 31).

CHAPTER 1

GOD'S TESTIMONY TO 'JOB'

The scene begins in the province of Edom; with a righteous man who worshipped the true God like the patriarch fathers, and practiced the priestly work to the account of his family.

There is another scene in heaven, unknown even to 'Job'; but was proclaimed by God to the author of the book, in which God proclaimed His care for mankind, especially those who believe in Him.

The Holy Book demonstrates, especially in this book, that Satan knows no slothfulness, but keeps on exerting every effort to oppose God in the humanity worshipping Him, and never stops complaining against the believers; God, on the other hand, takes on Himself the role of defending them; as they are the object of His divine interest and exalted care; Yet He may allow for them to pass through temptations, in order that their crowns may glitter more.

1- Job's piety and riches	1 – 3
2- Family feasts	4 – 5
3- Satan's complaint	6 – 12
4- Successive tribulations	13 – 19
5- 'Job' the thankful	20 – 22

1- JOB' S PIETY AND RICHES:

"There was a man in the land of 'Uz', whose name was 'Job'; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1: 1)

The attention of **many fathers** is drawn by such a kind of great commendation given to 'Job'; namely, that he was "*a man*". **The scholar Origen** says, that, although many are called 'men', Yet, they may behave like wild beasts, and dumb animals, and not like men, created by God, the Philanthropic.

❖ This name '**man**', as defined by the Holy Book, does not apply to not any one with hands and feet; or any one who just have reason; but to him, who practices piety, and virtue with courage¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ There are many who are called '**men**', Yet, they are not truly so! Some of them behave like beasts; others like Reptiles, or like any voracious animals. That is why David says: "*Man, though in honor,...; but he is like the beasts that perish*" (Psalm 49: 12)...

The word '**man**' is surely used for him who bears the image of God (Genesis 1: 27); Who fittingly keep his honor; who discerns between good and evil; and in whom "*The glory of God endures forever; and the Lord rejoice in His work*" (Psalm 104: 31).

Thus, "the man in the land of Uz." Attach the region has been a lonely, but the implantation ... Job treasure was not lacking anything. Was filled with oppression planted the grape harvest. Was complete (true) like true creature of God, as used for the calculation of the right qualities without hypocrisy, and an integral part of God's commands ... his worships was as God wanted.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ *Second Instruction, 1.*

The Edomites used to live in the land of 'Uz' in the days of the prophet Jeremiah (Lamentations 4: 21); believed by some to be between Damascus and Edom, in the Syrian desert; and by others to be 'Haran', between Palestine and Arabia, North-east of the River Euphrates, on the caravan route between Egypt and Babylon. Tradition believes that 'Haran' is the home of 'Job', east of the Sea of Galilee, a very fertile land, which used to include about 300 little towns.

'Uz', probably, was not very far from 'Ur' of the Chaldeans, from where Abraham was called by God. Although God called Abraham from there to set from his seed a chosen people; Yet, there, God still had a remnant to testify to Him among the Gentiles, to realize His plan toward mankind, whom we enjoy seeing, together with St. John in his revelation: "*A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne*" (Revelation 7: 9).

God took Abraham out of that corrupted land; calling His elect to separate themselves from evil; Yet He allowed for 'Job' to remain there, to testify to His divine light in the midst of a pitch darkness; like a star amid the darkness of the night.

❖ To reveal the worthiness of his virtue, we are told where this man lived. 'Uz' was a Gentile land; namely, under the authority of the devil. Telling us where he lived is a commendation to him. He was a good man living among wicked people. It is not such a great commendation to be a good man living among good men; But to say that you are a good man living among wicked men, is un-comparable testimony.

About the righteous 'Lot' it was said: "*He was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked among whom he was dwelling (for the soul of that righteous man was tormented from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)*" (2 Peter 2: 7-8)...

And the **apostle Paul says to his disciples**: "...*In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2: 15).

And to the **angel of the church of Pergamos**, God said: "*I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you held fast to My name, and did not deny My faith*" (Revelation 2: 13).

And the **church was commended** by the voice of the divine Groom, saying: "*Like a lily among thorns, So is my love among the daughters*" (Song of Solomon 2: 2).

About 'Job' it was said: "**He shunned evil**"; As it was said: "*Depart from evil, and do good*" (Psalm 37: 27). Good deeds would surely be unacceptable by God, if they are tinted and mixed with wicked deeds. As it is said by Solomon: "*One sinner destroys much good*" (Ecclesiastes 9: 18); And as testified by St. James who says: "*Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2: 10); and by St. Paul who says: "*A little leaven leavens the whole lump*" (1 Corinthians 5: 6).

Therefore, it was befitting to say that 'Job' turned away from evil, to demonstrate how that righteous man was without a wrinkle, and abided in his good deeds.

Pope Gregory the Great

The word of God testifies to 'Job' that he **was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil"**.

1- "**Blameless**" is here relative; It does not mean (without sin); but rather (seeks blamelessness), tirelessly, and as much as he could.

- ❖ When the apostle says about himself that he is both blameful and blameless; He counts himself blameful, because there is much that he still lacks; But blameless, when he is not ashamed to admit his shortcomings; and that he tries hard to reach blamelessness¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ There are two forms of blamelessness: One regular, and another exalted. One to be acquired here in this world,; and another to be sought later on.. One according to human abilities; and another concerning the coming world. God, on the other hand is Just through all; wise above all, and blameless in all².

St. Ambrose

2- **“Upright”** in his dealings with God and with people; namely, has the spirit of simplicity without twists, or inner diversion. What he practices reveals what is actually in his heart without hypocrisy. He is upright in his behavior; particularly in his thoughts; faithful in his time, and in the talents given to him by God.

3- **“feared God”** He worshipped God with the spirit of piety; not with dry formalities with no spirit. He sought to consummate the will of God. In other words, his behavior was in harmony with his worship to God. He feared God, lest he would do wrong toward His majesty and His love.

4- **“He shunned evil”** The fear of God was like a wall around him, that keeps evil from infiltrating into his mind, heart, or behavior.

- ❖ It is said that he was **“without blame”**, and not “without sin”... he “without blame” because he was “upright”.

He was **“true”**, because men around him are “liars” (Psalm 62: 9).

He was **“true”**, not only in his words, but also in his deeds; he was **“a man of truth”**; As *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”* (Ecclesiastes 12: 13). ‘Job’ was zealous toward his pure behavior. All his virtues were because of his knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is proclaimed in the life of man...

He did not say: **‘He did not commit evil’**, but said ‘He shunned evil’; namely, he turned away from it... as expressed by the words of the wise Solomon: *“Lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’”* (Proverbs 30: 9). So you see, man has to be alert; as was the case with ‘Job’.

St. John Chrysostom

And seven sons and three daughters were born to him” (Job 1: 2)

Even with so many children, ‘Job’ was not preoccupied with leaving a great inheritance to each of them; But rather with supporting them with a great inheritance of prayers, praise, spiritual sacrifices, and burnt offerings.

The **scholar Origen** sees in the sons and daughters, a symbol of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, by whom he begets, through his soul as well as through his body, spiritual fruition holy to the Lord. In a pious man like ‘Job’, the Spirit of God works, so that the soul harmonizes with the body, to become as a whole under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. **Pope Gregory** the Great, presents to us in detail, allegoric interpretations for the seven sons and the three daughters, of which we shall quote the following.

¹ Two Letters of Pelagius, 3:19.

² Duties of the Clergy, 3:2:11.

- ❖ What does the figure 7 present to us but the wealth of perfection?... **The 7 sons represent the ordinance of the preachers**; while the three daughters may refer to **the three categories of believers in the life of the church...** the Shepherds, the virgins, and the married.

Seven sons are born to us, when we get (pregnant) with the good intention; **to deliver the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit**. The prophet Isaiah particularly cared for this spiritual seed, when the Holy Spirit makes the mind embrace the following words: *“The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11: 2). When, in each of us, with the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom, the understanding, the counsel, the might, the knowledge, the piety, and the fear of God, are developed; We would then have in our mind, what keeps the purity of our exalted seed in life.

The seven sons in us, surely have three sisters; because each of the sons, works in maturity with virtuous tendencies; uniting **with faith, hope, and love**. The figure 7, would not reach the perfection of the figure 10, unless everything is done with faith, hope, and love.

Pope Gregory the great

After speaking about his inner spiritual riches concerning the soul; having seven sons; namely, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with three daughters; namely, faith, hope, and love; He speaks about his carnal riches. Sons refer to the riches of the Spirit; And the beasts refer to the riches of the body, sanctified in the Lord. He would suffer neither need in the Spirit, nor in the body; as long as the Creator of the soul and the body fulfills his whole being.

“Also his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east” (Job 1: 3)

Beside his great material wealth, he was a righteous man. He started with the sheep, because: *“lambs will provide your clothing,...; and goats’ will provide milk for your food, for the food of your household, and the nourishment of your maidservants”* (Proverb 27: 26-27). He had a multitude of servants and maidservants in his household.

Of the customs which still prevail in the societies of nomads, is to evaluate the wealth of someone, not in terms of the land or houses, but of the number of beasts he possesses. On this scale, Abraham was a very rich man (Genesis 13: 2); So was Lot (Genesis 13: 5); and Job. The female donkeys were mentioned, because of their greater value as milk producers¹.

Some see in ‘Job’s sheep and camels, a reference to the union of the era of the law with that of the grace. The seven thousand sheep refer to the pasture of the law, that becomes perfect by the spiritual touches (the figure 1000), instead of the letter. Three thousand camels, symbolizing the peoples of the Gentiles who come to join that spiritual pasture of the law, for all to become one flock of One Shepherd.

- ❖ Although ‘Job’ was a very rich man, Yet he lived his life with compassion toward others. His house was open before every one in need; He never oppressed anyone, but helped the oppressed. And, as a righteous rich man, he provided for the widows and the fatherless².

¹ cf. James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 207.

² *Fragments*, 222, on Luke 16: 19.

2- FAMILY FEASTS:

“Now the sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them” (Job 1: 4)

A marvelous portrait of a very rich man and his children, who were not preoccupied with their wealth, as much as with gathering together with the spirit of love and unity; holding feasts in their houses, each on his appointed day, together with their three sisters; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“How good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity”* (Psalm 133: 1).

In those feasts, we notice the following:

- 1.They were held in their houses, and not in public places; probably to keep the holy nature of the family, even on happy occasions.
 - 2.Inviting the sisters to those feasts indicate that they were confined to the ‘Job’ family.
 - 3.‘Job’ did not join those feasts; because he assumed that his presence as an old man, would probably interfere with the freedom of his young children to have fun and joy, as long as it is in the Lord.
- ❖ The great wealth are often a cause of controversy between brethren; But here, in this blessed family, peace is proclaimed as filling the hearts of everyone. What a great commendation for the way that father raised his children!

Pope Gregory the Great

“So it was, when the days of the feasting had run their course, that ‘Job’ would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For ‘Job’ said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’. Thus ‘Job’ did regularly” (Job 1: 5)

Despite not joining his children physically in their feasts, ‘Job’ joined them with the spirit of compassionate fatherhood. He was keen on the salvation of their hearts; fearful, lest they would get defiled even by thought, and be counted as blasphemers against the Holy God.

He feared that any of them would think in his depths, saying: *“My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth”* (Deuteronomy 8; 17); Or as the wise Solomon says: *“Lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’”* (Proverb 30: 9).

‘Job’, as the priest of his family, believing that he is unable to sanctify his children, as this is the work of God, he used to offer burnt offerings according to their number. He used to do that, not only at the start of the feast, nor at its end, but all along its days; and even, regularly, all the year long. Although he, most probably offered a burnt offering for the whole family every single day, Yet on the days of the feasts, he used to offer a burnt offering for every one of his children; on account of the fact, that sins, especially of the mind, would find in the feasts, a suitable atmosphere to infiltrate.

- ❖ If the sins committed in ignorance, are said to be so serious, and need a burnt offering to redeem, as testified by the action of ‘Job’; What would it be for those

sins that are committed with complete knowledge; or for those we see committed by others, and we keep silent? ¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ If ‘Job’ offered his sacrifices for the sake of the hidden sins of his children; or those they unknowingly committed; how would it be for the apparent ones?! Notice how the apostle translate this into positive action, saying: *“And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6: 4); namely that man should care for his children through fatherly protection. Notice the extent of perfection he intends to lead them...

As far as the apparent sins are concerned, he could be able to correct them; But what could he do for the hidden ones? It is said to the prophet Moses: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever”* (Deuteronomy 29: 29). Anyway, ‘Job’ did not disregard even the hidden sins in his relationship with God, but committed himself personally to correct the faults of his children by a therapeutic way; that helps him to uproot the sins, and teach his children at the same time...

Here you see how ‘Job’ did not only care for their shortcomings as far as their deeds are concerned, but even cared for their thoughts; consummating in a practical way what the Lord Christ will say in the future: *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,...These are the things which defile a man”* (Matthew 15: 19-20).... Here you see, not a Mosaic sort of purification, nor according to the law, but an apostolic one; ‘Job’ daily seeks to purify his children, not only through advice and counsel, but also through praying for them. This is not just the task of a father, but that of a priest as well. Although we know, that at that time, there was no priesthood, yet some believe that there were priests like Melchizedek, not chosen by the people.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ According to the same book, because ignorance is a sin. ‘Job’ offered burnt offerings for his children, for fear that they might have unknowingly sinned in their hearts².

St. Jerome

- ❖ Those words by ‘Job’ tell us how pious he was. There are many who would rise early in the morning to practice the earthly things that they thought about through the night, concerning the ways to wealth, glories and honors. About such people the prophet says: *“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it”* (Micah 2: 1). That was not the case with the righteous ‘Job’, who believed that the true sacrifice is keeping the law and practicing virtues (See Sirach 35: 1-3). In this concern, we have before our eyes the words of the apostle Paul, saying: *“Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God,... But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Hebrew 13: 15-16).

“For ‘Job’ said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts” (Job 1: 5). As a wise father and an experienced guide, he did not stop at praying, and saying: *“Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults”* (Psalm 19: 12); but walked according to both the law and the grace; and according to the commandment of the gospel: *“...Those who have heard the word with a noble and*

¹ On the Judgment of God.

² Against the Pelagians 1: 33.

good heart” (Luke 8: 15). About that, St. John says: “*By this we... shall assure our hearts before Him; For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God*” (1 John 3: 19-21); And the Lord Himself says: “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man*” (Matthew 15: 19-20).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ If ‘Job’ so did concerning the hidden sins of his children; how much more he must have done concerning their apparent ones¹!
- ❖ ‘Job’, knowing that feasts are rarely without trespasses, he was keen on cleansing those unintentionally done by his children through offering sacrifices on their behalf².

St. John Chrysostom

Although ‘Job’ knew for sure that his children would behave in the spirit of unity and harmony; yet, he did not slothfully consider himself as not responsible for what might go on secretly in their minds and hearts; But, in love and wisdom, he resorted to God, who knows the hidden secrets, through offering spiritual sacrifices and burnt offerings for each of them, to sanctify their depths.

- ❖ “***Thus ‘Job’ did regularly***” (5). He did not stop offering a perpetual sacrifice; the way our Savior does; whose mere incarnation before the Father, is an incessant offering for our sake; Who by revealing Himself as man, He presents by the secret of His humanity, a perpetual sacrifice, to cleanse the defilement of man.

Vain would be the goodness we practice, if we stop it before the end of our life; the way it is for him who runs a race, if he stops before reaching the end of the course. ‘*Woe to you, who lost patience*’ (Sirach 2: 14); and “*You are those who have continued with Me in my trials*” (Luke 22: 28)... By ordaining that the tail of the sacrifice should be offered on the altar, Moses intends to demonstrate that every good deed we start, we should persistently complete until the very end.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The wise Solomon says “*Hear, my son to a father’s instruction, and pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching, When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender and an only child of my mother...*” (Proverbs 4: 1-3). A righteous father raises his children properly by being to them himself a good role model, so as not to get embarrassed one day to hear the words: “*You, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?*” (Romans 2: 21); But he would instead, as a faithful servant, who could save both himself and the others, be worthy to hear the words of the Lord: “*Well done, good and faithful servant, you*

¹ *The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 42:3.*

² *The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 86:4.*

were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25: 21)¹.

St. Athanasius the apostolic

3- THE COMPLAINT OF SATAN:

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them” (Job 1: 6)

In the ‘Targum Yerushalmi’, it came that two sessions of meeting took place in heaven: one on ‘Rosh ha-Shanah’, and the other on ‘Yom Kippur’.

In those two sessions, the angels – the sons of God – came before God, to present to Him the befitting praise for His love toward the heavenly and the earthly creatures; to present to Him as well the prayers of the believers, and to anticipate any further assignment to consummate; being *“ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation”* (Hebrew 1: 14).

Among them, came the arrogant and deceitful Satan, to complain against mankind, especially the believers. As he, in his envy, could not stand to see an earthly man growing in Spirit, and setting forth as though with the wings of a dove to heaven.

As all things are revealed before God, He is in no need of angels to carry to Him the prayers of believers; nor to Satan to reveal the corruption of a believer. But God, in His love for the heavenly creatures, grants them the work of love, to present the prayers, and to consummate the missions; and He, as well, in His Justice, gives Satan the freedom to complain against whomever he wants. He sanctifies the freedom of will in the reasonable creatures, on the level of the heavenly hosts, on the spiritually evil hosts, and on humans.

We should not marvel to hear this; as in the vision of the prophet Zechariah, he saw the Word of God Himself, as a High Priest, carrying our sins as a filthy garment; and Satan at His right hand to accuse Him (Zechariah 3: 1-2).

St. John Chrysostom asks us not to marvel that the rebel stands among the angels; As the book presents to us a human portrait that helps us to understand it with our human mind.

- ❖ According to the text, the angels came, and Satan also came among them; from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth under heaven. From this we should understand that the earth is full of angels and devils; that all of them are under the authority of God; that the angels stand anticipating His instructions; And, by saying, ***“Satan also came among them”***, (6) that Satan cannot do anything unless he is allowed by God.
- ❖ As both the good and the evil humans are mixed together on earth; So are the angels and the demons.

St. John Chrysostom

The most exalted thing longed for by man, is to join the heavenly forces, and stand among them, to enjoy the heavenly glory, and see God. So, how could Satan stand to see God and to enter into a debate with Him? Standing here should not be taken literally; God allowed him to debate for the sake of divine justice, and to confirm the freedom of the reasonable creation, even of Satan and his evil hosts. **Although Satan was allowed to stand among the angels, and to debate with God, Yet he was not allowed to enjoy beholding the glory of God; the splendor of the**

¹ *Paschal Letters*, 2.

divine glory did not shine on him; and he did not experience hearing the sweetness of God's voice, the source of pleasure, joy, and true peace!

In the great day of the Lord, the true believers see in the eyes of Jesus Christ, a meek dove; and feel in His bosom, un-expressible glories; Whereas the wicked see in them flames of fire, they cannot bear to behold.

As it is said here, that Satan stood before the lord without enjoying beholding the splendor of His glory; It is said somewhere else, that the angels are "*ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*" (Hebrew 1: 14). Yet, sending them forth does not deny them the enjoyment of the divine presence, and the shining of the divine light on them.

❖ Some may wonder, how could Satan, who fell from his rank because of his pride, stand before the Lord among the angels? Could he behold the Lord while impure?

It is true that Satan and his hosts have fallen, and have lost the right to behold God; Yet, because of his nature as a spirit, he could stand before God to complain against us, but without beholding Him, because of his impurity.

Notice that it is said, '*he came before the Lord*', and not that '**he saw the Lord**'; he came to be seen, and not to see; **He was before the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord was not before his eyes**; The same way, when a blind man stands before the sun; Although he is wholly bathed in its warmth, yet he is not able to see its splendid rays. Even things that flee from God's face are not hidden from His eyes; everything is bare before Him, including Satan.

❖ Who are those who are called the "*sons of God*", but the elect angels who behold His glory? We should ask ourselves: From where did they come to stand before God? They are said to "*always see the face of the Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 18: 10); and "*A thousand thousands minister to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him*" (Daniel 7: 10); namely, they never separate from His presence. But St. Paul said about them: "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb1: 14), **They learn from this Addressees and discover where they come from ...**

We should understand that they do not go forth in a way that deny them seeing God, and the joy of contemplating in their Creator; Because if they are, they would not be able to raise the fallen; to proclaim the truth to those in ignorance; nor to present to the blind what they were denied through forsaking the source of light.

The nature of the angels differ from our present human nature; We are limited by place, and by the blindness of ignorance; Whereas the angels, being spirits, although also limited by place; but their knowledge are far above our knowledge, and we could not be compared to them. They have an extended knowledge, inside and outside; contemplating in the source of knowledge Himself.

And being spirits, while we are bodies; Yet if compared to the exalted and uncomprehensible Spirit, they are counted as mere bodies. That is why, although they are sent forth by Him, yet, they still stand before Him, and never separate from Him.

Therefore, although they perpetually see the face of the Father; yet they come to us through our inner contemplation. It could then be said that "*The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*", having never been separated from Him in the first place!

Pope Gregory the Great

“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’. So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it’” (Job 1: 7)

By saying, ***“From going to and fro on the earth”***, he refers to the fact that he did not surpass his limits; as *“The great dragon have been cast to the earth”* (Revelation 12: 9). Many fathers of the early church believe that, because the earth in the Holy Book refers to the earthly carnal man, who is only preoccupied with earthly things, Satan, therefore was going to and fro as though in his own domain. And because heaven, on the other hand, refers to the spiritual man, who is preoccupied with eternal things. Satan cannot infiltrate into his heart, but can go to and fro in that of the carnal man.

The devil knows no slothfulness; He does not stop day or night going to and fro on earth to seduce the children of God to forsake the kingdom of light, and to get preoccupied with sins.

❖ ***“From going to and fro on the earth” (7)***. Now, if you say, Well, heaven is out of bounds to the evil devil; but the world welcomes him.; that would be for your own benefit; and you would be slothful, If you do not care to reform yourselves, being confronted with such an alert enemy.

Listening to Paul saying: *“... whom I delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme”* (1 Timothy 1: 20). Shows that although Paul seem to use even the devils in his work; yet the good results he gets are not the work of Satan, but of God's love for man, who uses even Satan for His purposes.

❖ God said to Satan, ***“From where do you come?”***, to condemn his ways, as though they are unknown to Him, the divine Judge! The same way He said to Adam in his sin: *“Where are you?”* (Genesis 3: 9); as though He did not know where his rebellious servant was hiding! But the one fallen, **is seen as hidden from the eyes of the Truth under sin.**

Condemning Satan, He enquires about where he is; The ways of the elect angels, on the other hand, representing God's will; and under His authority, are known to Him, **and they do not need to be asked where they are.**

❖ Satan goes to and fro on the earth; having despised the dwelling in peace in the high heaven. Saying that he walked, and not flew, refers to the burden of sin that pulls him always downward.

God talks to the angels to proclaim His will to them; whereas the angels talk to God when they contemplate in what is above their comprehension. God talks to the souls of His saints in a way, while they talk to Him in another way... We hear them in the book of Revelation: *“Crying out in a loud voice, saying, ‘how long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’... It was said to them that they should rest a little while longer”* (Revelation 6: 9-10).

God, on the other hand, talks to Satan in four ways: He condemns his oppressive ways; **He rebukes him by the righteousness of His saints**; He allows him to tempt their innocence; but sometimes restrains him from tempting them any further.

He rebukes him by the righteousness of His saints; saying: *“Have you considered My servant 'Job' that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil”* . He allowed him to test his righteousness, when he said to him: *“Behold, all what he has is in your power”*; But he restrained him by saying: *“Only do not lay a hand on his soul”* (Job 1: 12).

Pope Gregory, the Great

“Then the Lord said to Satan: ‘Have you considered My servant Job. That is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’ (Job 1: 8)

God’s talk with Satan reveals how much **He is proud of ‘Job’**. Through a mutual relationship of love between God and the true believer; 'Job' on his part says: “*Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?*” (Exodus 15: 11); “*Who is a God like Ypu, pardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?*” (Micah 7: 18). God likewise, says how much He is proud of the faith of other believers, like the centurion, and the Canaanite woman; who, strangely enough, are all Gentiles!

- ❖ Perseverance was an attribute of ‘job’, known and testified by God; and became known to men through the experience of temptation. The fruit that was once hidden inside, has been revealed and became apparent because of it¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Satan intended to enter into a controversy, not with ‘Job’, but rather with God Himself; using ‘Job’ as an issue.

The fire of envy flared in the tempter's mind, because of God’s commendation of 'Job'! Because God knows for sure that ‘Job’ would be consistent on his uprightness, He delivered him to be tempted by Satan, yet not to destroy him...

When our old enemy fails to find any evil works by which to accuse us, he concentrates on our good points, to transform them into evil: he searches among our words to find something to accuse us with; he struggles to turn the intentions of our hearts into darkness, so that, when our good deeds do not come from a good mind; they would not be seen as good in the sight of the divine Judge. In case he finds a good fruit on a green tree, he will search for a worm to corrupt the roots.

- ❖ Notice how foolish and deceitful Satan is ! Hearing God testify that ‘job’ is blameless; he intends to oppose God’s testimony!

Hearing God say: “***My servant Job***”, which in itself is enough to reveal his virtue... Satan got mad, because he counted this as a rebuke against him!

Have you not, O Satan, one day been also a servant of God?!... That is what St. Paul meant when he said: “*Do you know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?*” (1Corinthians 6: 3)

‘Job’ has reached such a stage; that made God add: “*A blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil*”. But you, O Satan, on the contrary, are not that way at all!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ "*Hast thou considered my servant Job?*"(8) At the same time, it is mean precisely that the traitor (evil) a malicious intent to those sinners who have well thought of their vices and a response his deceit.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- “***So Satan answered the lord and said; ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’***”
(Job 1: 9)

¹ On the Good of Marriage, N. & P-N Frs, vol 3, p. 409.

Satan could not hear a word of commendation directed to someone else, even if it comes from God who searches the minds and the hearts; the same way, king Saul felt, when he heard the women of Jerusalem commend young David, who saved him, his army, and his whole people, from the mighty Goliath (1 Samuel 18: 6-9); And when the high priests heard the little children praise the Lord Christ in the temple (Matthew 21; 15); etc.

- ❖ Satan is called the ‘Oppressor’, because of his false accusations against man before God, saying: “*Does Job fear God for nothing?*” ...; the same way he does against God before man, saying: “*The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep*” (Job 1: 16); with the intention to convince Job that the tribulation has come from God in heaven. Both ways, his intention was to raise animosity between the servant and his Master; but he failed¹!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ “*He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy; and will break in pieces the oppressor*” (Psalm 72: 4). Satan is rightly called the ‘Oppressor’; when he claimed that God, motivated by envy, ordered Adam and Eve not to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2); And when he said against ‘Job’: “*Does Job fear God for nothing?...Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse you to your face*” (Job 1: 8, 11). Here, he is called an ‘oppressor’, while in psalm 8, he is called, “*the enemy and the avenger*”² (Psalm 8: 2).

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

- ❖ Satan, the accuser of the saints, because he does not dare in the presence of the divine Judge, to accuse them of a false charge; he resort to something true! He who envies us because of our presence in the kingdom of heaven, from where he was driven out, says: “*Does Job fears God for nothing?*” (Job 1: 8).

It is befitting for us to love God, but not for the sake of a reward; For what kind of a reward would that be, compared to Himself?! Do not worship God in order to have something in return. God will give Himself to you to enjoy!

If you love what he has created, How much more would you love the Creator Himself? If you take away from

your heart the love for the created, and get attached to the Creator; then you can say together with the Psalmist: [I would rather be attached to my God (Psalm 72: 28)³].

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ Satan says: “*Does Job fear God for nothing?*” So, although he admits that 'Job' is indeed righteous, yet he claims that his righteousness is because of God's abundant gifts on him: He has everything,... nothing to worry about,... nothing that makes him do wrong,... he has a nice house,... all his possessions are hedged with blessings,... his children around him are like a crown over his head,... Why then, could he not be upright?... He, who has not tasted poverty, Why should he steal?!

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Arrogantly, Satan entered into a controversy against God; seeking to twist the motivation of 'Job' (Job 1: 9). This is not the tendency of Satan alone, but that of all

¹ *Resisting the Temptation of the Devil, homily 2:2.*

² *Commentary on Ps.72.*

³ *Sermons, 21: 5.*

the wicked; like the servant who said to his master: “*I knew you to be a hard man, reaping what you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed*” (Matthew 25: 24).

Yet God always tend to condemn His enemies through their own words, so as not to leave them a chance to find an excuse; according to the words of the Lord: “*Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant*” (Luke 19: 22)...

St. John Chrysostom

“*Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land*” (Job 1: 10)

Here, Satan is blaming God! **Yes, God made a hedge around him and around his household, granted him success and wealth, and blessed the work of his hands;** But all that was not out of partiality; as ‘Job’ was never slothful or lazy.

Satan's talk reveals that he tried in vain to find a gap, through which to enter into ‘Job’s heart or mind, to draw him to his kingdom.

- ❖ “*Because you have made the lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place*” (Psalm 91: 9). If you experience the hope in the Lord, and make Him your refuge, “*No evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent*” (Psalm 91: 10). You will hold fast before the spears of Satan; **they will never do you harm;** the way the divine care made a hedge around Job’s household. When the Lord allowed for Job's temptation, Satan's evil was revealed, and the just Judge crowned the victorious warrior¹.

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

- ❖ “*Have you not made a hedge around him?*” Do you notice that even Satan knows for sure that all the security enjoyed by ‘Job’ is a gift from the Lord, and not the fruit of oppression on Job's part?

“*But now, stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse you to your face*” (Job 1: 11). He must have wished to get that authority from God, but could not dare to utter such a request!

- ❖ What is God’s work, if it is not to do good to all mankind? Both by chastisement and by reward? I wish therefore, that we thank God, not only when we are in prosperity – as this is not a big deal; and is what Satan expects, when he says: “*Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side*” (Job 1: 10)².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The blessed David, knowing that when the Lord occasionally forsakes us, it would be for our own good, prayed to Him, saying: “***Do not forsake me utterly***” (Psalm 119: 8). Namely, [Knowing that You sometimes forsake your saints in order to test them;... I ask you, to forsake me, as it is good for me to be aware of my weakness; “*It is good for me to be afflicted*”; and to have the occasional chance to fight; which would not be possible as long as I am under the perpetual protection of God. Satan would never then dare to fight me, but would just complain against me and against You, saying: “*Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around everything he has?...*Yes, **I ask**

¹ Commentary on Ps. 91.

² Homilies on Ephesians, Homily 19.

You to forsake me, But “not utterly” (The Greek words: 'Not much'); in order to test the steadfastness of my love¹.

Father Daniel

- ❖ [Your words strike me hard in my chest; and make a hedge around me on every side²].

St. Augustine

“But now, stretch Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 1: 11)

In a talk by **Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh**, about the divine care, he raised the controversy by some people like Philon of Alexandria, and the Apucrites, saying: Why do most rich people live such an oppressive life? Why do not they seek justice? To which **Theodoret** answers: [You are again forgetting that man has got a free will. and you are depriving him of the glory given to him by his Creator! This is beside the fact that, in case God gives His goods only to the righteous in this life; the wicked would then find a foundation to defend themselves to by saying what their master said about Job: **“You made a hedge around them, around their households, and around everything they have; But now, stretch Your hand and touch what they have, they will curse You to Your face”³**]

St. Augustine believes that the true believer like ‘job’ is like a stretched horn; and that the temptations are like striking with a hammer. Blowing the horn produces nice voices of praise; And the hammer that strikes the non-believer, would reveal the peace and the rejoice of the believer, to justify him before the Lord⁴.

- ❖ If it is in the authority of Satan, would he not avenge himself?. When he intended to tempt ‘Job’, he asked God's permission to do so, and would never had this authority otherwise! Why then, do not you worship God without fear? without whose permission, no one can harm you; and with which, you are chastened, for your own good, but never defeated?⁵.

- ❖ Satan could envy the righteous ‘Job’. But could he harm, even one hair, or a finger nail out of him?

He could accuse him. But could he condemn him? Could he take anything away from him; without saying to God: **“Stretch out Your hand”**; ... without asking for the authority that was given to him?

The one who was tempted conquered his tempter. God who allowed Satan to tempt ‘Job’, has never forsaken his servant, but used him as a sword to overcome Satan.

The ultimate result was for the benefit of all mankind: **Man, who was defeated in paradise**, became victorious here on a heap of trash; In paradise he was defeated by Satan and a woman; And here, he defeated them both⁶!

St. Augustine

- ❖ Satan prepares the temptation; If he finds man weak, he attacks him; But if he finds him strong, he does not⁷!

¹ Cassian: conferences 4:6:2.

² Confessions, 8:1:1.

³ On Divine Providence, Discourse 6: 36.

⁴ On Ps. 98.

⁵ On Ps. 97. (96).

⁶ On Ps. 34, Discourse, 1: 7.

⁷ Homilies on Thessalonians, homily. 4.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Some falsely claim that the faithful 'Job' was supported by the divine help in his wrestling with Satan in that unique battle! But we think otherwise. If 'job' has conquered Satan, not by his own perseverance and resilience, but by the protection of God's grace; that would justify Satan's claim, saying to God: "*Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face*" (Job 1: 9-11).

But the fact that 'Job' has defeated Satan on his own, and not by the divine power, has deprived Satan of that weapon. **It is not that God's grace has forsaken 'Job'**¹, but has **given Satan the authority to tempt 'Job' within the limits of his capacity to bear it; The divine grace did not protect 'Job' in a way that would deprive him of the honor of his virtue and strife!**

But protected him through not allowing his very fierce enemy to take away his mental power, to drown his mind with thoughts more than he could bear; or to use against him such ways or weapons that are beyond his power to resist².

Father Sherimon

- ❖ The divine care mostly allows for the believer to go through afflictions; in order to reveal to others the greatness of virtue hidden in him; as was the case with the righteous 'Job'³.

St. John of Damascus

"So the Lord said to Satan: 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person'. Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1: 12)

God allowed Satan to tempt 'Job' the way He allowed him to sift the apostle Peter as wheat; but was keen that his faith should not fail (Luke 22: 31, 32); As temptations are meant to give those who manage to go successfully through them, praise, honor, and glory (1 Peter 1: 7).

The allowance by God to Satan, gives the believer some peace of mind, and the assurance that Satan would not dare to touch a believer, not even his possessions, without the permission of God. But the mighty, the loving, and the wise God, gives allowance within the limits He knows that we can bear; and for the sake of our glory, in case we are faithful.

It was said that "*Satan went out of the presence of the Lord*"; the same thing that was said about Cain (Genesis 4: 16). Evil cannot bear the presence before God; whereas the children of God would never go away from the presence before the Lord; They remain in His presence even while sleeping.

Pope Gregory the Great discerns between the will of Satan and his authority. The first is always evil, whereas his authority, allowed by God, would never imply oppression, as it is allowed by God for the sake of our justification and edification. That is why we do not marvel to read in (1 Samuel 18: 10) that "*a distressing spirit*

¹ هذا النص من ضمن النصوص التي جعلت البعض يتهمونه بالـ *Semi – pelagianism* غير أنه يظهر من المقال في مجمله أنه لا يقصد تجاهل نعمة الله وقوته. لكن خاف البعض لئلا يقتطف البيلاجيون بعض عباراته منفردة عن المقال ويعتمدون عليها في تأكيد انكاهم على أعمال الإنسان فقط..

² *Cassian: conferences 13:14:1.*

³ *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 29.*

from God came upon Saul”. Saying: “from God”, means by divine permission. According to the apostle St. Paul: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” (1 Corinthians 10: 13); And according to the Psalmist: “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me” (Psalm 26:2)

St. Augustine believes that God allows Satan to bring afflictions on his children, either to chasten them, like what He did when he delivered his people to be captivated by their enemies; or to test them to be justified, like when He allowed for the temptation of ‘Job’; or to let them be crowned with victory like what happened with the martyrs¹.

❖ Satan’s attack against ‘Job’, resulted in giving him double the glory following his conquest. Getting double as much as he lost in the present world, is a sure indication that he will be treated the same way in the heavenly places; according to the words of the apostle: “If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2: 5).

How could there be strife, if there is no opponent?

How could the greatness and splendor of daylight be evident, unless compared with the darkness of the night?

How could some be commended for their purity; unless others are condemned for their impurity.

The strong are glorified, when compared with the cowards.

Sweetness is more enjoyed, after tasting what is bitter².

The scholar Origen

❖ In the book of ‘job’ we read how Satan himself, who may seem as though he has all authority for sometime, can do nothing unless allowed by God. He may have got authority over lowly things, but has lost authority over what are greater and more exalted. His authority is not as though he can issue punishment; Because punishment has actually dwelt on him³.

❖ God allowed the tempter, not to know what He actually knows (about ‘Job’); but to let us know and follow his lead. He delivered him to the tempter who took everything away from him, including his possessions, his household, and his children; Yet ‘Job’ remained filled with God⁴.

❖ The tempter was allowed to tempt the righteous ‘Job’. He took away from him everything he has; both the inheritance, and the heirs; not gradually, but all at once by one stroke... Job might have stayed alone; **But in him remained the vows of praise, he kept saying to the Lord**⁵.

❖ Like what happened, when God responded to the request of his people, and gave them a king according to their heart – and not according to His – He also did when He granted Satan his request to tempt His servant ‘Job’, to justify him⁶.

St. Augustine

¹ On Ps. 29, Discourse, 2,6.

² On Genesis, homily 1.

³ On Ps. 26 Second Discourse, 1.

⁴ On Ps 55 (56).

⁵ On Ps. 56 (55)

⁶ Letters, 130:14:26.

- ❖ Do you see the limitation put on the temptation? Do you notice that Satan could not even dare to touch the flock, without being allowed by God?

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Satan the tempter is allowed to make war against the saints with every kind of temptation, in order to justify their love of God; which would be a witness to their benefit, when they become deprived of everything, and in need of all sensed things; they abide in their true love for God; The more Satan tries to seduce them, the more they stay unconquered, and their love for God remain unchanged.

The way Satan asked God's permission to tempt 'Job', he is still adamant on his desire to tempt everyone of us. And once he gets the permission from God, he hastens to practice his evil desire, according to the strength of his victim. **Those who are upright and steadfast in their love of God, would become justified when they see everything they may lose, as nothing, compared to their love of God¹.**

Mar Isaac the Syrian

- ❖ Authority over us is given in one of two ways: either as punishment if we err; or as glory when we are justified; like what we saw in the case of 'Job'².

Cyprian, the martyr

- ❖ **"All that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person"** (Job 1: 12), may have another meaning. God knew that His warrior is brave;... that victory is sure under all circumstances for that persistent fighter;... that the enemy will return defeated after the battle, to prepare himself for another one, to be defeated again;... and that He who faithfully follow Him will become un-comparably victorious on the defeated enemy, who is always ready for new wars.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ What is written about 'Job' is not without meaning. According to the Scripture, Satan sought God's permission to tempt him; as he can do nothing without a permission from God.

Satan said to God: "Deliver him to my hand; he will surely curse You to Your face". 'Job' is still the same; So is God; and so is Satan.

Man having comfort by grace; Grace may withdraw a little bit, to let him be delivered to Satan, who would come with thousands of evils as temptations; like despair, apostasy, evil thoughts,... etc. to torture his soul, weaken it, and to separate it from hope in the Lord³.

St. Maccari the Great

- ❖ **"Lead us not into temptations"** This prayer does not mean not to be tempted, but not to be led into temptations.

Every man committed to be tested by fire, should pray, not that fire would not touch him, but that it would not destroy him. As a vase of porcelain is tested by the oven, man is tested by 'a trail of tribulation' (Wisdom of Joshua 27; 6).

Joseph was tested by the seduction of adultery; but was not led into its temptation (Genesis 39; 7-12)

Susanna was likewise tempted, but was not led into temptation (Daniel 19: 22).

¹ *Ascetical Homilies, homily 39.*

² *Treatises, 4:26.*

³ *Sermon 26:7.*

Many believers of both sexes were so tempted, but not led into temptations.
But 'Job' was the greatest, for he admirably abided in the Lord his God¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Demons have no authority, nor power, to practice against anyone, unless allowed by God; as it happened against 'Job'; and against the herd of swine, mentioned in (Mark 5: 13)².

Father John of Damascus

- ❖ The evil spirits have no authority to harm anyone unless allowed by God; as is evident in the episode of 'Job'; and as so confessed by by them in the gospel, when they begged the Lord Jesus, saying: "*If you cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine*" (Matthew 8: 31). **Thus, if they have no authority to enter into the unclean animals, without the permission of God, how much more would it be for entering into man, who is created according to the image of God?!³.**

Father Cerinus

4- SUCCESSIVE TRIBULATIONS:

"Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house" (Job 1; 13).

- ❖ We should notice the timing, **chosen by Satan to bring about the temptation;** when Job's children were preoccupied with having fun in a feast (Job 1: 13). He not only thought about what to do, but when to do it! Although he already had the divine permission, yet he chose the right time to act. And it was God's intention to have it so mentioned for our own benefit, that **enjoying fun is a preparation for the dwelling of tribulations.**

Pope Gregory the Great

"And a messenger came to 'Job' and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them'" (Job 1: 14).

In the Septuagint version it came as: "*the donkeys with their young*". Craftily, the enemy intended to make the tribulations much more bitter; by letting them happen successively and swiftly.

"when the Sebeans raided them and took them away – indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you" (Job 1: 15).

Having got the permission, Satan found those who could help him fulfill the evil plan of their wicked father. And as the Lord Christ says: "*You are of your father the devil; and the desires of your father you want to do*" (John 8; 44); "*he is the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*" (Ephesians 2: 2)

- ❖ Do you notice the swiftness of the stroke? In one instant, 'Job' was deprived of all his possessions: his flocks were taken away; and his servants were slain with the edge of the sword!

St. John Chrysostom

Yet **St. Ambrose** confirms that many things that look evil and bad, may turn out to be for the growth of our virtues; as it happened with 'Job' in his several temptations.

¹ *Sermon on the Mount, 2:10:32.*

² *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 4.*

³ *Cassian: Conference 7:22:1.*

- ❖ Wouldn't 'Job' be less blessed, if he has not passed through those things by which he was justified?!¹.

St. Ambrose

“While he was still speaking, another came and said, ‘The fire of God came from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them,; and I alone have escaped to tell you” (Job 1: 16)

Tribulations came swiftly, like incessant successive waves “*Deep calls unto deep*” (Psalm 42: 7), with Satan's evil intention to deprive 'Job' of any chance to think soundly; and to let him be convinced that God's wrath has dwelt upon him, and would never cease.

It was amazing that all the messengers confirmed that the “*oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding*”; namely, that even the beasts were doing their duties. **No blame then would be put upon the children, the servants, or the beasts; but all the blame was to be put upon God alone!** Satan's plot was intended to strike 'Job's heart, and to direct all his thoughts and feelings to blaspheme against God.

While writing this commentary, a young man suddenly died; and his close friend started to blaspheme against God, saying: ‘Why did God take away my dearest friend?’, ‘Where is God?’, ‘Where is His mercy and care?’, refusing to hear any word of comfort! It is as though the devil, in every generation, is doing his best to let men blaspheme against God.

As the news came that the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed the servants by whom he would fight his enemies, Satan did not give 'Job' the chance to confront the 'Sebeans' to bring back his possessions;. Could he fight God? How could he reach Him?!... He has nothing left but to use his tongue to blaspheme God, as unjust and merciless!

St. John Chrysostom believes that by saying, “*The fire of God fell from heaven*”, Satan intends to convince 'Job' that what dwel upon him are not human strikes but divine ones from God, directed against him alone; with the intention to distort the image of God in his eyes! Although he committed no major sins, and was not slothful in his worship to God, the unwarranted wrath of God would make him blaspheme Him as unjust. God consumed his sheep, the best of which he used to chose to present as burnt offerings; as though He is not pleased with his sacrifices, and does not accept his worship;... or “*It is vain to serve God*” **!(Mal 3 : 14)**

Because it is not heard that fire fell from heaven since the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, 'Job' said; “*Destruction from the Lord is a terror to me*” (Job 31: 23).

- ❖ Notice how saying “*fire from God*” is as though saying to 'Job': You are suffering the wrath of Him, whom you intends to please by your many sacrifices, and whom you preoccupy yourself with serving Him every day...

Bringing back to his memory his past services, would let him feel that he is unjustly treated by God.

When a pious man finds himself carrying crosses on the hand of man, he would seek the divine comfort, and protection in the haven of his conscience; But the crafty adversary, in order to destroy the heart of that brave saint, made him face, at the same instant, strikes from man, and despair in God.

He brought to him the news of the attacks by the Sebeans, and of the fire from God that fell from heaven; in order to close completely any door for comfort.

¹ Duties of the Clergy, 2:5:20.

Pope Gregory the Great

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you” (Job 1: 17)

By that, Satan intends to confuse Job’s mind; If it is only a fire from God; ‘Job’ would probably assume that it is a divine chastisement for something wrong he might have done; But to confront human attacks at the same time; That is what he cannot interpret or justify! By that third strike by the Chaldeans, when he has lost every power to resist, ‘Job’ cried out in his heart, saying, ‘Why does God let the wicked have their ways?’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they were dead; and I alone escaped to tell you” (Job 1: 18, 19)

To fill the cup of his bitterness, Satan let ‘Job’ get the horrible news that nature itself came against him; a great wind struck the house and killed all his sons and daughters, in a way that he could not even get their horribly mutilated corpses from under the ruins! ‘Job’ was greatly confused; How could heaven and earth; God, **man, and nature, all come against him?** Why? What has he done to deserve falling under all those successive catastrophes from various sources?!

The enemy kept that most bitter of all the strokes till the end, to aim at ‘Job’'s heart the fatal arrow; that all his sons and daughters perished in an instant under the ruins. When the infant son of David fell sick, he couldn’t bear the bitterness, but kept going to and fro screaming in agony; How could it be with ‘Job’ who all of a sudden lost all his children?!

‘Job’ was in need of his children to comfort him for the losses he had; But their death, and the way they died, made him forget all his previous losses, to fall into an unbearable bitterness.

St. John Chrysostom saying as far as the previous catastrophes are concerned, there might be some justification in the words of the messenger: *“and I alone escaped to tell you!”*; But in that last one, for a servant to escape alone when all the children died under the ruins of the fallen house, in which he also lives, is something that defies logic! **St. John Chrysostom** believes that the messenger could not be anyone but, but Satan himself!

❖ Did your child die? Do not say you lost him. He has fallen asleep; he has actually departed from a worse condition to a better one!

Do not arouse the anger of God by your grief and protest; but you should rather draw His compassion; For if you bear your loss with dignity, comfort would be double for you as well as for the departed.

If you thank God, He will lift up from you the cloud of sadness; and you will say together with ‘Job’: *“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1: 21)*¹.

St. John Chrysostom

5- ‘JOB’ THE THANKFUL:

¹ Homilies on 1 Corinthians, homily 41:9.

“Then ‘Job’ arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped” (Job 1: 20)

To act otherwise, 'Job' would be counted as someone senseless and un-natural; who did not feel the loss of his children and servants. **But by such behavior, he reveals the bitterness of his soul**, in a decent and a befitting way, taking into consideration the horrible experience he faced.

That is beside the fact that such were the custom at that time. His actions do not mean that he lost his inner peace, courage, perseverance or longsuffering.

Some scholars believe that tearing the robe was a sign of rejecting blasphemy; the way the high priest did when he assumed that Lord Jesus has blasphemed against God.

Falling to the ground and worshipping, is likewise a sign of honesty with himself; feeling that he is a sinner, and that his soul has fallen down to dust.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that ‘Job’ has torn his robe and shaved his head, not only out of grief, but rather, to bare himself of everything he still has; namely, his robe and the hair on his head; to leave nothing more for the devil to tempt him with. And before the Lord, he humbly fell to the ground and worshipped.

❖ He “*worshipped*”, to show the traitor that, in vain, he speaks falsity about him before God. For there he is, the one expected, once he loses his possessions, to blaspheme (1: 11; 2: 5) and show denial, is here worshipping before to the Lord, and offering more thanksgiving than before.

❖ Some count it as an exalted level of the philosophy of steadfastness, that when they fall under harsh chastisement, they demonstrate cold and senseless reaction toward pain of strikes and scourges; While others exaggerate their reaction to them.

The prophet says: “*You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; you have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction*” (Jeremiah 5: 3); And in contradiction, the psalmist says: “*They will not be steadfast in tribulation*” (Psalm 140: 10 The Volgata); As they would be steadfast in tribulation, if they bear it with perseverance.

❖ It was the custom in the old days, for man to keep his natural appearance, by letting his hair grow, to cut it off in the time of grief.

Having lost everything in his tribulation; that saintly man, realizing that Satan, his adversary, would have no authority to tempt him without allowance from God, did not say: ‘The Lord gave, and Satan has taken away’; As it would be a sad thing, if what the Creator gives is taken away by the enemy! But, He, who takes away is none other than He who has given; He took back what is His, and not what is ours. All what we use here in our present life comes from Him; So why should we grieve, when we give Him back what we have borrowed from Him, through His generosity?

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ What a courage of ‘Job’, that surpasses all what we were told! What a humility! What a love for God!

If the enemy thinks that ‘Job’ does not care for oxen, or give value to donkeys or camels; Or that his possessions are all of no importance to him; How did he assume that the horrible grief for the death of his sons and daughters would not bring him down to the ground?

How could he bear, after being a father to so many children, to have no one to call him ‘father’?

How could he not say to God: ‘What grave sins have I committed, to be counted unworthy of embracing the bodies of my dead children; of giving them the honor to be buried in a grave; of getting the comfort of shedding tears for them; or of leading a decent funeral procession for them, as is the custom of fathers?!

Therefore, I wish you do not get furious when you lose possessions, get deprived of temporal honors, or be separated from children or fathers.

Wish you do not get confused, when you lose any of these according to the law of nature!

As long as you are not deprived of your true wealth; namely, of your ability to praise God, which makes you strong enough to challenge all events.

Would a servant complain if asked to give back the talents left with him by his master? (Matthew 25: 19).

Or if he takes a loan, would he be disturbed to give it back?

Yes, when we give back what is not our own; I wish we would thank God, when He gives, as well as when He takes away.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **“Then ‘Job’ arose and tore his robe and shaved his head” (20).** Do not think, O brethren, that this is a sign of defeat; for it is rather a sign of victory. **He never showed a kind of shock;** but he truly showed himself a wise and pious father. He was not grieved by the loss of his children and beasts, as much as for the way he lost them. Who would not collapse before such events? Who is the man of iron who would not be affected by them?

The apostle Paul had such feelings, when he was confronted with the grief of his followers at his departure, and admirably said: *“What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart?”* (Acts 21: 13). Here ‘Job’ also is worthy of admiration, because, before such devastating circumstances, he reacted with a most befitting way.

The prophet Moses broke the two tablets of the law; and Joshua tore his clothes (Exodus 32: 15-20; Joshua 7: 6). If ‘Job’ did not tear his robe, it would be said that God created him with unnatural sensation; but he received the same sufferings that normally dwell on the righteous, to let you realize that he was committed to be wise even in his grief.

❖ So as not to think that tearing his robe implied blasphemy, or that he was in a state of anger because of the painful events **“He fell to the ground and worshipped” (20).** Listen to what he said: **“...Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there” (21).**

Notice how, by doing that, he proclaimed the words of the apostle: *“We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”* (1 Timothy 6: 7).

Notice how his words which he uttered, served, not just him, but us as well.

These possessions, after all, Are they mine?

Have I created them?! This wealth; Is it not just a deposit? Was it with me when I came to the world, and will it be when I depart from it?!

That is why God created us naked from the beginning; And that is why He made us prone to death.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ When ‘Job’s children died, all he could do was to show his natural fatherly emotions, by tearing his robe, falling to the ground, and worshipping, saying:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord” (20)

¹.

St. Jerome

“He said: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1: 21)

The Holy Book did not mention any praise uttered by Adam or Eve, when they were in paradise enjoying all those exalted gifts and blessings. But it did mention this short praise uttered by ‘Job’, that surpasses many others; a praise that brings pleasure to the heart of God, and the hearts of the heavenly creatures; a praise that will remain engraved, as though on a rock, for the generations to sing, and for mankind to find by it divine comfort along the generations. We would not have enjoyed such life of inner joy in the psalms, if the prophet David has not been a man of suffering; And we would not have sung the praise of the three saintly young men, if they were not cast in the fire.

By saying what he said, ‘Job’ proclaims his return to his origin; according to the words of the wise Solomon: *“The dust will return to the earth as it was”* (Ecclesiastes 12: 7); and according to the Latin proverb: ‘No one can reach a condition of utter poverty, worse than that when he was born’.

Job’s faithfulness was contrary to what claimed by Satan; Instead of blaspheming God, he blessed Him; confessing the divine care, whatever were the afflictions that dwelt upon him.

He did not say: [The Lord gave, and the Sabians and the Chaldeans have taken away]; Nor said: [The Lord gave me, and the Lord made me poor]; but said that He, who gave, has the right to take away. He lost nothing that is his own; for everything he had, including even his children, were God’s, His gifts!

He blessed God who gave; and blessed Him who has taken away; If those gifts stayed with him for some time, It was out of God’s love; and because God, the wise, the loving, and the mighty, knows what is for our edification, and how much of it is enough for our benefit; That is why, even taking it away is surely for our own good.

- ❖ We should follow the example of the righteous 'Job'. When the messengers came to him, one after another, bringing the unbearably horrible news of the death of his children; he did not scream, and did not even sigh, but resorted to praying and thanksgiving².
- ❖ ‘Job’ not only refrained from blaspheming, but he blessed; He did not only bore his great loss in dignity and silence, but he glorified God; not only then, but also for the future.
- ❖ If we practice such a spiritual wisdom (the perpetual thanksgiving), we shall never experience any evil; Even if we fall under limitless suffering; our benefit will surpass our loss; and the good, will prevail over the evil. **By uttering such words like those uttered by ‘Job’, we would draw God's mercy toward us; He would protect us against the tyranny of Satan; The instant we utter such words, he would soon flee before us³!**

¹ Letters, 117 to Julian, 2.

² Concerning the Status, 16:2.

³ Paralytic Let Down through the Roof, 8.

❖ When ‘Job’ was surrounded by wealth, it was not apparent to many what kind of man he was. But once he tore his clothes, cast them away, and set forth to wrestle for the sake of piety, he astonished all those who saw him; Even the hosts of angels cried out, when they saw how steadfast his soul was; and commended him, having got the crown. Those who did not notice him when he was rich, and did so when he appeared naked on the stage of this world, have testified to him; not because he was deprived of everything, but because of the perseverance with which, in his struggle, he sustained his weaknesses¹.

❖ **“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away” (21)**. Notice how he believed that it was the Lord who has taken away... What could be compared to that?! He did not, even for the sake of knowledge, ask: Why did God give me; and why did he take?!

“Blessed be the name of the Lord” (21). Notice how he enjoyed comfort.

It is God who decides. You may ask why did He decide that way? **As I did not ask why He made me rich; I do not want to know why He is making me poor.** Has He given me because of worthiness on my part? Was it because of good things I did? It was His decision to give; And it is His decision now to take.

It is a sign of piety, not to seek an account from Him; nor an explanation for what He does.

❖ It is a great thing to give Him thanks with great joy; Yet, doing that out of fear is something; and giving it while being grieved is something else. That is how ‘Job’ did when he thanked God... No one could claim that he was not sad and deeply moved by what happened to him; No one can deprive him of commendation on his righteousness. **Satan would do us harm; not by taking away what we have, and making us penniless; but by succeeding to make us blaspheme God².**

❖ ‘Job’ was crowned, and became famous; not because he was not broken down by the limitless tribulations he suffered; and despite his wife’s opposition; But because he remained thankful to the Lord in all situations; Not only when he was rich, but when he became poor as well; Not only when he was healthy, but when his body was covered with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; Not only when those things happened to him gradually, but when a violent storm swept away his household as well as his person³.

❖ Satan intends, not just to take away our riches, because he knows well that all these are of little true value; but to commit us to utter blasphemy; As he did to the righteous ‘Job’, whom he strived, not just to make him poor, but to turn him into a blasphemer⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Although he was counted as one of the richest people; But **the temptation he went through proved that his only most precious possession was God⁵.**

St. Maccari the Great

❖ Praise God on the guitar, when you have an abundance of earthly possessions; And **present to Him thanksgiving when you are in need, or has been deprived of**

¹ Concerning Statues, homily 1:18.

² J. A. Crammer, ed. *Catena in Epistolas Catholicass. Oxford 1840, 35.*

³ On Ps 111.

⁴ Homilies on Hebrews, homily 20:8.

⁵ Sermon 5: 7.

what you had. Play joyfully on the guitar, because you were not deprived of the Giver, even if you are deprived of the gift He gave you. I repeat, Play joyfully, and in complete confidence in your God; Play joyfully on the strings of your heart; Let your voice loudly sound, together with the righteous 'Job', saying: "***The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away***"¹.

- ❖ Let Him take what He has given; Let Him bare me of everything I have; But let me keep Him, Himself. What would I lose, if I acquire God? Or what would be the benefit if I have everything, but do not acquire God²?
- ❖ He could have said: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; because what He took away, He can give again, and much more. He did not say just that; but he also said: [**Let Him do** what seem fit in his sight. What would please Him, will please me. **I wish what would please the good God, does not grieve the submitting servant; What would please the physician, would not grieve the patient**³.
- ❖ Where from have those jewels praising God come? Could his lips utter such jewels, unless there is a treasure hidden in his heart?⁴.
- ❖ What an inner wealth that no thief can approach! God has given him Himself⁵.
- ❖ You may take what I have; but not what lie inside me. He will never become poor, he, who says: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Let Him do what is fitting in His sight. Blessed be the name of the Lord*"⁶.
- ❖ All the riches of this world, is a wealth of oppression, whatever its source is. If we want the true riches, it would be different. When 'Job' became naked and lost everything, his heart was full of divine things, he poured praises, as the most precious jewels he could offer his God⁷.
- ❖ Hearing this, direct your hearts toward God; and do not deceive yourselves!
Whether you love this world or not, Learn to let it go before your eyes, before you go yourselves. What does it mean to let it go? Do not let your hearts attach to it!
When you have something that you will eventually lose, whether while you are still living, or after death, Let it go, as it would never be with you forever.
Prepare yourselves for God; Hold fast to Him, He, whom you cannot lose. If there is a chance to lose the temporal things; say: "***The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away***"⁸.
- ❖ 'Job' worshipped God and loved Him for His own sake; and not because He gave him what he needs. When the fire of temptation approached him, it found him gold and not chaff; It cleansed him of impurities, and did not turn him into ashes⁹.
- ❖ If you happen to err, you may grieve for losing your inner treasure. You may have nothing in your house; but your heart may be more empty. In case your heart is full of goodness, full of your God; why don't you say: "***The Lord gave, and the Lord***

¹ On Ps. 32, Discourse, 2: 5.

² On the Creed, 10.

³ On the Creed, 10.

⁴ On Ps. 30, Discourse, 4, 12.

⁵ On Ps. 56 (55).

⁶ Sermons on N.T. lessons. 57:9.

⁷ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 63:4.

⁸ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 76:11.

⁹ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 41:4.

has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord'. What would grieve God? Would they the strokes; He Himself was stricken! ¹.

- ❖ What jewels of praise to glorify God, he has brought out of his inner treasures! That is his wealth! ².
- ❖ What a sweet and brave voice! Who cannot wake up to such a voice? Who does not trust God, to walk to battle against Satan with no fear; to fight him, not with his own power, but with that of the One who justifies him ³.

St. Augustine

- ❖ How can I be qualified to be in the company of 'Job'? When I cannot bear the regular tribulations with thanksgiving? ⁴.
- ❖ It is **obvious that virtues come to be our possessions**, when they are practically woven in our nature. They would never forsake us during our strife on this earth; unless we drive them away with our free will; through opening the door for iniquity to enter.

They would evaluate those who have them among the rank of angels; and would shine forever in the sight of the Creator.

But as far as wealth, authority, pleasure, and all such idiocies, are concerned; that grow daily because of our foolishness; they have not entered with us into this life, and will not go accompany us when we depart from it. The words of that righteous man: "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there*" (Job 1: 21), are truly sound and steadfast and apply for every man ⁵.

- ❖ Among the old and contemporary personalities, every one is supposed to enjoy a certain success, having got a particular virtue: 'Job', got the perseverance, that hold fast in tribulations; Moses and David got meekness; Samuel got prophecy; Penehas got jealousy; Peter and Paul got zeal in preaching (Galatians 2: 7) ; and the sons of Zebedee got eloquency, to be called 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3: 17) ⁶.

St. Gregory the Nezinian

- ❖ It was like a scream he uttered, saying: [God intended for me, for a long time to be a 'father'; Then intended to take away this crown from me. I should not oppose him in what concern Him. What He sees fitting in His sight, let it be realized. He is the Creator of my children; And I am just a tool in His hand. Then why, should I, the servant, surrender to a useless grief, and a bitter complaint, against a decision, which I cannot alter? By such words, 'Job' cast his enemy to the ground ⁷.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ Have you seen the arrows aimed by the traitor?

Have you seen how the enemy got confused to see 'Job' unmoved by those events; how he listened to the evil talks falling upon him, as though they were addressed to someone else; like a rock unscathed by the waves striking it.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ On Ps. 38 (37).

² On Ps. 69 (68).

³ On Ps. 98 (Latin 97).

⁴ The Long Rules, Preface.

⁵ On Detachment.

⁶ On the death of his Father, 24.

⁷ On Detachment.

- ❖ When man bears God's ordinance with perseverance; and say when he loses something: "***The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken...***"; he would gain a crown, for his perseverance that pleases God, if he is righteous; and forgiveness, if he is a sinner¹.
- ❖ A righteous man suffering from a material loss, is both rich although naked; just like 'Job', **who lost everything given to him by God, but acquired God Himself who gave them to him**².

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ Ending everything he said by blessing the Lord, 'Job' clothed the enemy with shame; Satan who has been originally created in blessing, before he rebelled against the Lord. Whereas that mortal man, by uttering a praise of glory, even while under chastisement... he aimed many arrows to the chest of his enemy, and inflicted him with wounds, more bitter than those he himself suffered. Through his tribulation, he might have lost the earthly things; while by his humble endurance, he got back double heavenly blessings.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The Holy Book says: "*We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*" (1 Timothy 6: 7). Those who seek wealth, fell into several worthless lusts. The disciple who became a traitor, and perished for the sake of a little miserable price, is an obvious proof of this fact³.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ We are our own masters; we can harm ourselves, or otherwise... Loosing all your treasures, although a truly sad thing to happen; yet, **it is up to you to turn the situation, either into a loss or into a gain**. You may say: How could it be a gain? If you so wish, it would be a great gain; And if you do not, your loss would be more severe than what is taken away from you. Like a clever artist, who wisely uses the raw material before him to produce something good; whereas the less clever, would corrupt the same material, and turns the work into a shameful loss. **You would do like the first one, if you give God thanks; If you refrain from weeping bitterly; and If you utter the words of 'Job': "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away...*"**⁴.
- ❖ Who can bear to see his only child lying down a lifeless corpse? He would needs a soul as solid as steel. By doing without the natural sighing, and by uttering instead, the words of 'Job': "***The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away***", such a man would stand together with Abraham himself, and with 'Job', and would be proclaimed as a conqueror. If he stops the women from wailing; If he scatters the mourning men, and leads them instead to praise the glory of God; he would gain limitless awards, would be admired by people, **commended by angels, and crowned by God**⁵.
- ❖ These are the words of a living soul, that achieves her befitting role⁶.

¹ Sermons, 54: 4.

² Sermons, 114: 6.

³ Commentary on Luke, homily 40.

⁴ Homilies on Thessalonians, homily. 3.

⁵ Homilies on 2 Corinthians, homily 1:6.

⁶ Homilies on 2 Corinthians, homily 7:4.

- ❖ Let us suppose that someone has lost a son, and another has lost all his possessions... Both can acquire fruition from these tribulations, even though they cannot change them; by enduring the situations with dignity; And instead of uttering words of blasphemy, they give thanks to the Lord. By such behavior, the evils they face against their will, would turn into good works through their own will¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Because God is good; all what He does has to be good.
Did he decide to let me lose my husband? Well, I shall mourn my loss; Yet, I shall submit to His decision.

Did He choose to take away my only son? It is a painful strike; Yet it could be endured; Because He who takes is the One who gave.

In case I lose my eye-sight, I shall be comforted by my friend's reading to me.

And if I become deaf; I shall be spared hearing the evil gossip, and my thoughts will concentrate on God alone².

St. Jerome

“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1: 22)

This is a living testimony presented to us by the Holy Spirit, about Job's good reaction at the time of affliction. He passed through the temptation with great success.

St. John Chrysostom believes that the expression “*nor charge God with wrong*” implies that ‘Job’ did not charge God with oppression, counted what befell him as by mere chance, nor protested that he did nothing wrong to warrant such tribulations; of all these thoughts that normally come to some, when tempted, while they see others enjoy an abundance of temporal blessings.

- ❖ Satan consistently fought ‘Job’; Yet he could have no conquest over the warrior of God.

He emptied his bag of arrows; but could not wound that brave fighter.

He created mighty waves, but could not move the steadfast rock.

He used all his tricks, but could not bring down the sturdy tower.

He shook the tree, but could not destroy the fruit.

He broke the branches, but could not harm the root.

He managed to break through the wall, but could not carry the treasure away.

Now I can say that Job's treasure was not gold or silver, but was that man's faith which Satan intended to break down, by arousing unprecedented tribulations against him... Now you can see how God was glorified, and how Satan was disgraced³.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ Satan and his angels failed to conquer ‘Job’, who stood firm, and whose faith never faltered⁴.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Notice how it is said that, while temptation brought 'Job' to a more exalted position; it brought David down to the ground. That is why, while the virtues of our predecessors would strengthen our hope; their falling down, on the other hand,

¹ *The Epistle to the Romans, homily 9.*

² *Letter 39: 2.*

³ *Sermons, 131: 1.*

⁴ *On Ps, 12.(v. 5).*

would make us more cautious; And while, the former would lift us up to joy; the later would fill us with fear.

- ❖ ***“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (22).*** He did not utter any foolish word, and kept his tongue from transgression. Saying that he *“did not sin”*, implies that he did not even harbor any angry thought or an unspoken protest.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Thank God, and praise Him, when He tests you by fire; Praise and do not blaspheme; the way that righteous man expressed himself¹.
- ❖ That was the way ‘Job’ offered the sacrifice of praise, despite those horrible sorrows, beyond human endurance, that dwelt over him².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *On Ps 128.*

² *On Ps. 50.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB'1

A PRAISE AMID AFFLICTION

- ❖ Grant me, by Your grace, O Lord, to enjoy spiritual riches.
Let me be blameless in Your sight; You, who refer foolishness to Your angels.
Count me as upright, by the work of Your Spirit in me.
Nail Your fear in my heart; to live in piety.
Shine Your light in me.
To walk no more in the darkness of evil.
- ❖ Grant Your church to become like Job's household.
Let all her days be feasts and incessant spiritual banquets.
Let her features show brotherly love, and accordance without dissension.
Let her play the symphony of love that brings joy to the heavenly creatures.
In the midst of my joy, let me never forget the sacrifice of Your cross.
Let me pray for my brethren beside my lowly self.
Lest, in ignorance or in knowledge, I may sin against You.
- ❖ Let Satan complain against me before You.
I am always protected under the shadow of Your wings
No one supports me but You.
- ❖ Let Satan deprive me of everything.
But, as long as I acquire You, he will never be able to draw me away from You.
You are my wealth, my happiness, and my fulfillment in everything.
- ❖ Amid affliction my soul gives You thanks and praise.
Because my heart is lifted up to You;
It has no other place in this world.
Nor the world has a place in it.

CHAPTER 2

A NEW ROUND OF TEMPTATIONS

If the angels, the sons of God, appear before God longing to serve Him in His beloved mankind; the devil, as well, would not stand tight-handed, but would go to and fro on earth, declaring war against God in humanity.

In the first chapter, the author presented the first round of the battle between Satan and 'Job', in which 'Job' ended up victorious. Now, the devil persists on entering a new round; in which he keeps aiming his arrows against the children of God, even if these arrows get back at him.

The first temptation touched Job's possessions, his sons, and his daughters. Now it is going to touch his whole body except for his tongue. Moreover, Satan used Job's wife the way he previously used Eve in paradise to seduce Adam. And finally he used Job's friends who came to comfort him.

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4- Job's three friends come to comfort him.	11-12

1- ENTERING A NEW ROUND OF TEMPTATIONS:

; and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord (Job 2: 1)

The enemy came to get a permission for more temptations against 'Job', more severe and more bitter; As the great dragon "*accuses mankind before the Lord day and night*" (Revelation 12: 10).

❖ "*Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*" (1). Why does the author persist on presenting their coming before the Lord in this way again and again?

It is for us to realize that no event escapes the divine care; that the angels give an account of the events of every day; and that every day they are sent to accomplish certain tasks, something we may not realize this; as for this purpose they are created; according to the words of the apostle Paul: "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*" (Hebrew 1: 14).

Now you can see why the angels came; But did he (Satan) come? He came to get the permission to consummate his mission to tempt 'Job' once more.

Besides, He had to be questioned in the presence of the angels; on account that he dared to say to the Lord in front of them: "*He will curse You to Your face*" (Job 1: 11). What a shame! How could he dare to show his face again among them?

St. John Chrysostom

"And the Lord said to Satan: 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the lord and said: 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it'" (Job 2: 2)

His answer came exactly like he did the last time; as though he did not harm anyone; and as though it is his right to do whatever he likes to everybody. But he does not admit that he did anything wrong!

❖ Satan intended by his temptation to bring 'Job' to death; But 'Job', through it, gained more growth in his life; **Although, being defeated in the first round caused much grief to our old enemy, yet he prepared himself to direct new**

attacks against ‘Job’. As the evil one cannot believe in the existence of good, even if it is proved to him through his own experience; He dared to accuse him again.

“From where do you come?” (2). it is as though God says to him: [See, You are defeated by one man, despite the weakness in his body; then you dare to stand before Me, the Creator of all].

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **“So Satan answered”.** This means that he was allowed to open his mouth to speak, and answered, saying: [I have elaborately covered the whole earth, set my snares everywhere; and set my traps all over the earth. Although very one got fed up with them; yet there is no way out of my captivity.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Notice how **Satan walks back and forth every moment on the earth!** The prophet Zechariah tells us that the angels, as well, walk to and fro throughout the earth (Zechariah 1: 10-11); that miserable creature, Satan, persists on walking to bring upon himself more and more condemnations; and for us to be more cautious and alert. That is why he is called: *“The ruler of the darkness of this age”* (Ephesians 6: 12).

Speak up, O Satan, What have you done?

He answers: *“From going to and fro on earth”* And here I am!

What have you achieved?

As he achieved nothing good, he did not answer!

St. John Chrysostom

“Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil. And still he holds fast to integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause’” (Job 2: 3)

Again, the divine Judge Himself comes to the defense of the accused and to commend him.

❖ There was no way that the Just Judge would not utter those words; as He was indeed incited against 'Job' without cause. But because He is both just and is the Truth, He does both things: He does justice, and utters the truth. Yet we can say that 'Job' was **not struck without cause**; for, without the temptations he went through, others would not get such an example of virtue and perseverance.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ 'Job' was not shaken; and did not retreat from the steadfastness of his faith¹.

St. Augustine

❖ **Pope Gregory the Great**, believes that 'Job' symbolizes the Person of the Lord Christ who accepted the passion (**the wrath**) without cause; and suffered without cause; Yet as a Savior and a redemptive Intercessor for us, He suffered with a cause; namely, to purify us of our sins by His blood.

❖ Why is he resuming the attack? What should we learn from this? Even if we fall a thousand times, Satan will keep on attacking us, but will not hesitate to go on fighting.

S. John Chrysostom

¹ On Ps. 13 (12).

“So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has, he will give for his life’” (Job 2: 4)

This proverb, well-known in the old days of ‘Job’; to express that man evaluates his own life above every other thing in the world, has several interpretations.

It might refer to an old custom by which a hungry hunter exchanges or even gives up all the skins of animals he caught, for food to save his life. That proverb expresses that man would accept all losses, to avoid losing what is greater; namely, his own life. And according to a Turkish proverb, ‘It is fitting for us to give up even our beard to save or life’¹.

Satan intended to crush ‘Job’s personality by saying: *“Skin for skin”*. He meant that man does not care for whatever losses, even if it comes to his own children, as long as he personally is healthy, and nothing touches his skin; But he would get mad, and loses his faith and mind, if someone touches his skin. He is own skin; like an ostrich that treats her young as though they are not her own. He is naturally selfish, and is only preoccupied with his health, comfort, and the safety of his own body.

❖ By saying that, Satan means that man’s only interest is himself, and everything else is of secondary importance... Based on this principle, he intends to catch him.

Let us, brethren, not be ashamed to learn even from Satan; that it is befitting, and only natural for man, to give up everything for the sake of his life; And that, as long as wealth does not represent much importance, let us then give it up for the sake of our life.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Notice how our adversary is crafty, and violent in sin;... how he can discern between the outer and the inner aspects of things. He knows that even the philosophers of this world, call the outer aspects ‘adiafora’; namely, of no value; and how they believe that the perfect virtue is not set upon the existence or the loss of those outer aspect; that the inner ones are of more value; and their loss may cause unavoidable distress. That is why, he dared to contradict God, and proclaimed that ‘Job’ is not at all worthy of any commendation by God; as he was not exposed to a temptation that touches his own skin, but only touches what is outside him; and that he was ready to give his skin instead of those of his children; and his wealth to guarantee his own health².

St. Jerome

“But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 2: 5)

Satan asked God to stretch His hand to strike Job’s bone and flesh; for the thorn in the flesh is extremely painful to endure without the grace of Christ (2 Corinthians 12: 7-9).

“So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life’” (Job 2: 6)

This phrase *“Spare his life”* could be understood that the temptation should be only within limits, and not meant to destroy him. In other words, temptations are meant to reveal man’s weakness; lets him be humble before God, and keeps him from being haughty; But if it surpasses the limit of man’s endurance, he would probably

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 207- 208.

² Letters, 118:3.

end up falling into despair and depression, and his soul would perish because of loss of faith.

By saying, “*Spare his life*”, the Lord puts limitation to temptation; namely, not to reach up to death; For He knows for sure that Satan, after leading him to blasphemy, might intend to kill his victim at one of the moments of his weakness.

Some interpret the phrase “*Spare his life*”, as ‘**Spare his mind**’; namely God allowed Satan to tempt ‘Job’ through the ailments of the body, but not through any loss of his mind.

St. John Chrysostom comments on this phrase, by drawing our attention to the extent of Satan's weakness.

Although he is like a fierce beast with no body; yet he could not approach to tempt a human being with a body, except by permission from God.

❖ “*Spare his life*”; namely, ‘Do not kill him’. We understand from this, that Satan’s authority is conditioned by permission and denial; moreover, the expression “*Spare his life*” is stronger than ‘Do not kill him’.

❖ Therefore you should not fear Satan, even when he has no body, as he approaches your body; for there is no one weaker than him; and there is no one stronger than his brave and daring victim, even though he carries a body prone to death!¹.

St. John Chrysostom)

❖ God told the enemy “*Behold, he is in your hand*” (2: 6); namely, the same person is in the hand of God, and in the hand of Satan as well.

But, how could it be said to Satan “*Spare his life*”; when his intention is always to destroy? Sparing life implies not daring to destroy it. When we pray to God the Father, saying: “**Do not lead us into temptation**”; God leads nobody into temptation; but covers everyone with His mercy, to protect them from temptation. If He does not protect us from the seductions of temptation, He would be as though leading us into it.

By keeping us from being tempted beyond our endurance, He is as though keeping us from falling into the snares of temptation. It is said to Satan to “**spares our life**”, when he is committed not to overcome us by his temptation.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Now, I give you the right to turn everything for him upside down; ... I deliver him into your hand (2: 6); Yet not to change his spirit (his mind), to have authority on his will, or to break down his freedom of decision; Because if you do that, you would easily overcome him; and it would be an unfair battle ... You surely wish to approach the life of a righteous man; But you cannot do that, for fear of coming under the law of the great King; the Guardian of the flock, who would never forsake them to the mercy of the wolf! I deliver to your hand the life of those you envy; yet not to do with them as you wish, but to act within my laws, and with the fear of my will.

I set you as his keeper, and I will hold you responsible, and will condemn you if you set a trap for his life.

❖ This protective measure goes hand in hand with the permission to strike; The divine ordinance would be realized through protection; While seeming to forsake His elect servant, He is keeping him... He delivered His saint in the hand of the

¹ *Resisting the Temptation of the Devil, homily 2:4.*

adversary (Job 2: 6); while his soul is kept in the hand of God; As he is among the flock about whom, the divine Truth says in the gospel: “*No one shall snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10: 28)

Moreover, about ‘Lucifer’, Isaiah says: “*O Lucifer, son of the morning*”; then directly adds, “*You are cut down to the ground*” (Isaiah 14: 12); referring to that he would never restore his past honor. By falling from heaven to earth, he intended to destroy man; **yet God gives those who are not deceived, the authority to trample over the traitor by their feet, and to break him down to pieces.**

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The unclean spirit has no authority over men; which is obvious from his struggle against the righteous ‘Job’. God gave him the authority over his body ; saying to him: “***Behold, he is in your hand; but spare his life***” (2: 6); namely, ‘Do not weaken his spirit, make him mad, or control his memory and his mind; strangling his inner capacities’¹.

Fathere Cerinus

- ❖ The body of that righteous man was delivered into the hand of Satan ; Yet he was denied his mental capacities. Because the sin resulting from the misuse of those capacities would stay at his door; not out of his desire to commit it, as much as having lost the balance of his mind².

St. Jerome

St. **Ambrose** presents to us a wonderful interpretation of this phrase, in his talk about St. Paul following the lead of God:

- ❖ “*He whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son He receives*” (Hebrew 12: 6). Yet in chastening him, according to the Scripture: “*The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death*” (Psalm 118: 18).

The apostle St. Paul teaches us not to forsake those who commit a sin to death; but we should commit them to the bread of tears (of repentance). Yet their grief should within reason, as is meant by saying: “*I let them drink tears with measure*” (Psalm). Their grief should be within limit; lest the repentant would be swallowed by extreme grief. As the apostle said to the Corinthians: “*What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of gentleness?*” (1 Corinthians 4: 21). He uses the rod, yet without cruelty; according to the Scripture: “*You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell*” (Proverbs 23: 14).

What the apostle means by the rod is revealed in his condemnation of the sin of adultery (1 Corinthians 5: 1); warning against sexual immorality with relatives, whom man is not allowed to marry; rebuking those who got puffed up instead of being grieved; And about the one who was caught guilty of that sin, he commanded that has to be separated from the congregation. And be delivered to Satan; not for the perdition of his soul, but for that of his flesh.

In this, Paul is following the lead of the Lord who denied Satan the authority over Job's spirit , but allowed him to touch his flesh (Job 2: 6). Paul delivered the sinner, not to the perdition of the spirit, but to that of the flesh; namely, "for the serpent to lick the dust of his body" (Micah 7: 17).

Let us now meditate in St. Paul's words. He said that the man guilty of that horrible sin should be delivered to the devil for the perdition of the flesh; namely, to

¹ St. Cassian: Conferences 7:12:3.

² Letters, 118:3.

be delivered to the one who tempts us through bringing ailments to our bodies; like what he did when he struck the blessed 'Job' with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; having been allowed by God, who said to him; "*Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life*" (2: 6). The same thing St. Paul did, when he commanded the sinner to be delivered to the devil for the perdition of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5: 5).

How great is this authority!! And how great is this gift; through which Satan destroys him by himself. By provoking him to tempt man, he is actually making him stronger in spirit. The weaker his body becomes, the stronger his spirit grows; for the weakness of the body resists sin; whereas the enjoyment of pleasure flares up its fire.

Satan is deceived through wounding himself by the strokes he inflicted upon himself; through fighting against himself by his intention to weaken the sinner. By wounding 'Job', Satan has actually provided him with stronger weapons. Inflicting him with painful boils made him more capable of enduring the strokes of Satan, without getting affected by his poison; according to the Lord's own words: "*Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook... Will you play with him as with a bird. Or will you leach him for your maidens... Lay your hand on him*" (Job 41: 5).

Notice how Paul ridicules satan; to make him look like the child mentioned in the prophecy, who put his hand on the serpent, and was not harmed. He drew him out of his hiding place, and turned his venom into a spiritual medication against venoms; turned the venom intended to destroy the body, into a cure for the spirit.

Therefore, I will let the serpent strike everything earthly in me (in my body); I will let it bite my body, and turn it blue; to be told by the righteousness about me: "*Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life*" (Job 2: 6).

How amazing is the might of God! He delivers the keeping of man's soul into the hand of Satan who intends to destroy him!!... Through His commandments, the Lord made Satan the keeper of His flock... Against his own will, Satan became an executioner of the commandments of heaven; And despite his cruelty, he abides to the commandments of meekness!¹.

St. Ambrose

2- ANOTHER ADAM IN THE MIDST OF THE ASHES:

"Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2: 7).

As soon as he got the divine permission, Satan hastened to strike Job's body with a terrible sickness, he did not inflict him with just one boil, or even a few, but "*with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head*" (7); which made him unable to walk, sit, or stand, or even to lie down on his side, back, or belly. His whole body except for his tongue, was covered with painful boils. Even the stray dogs, that licked the sores of poor Lazarus (Luke 16: 21), refrained from licking Job's boils;.

The scholar Origin comments on the divine promise: "*If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give heed to his commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians*" (Exodus 15: 26), one of which was the boils; So why was it brought upon 'Job'? The boils of the heathen Egyptians were

¹ On Repentance.

spiritual; namely, their weaknesses toward the world, and everything in it; of which I pray to God to heal us; and to keep away from us¹.

“All things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8; 28).

The righteous ‘Job’ was tempted by all things: In an instant he lost his sons and daughters, his house, his servants, and all his possessions; he is no longer a father, nor a master; he no longer has one single sound member in his body, except for his tongue. ***struck job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” (Job 2: 7).***

Notice how the tempter left only Job's tongue; because by it, he may probably blaspheme against the Lord his God. Yet, ***“In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2: 10).***

Contemplate in the greatness of his virtue. Contemplate how the saying of the apostle was realized in him: “All things work together for good for those who love God”.... Contemplate in the fact that, before the temptation, God never spoke to ‘Job’; whereas after it, God came to him, and spoke to him like a friend!

I wish all tribulations would come upon me; as long as the Lord Christ will come to me once they happen².

St. Jerome

❖ It is probably because my Creator knows that I am much too weak to endure, He did not give Satan authority upon my body; although I wish He does. Although I present myself, ready to receive a temptation in my body, Yet God does not count me worthy of this honor; although He tempted me with several other kinds of minor temptations. ‘Job’, on the other hand did not start, but ended with that kind of temptation³.

St. Ambrose

“And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes” (Job 2: 8).

What is this ‘potsherd’ (a broken piece of pottery), with which he scraped his itching boil-covered body, **but the use of earthly temporal ways to heal the soul.** Instead of using true comforts and real cures, a person uses a potsherd that may cause more inflammation to his boils, and could bring upon the body fatal infection. By attempting to treat our spiritual ailments by human ways, away from the grace of God, we may end up with more destruction to our souls.

‘Job’ became a symbol of the Lord Christ; he had nowhere to lay his head; and had to lie down with his boil-covered body on ashes; mocked even by his friends. The same way, the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head; and had nothing but to rise on the cross with all the passions in his body; rejected by His own (John 1; 11).

Like ‘Job’ who did not ascend a mountain, **but sat on ashes**, to enjoy his conquest over Satan, glorifying the Lord his God; So also our Lord Christ, the Savior of the world, found comfort in the humble, and the contrite of heart, to set out of them a temple for Himself. ***“He has chosen the foolish of the world to put to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are” (1 Corinthians 1: 27-28).***

¹ Cf. On Exodus, homily 7.

² On Ps., homily 6.

³ Epistle 20 to his sister, 16.

‘Job’ found no one to have compassion on him, nor to bandage or to anoint his wounds and boils; his friends probably could not bear the awful smell of his rotting sores. Finding no piece of cloth by which to cleanse his wounds, he had to use a potsherd to scrape them; giving him more painful than the sickness itself. He finally proclaimed: “*My flesh is caked with worms and dust*” (Job 7: 5).

He probably sat on the ashes, while his body was covered with boils, causing them to become more infected; as sign of humility and repentance.

In the Septuagint version, it came as “*He sat on ashes outside the city*”.

Pope Gregory the Great says: [We should not marvel that the one God Himself so commendef, ends up sitting on the ashes; the way He allowed for St. John the Baptist, to whom He testified, saying that, among those born by women, no one is greater than him, to pay his life as a price of a dance by a harlot.

❖ He allows this to press His saints down, in order to reward them in the highs.

On the outside, He brings them down to the lowest possible level, so that inwardly, He would lift them up to un-expressible highs.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ If all the human remedies could not cure him, perseverance and faith could. **He sat on ashes, while his soul was wandering in paradise¹.**

St. Jerome

❖ He was brought down from his royal chair to sit on ashes. Yet with so many tribulations, he stayed intact. Although his body was torn apart, yet, in the depths of his soul, he still kept a treasure of piety².

St. Basil the Great

❖ You are full of sores, Yet, you are beautiful! **You are wounded, but healthy! You sit on ashes, but reign in heaven!**

I wish we would strife to follow your lead³!

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

❖ Don’t you see how he reached the extreme of poverty? Don’t you agree that no one could be compared to him? Who could be poorer than someone naked, homeless, **and sitting on ashes?!**

In case you find yourselves in such poverty; If you just think about the sufferings of that righteous man; You would soon dismiss every thought of grief and despair. Who has ever reached such level of misery? No one!

...His body was steadily fading.... Worms were incessantly creeping out of his wounds.

A horrible stench surrounds him, and makes even his food loathsome to him (Job 6: 7).

Someone may probably say: He should have great comfort to know that it is God who brings upon him all these tribulations. But it was actually disturbing and confusing to think that the righteous God, whom he had so long served in every possible way, has entered into a war against him!

Feeling guilty, he says: “*Once I have spoken, but no answer; Yes, twice, and I will proceed no further*” (40: 5).; And “*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;*

¹ On Ps., homily 73.

² On Detachment.

³ Sermons, 114: 6.

But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in the dust and ashes” (job 42: 5-6).

If you happen to consider that to be enough for comfort, you may try to experience that same kind of comfort.; But if you do not suffer something of that sort on the hand of God, but you do suffer from the haughtiness of men; Then, thank God, and do not blaspheme Him, who can keep them away from you. And in case He allows them to stay that way, it may probably be to test you; So If you happen to endure with piety, some tribulations from other people, so allowed by God, you would be crowned as well¹.

❖ **The wounds of that righteous man ‘Job’, became more precious than pearls...**

Just imagine that fighter sitting in the middle of mire; like a golden statue studded with precious stones.

I cannot find a better analogy to that body covered with blood; Its nature is too precious to be compared to anything; His wounds are more shining than the rays of the sun; The rays of the sun may shed light on the physical eyes; Whereas those of his wounds shed theirs on the eyes of the soul! And strike Satan with utter blindness².

❖ Can you realize, dear friends, the greatness of the reward of that temptation?

His body that was once fit and sound; yet, when with wounds, it becomes more dignified!

A king sitting on his throne is not as famous as this man, honorably sitting in the middle of mire... The royal throne will end by death; whereas the mire will be followed by the kingdom of heaven³.

❖ Why was he sitting on ashes? To hide beneath the trash, his fall (even to death)!

Why did he go outside the city gates? To find a little comfort! For if he shut himself up in a closed chamber, its air would soon get corrupted; and he would suffocate by the stench of his sores.

Realizing that his sufferings are beyond any human intervention; and that, through them, God intend to give others a lesson, he was not offended to become a laughing stock to all.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Anyway, ‘Job’ did the right thing to sit on a heap of trashes... For his fading body, it self, turned into trash, containing the same constituents as trash.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

3- JOB’S WIFE TEMPTS HIM:

“Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse⁴ God and die!’” (Job 2: 9)

In the Septuagint version it came: **‘after a long time has passed, his wife said to him: How long shall you endure?’ He answered her, saying: ‘Here I am waiting a little longer, having hope in salvation’.** And it also came that his wife moved from one household to another, searching for a refuge.

Some Jews believe that Job’s wife was ‘Dinah’ the daughter of Jacob.

¹ *Resisting the Temptations of the Devil, homily 3:5-6.*

² *Concerning the Statues, homily 5: 1-2.*

³ *Concerning the Statues, homily 5: 3.*

⁴ في الترجمة البيروتية "بارك" كنوع من الحياء ألا يُقال "جذف".

The enemy used to strike believers by members of their own household; As he did with Adam using his wife Eve; And with David, using his wife Michal, who mocked him. He even used the apostle Peter against his Master, the Lord Christ; Hearing Him talking about crucifixion, he said to Him “*Far be it from You, Lord; this will not happen to you. But He turned and said to Peter: Get behind Me, Satan; You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men*” (Matthew 16: 22, 23).

The righteous ‘Job’ commenting on how his wife looked at him, says: “*My breath is offensive to my wife; and I am repulsive to the children of my own body*” (Job 19: 17).

❖ The only things Satan left for ‘Job,’ were his wife and his tongue. By his wife he tempted him; and by his tongue he hoped to hear him blaspheme God. Satan did not forget his old trick, when he deceived Adam through his woman; Now he is trying to do the same thing with ‘Job’.

Yet he did not realize, that, if through a woman, one man—Adam – was gravely wounded; now, also through a woman -- the Virgin Mary -- the whole world is saved.

The first woman caused us to be driven out of paradise; And the second one led us (by Christ her Son), to heaven¹.

St. Jerome

❖ “*After a long time has passed*” (Job 2: 9 LXX)... The Spirit, for our benefit, did not reveal the length of that time. For, if He proclaimed it in months and years, those who will be put under temptation in the future, would be depressed before reaching its end; They would count the days, nights, and even the hours; would concentrate on the passage of time; and many of them would fall into despair, assuming that God’s hand has not intervened from heaven, like it did with ‘Job’, after a certain time.

The Spirit said: “*After a long time*”, to tell us that ‘Job’ was found, not only stronger than illness and sores, but even stronger than time.

He struggled for a long time against physical sufferings; yet he remained unconquerable in battle.

By that, the Spirit comforts us that however long the time of our temptation may be, our heart should stay

Strong; as, eventually, “*God’s right hand will hold us up*” (Psalm 18: 35), the way ‘Job’ was saved from the fire of temptation “*after a long time*”

❖ Having found out that the righteous fighter has not softened off, Satan thought of using his wife; probably saying to himself: This man ‘Job’ could not be stronger than Adam. Although he is rich, yet he does not have ‘the paradise of God’; Although he is righteous, yet he did not have the “tree of life”; Although he is pious, yet Adam enjoyed talking with God; And although he possesses a great number of beasts, Adam, on the other hand, had all the animals of the earth at his disposal. So, If I managed to deprive Adam of all that through his wife, this man ‘Job’ will not be able to stand against the attacks of his wife!.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ He was left with his wife; yet, not as a comforter, but as an ally to Satan².

¹ On Ps., homily 73.

² On Ps. 30, Discourse, 4, 12.

St. Augustine

The consummation of this verse in the Septuagint version, came as follows: **‘See, your mention has been wiped out of the earth; Even your sons and daughters, the fruit of my labor, and the passion of my womb, whom I delivered by grief in vain, have all been lost. Here you are, spending your nights in open air, sitting in the midst of the corruption of worms. And I am left wandering as a maidservant from one place to another; and from a house to another; anticipating sunset to rest my aching body. “Say a word against God, and die” (Job 2: 9 B).**

- ❖ Imagine that you lost your wealth that made you famous; or deprived of your portion of children; How can you be remembered on earth? When your riches are robbed, your possessions are destroyed; when you are left with no more sons or daughters; and consequently no more hope for grandchildren.

It is as though Job’s wife says to him: In vain, you have planted the field of my womb!

You are deprived of the fruit of what you have planted. And I am deprived of the fruit of my sorrows, of the labor of my breast, of the experience of womb of a pregnant woman, and of the unbearable pains of labor, that turn into a horrible memory!

Therefore it is not just one sorrow, but many.

Death reached the children of my womb; and the fruit of my body has perished to the abyss.

Is it possible for me to hope for more children?

How? And from whom? The one who plants; namely you, is no more, You yourself have become food for bugs!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The more tribulations he brought over 'Job, Satan saw him grow stronger. That is why, having used all his ways, **he resorted to his old weapon – the woman**. Let her put on the mask of care; Present a dramatic portrait of what she is going through, Speak in a very compassionate tune; Then make her give a deadly counsel: *“Curse God and die”*. Still, he did not overcome! Yes, because that amazing man realized Satan's deceit; and with great wisdom, he muted the mouth of his wife, who was talking through his persuasion¹.

- ❖ See how by her eloquence, Satan tried to deceive him.

A long time has passed; not just days, but many months! 'How many more can you endure?!'

Notice how crafty Satan is? as though to provoke the woman, he says to her: 'The way you managed to let the first man fall, you can surely finish the life of 'Job'.

The first woman foolishly managed to seduce her weak man by putting the poison in good food.

But 'Job', the wise man, has overcome his own nature... Therefore, do not assume that the matter concerns the woman or her counsel.

Now, May I suggest to my congregation, not to take into consideration the dignity of men, but rather the nature of the counsel.

Knowing that the woman was created to help man, and not to be an offense to him.... Satan did not let her say to her husband: 'They died', as was the common way

¹ *The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 13:6.*

to express the grief among men; But, to express the magnitude of the tribulation, he let her say to him: **‘Your memory is wiped out!’**

As though she intends to say:

‘What kind of change do you hope for? Is it possible to resume what you used to be? What is completely gone, can it come back to life?!

Is it possible to have more children, to keep your memory on earth like regular humans?! Without descendents, you know for sure that you are no more than dead!

Notice to what level she intended to lead him by her horrible counsel. She did not intend to provoke him to anger, as much as to make him feel sorry for himself!

As though she intends to say to him: 'Day and night, there is no one under your roof to share your misery and suffering!'.

As for me, your poor wife, There is no one to show compassion on me. After being in the company of a king, I became homeless, living in open air under the stars; wandering around the city, to be insulted by everyone.

She did not say to him: ‘Blaspheme God...’, but said: **“Curse God”**. Why? Because she knows that once he does, he will die.

What are you saying, woman? Whether God is, or is not, the source of these troubles; We should ask for His mercy, and not blaspheme Him!.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ ‘Job’ lost his children and all his possessions, except for his wife (Job 1: 13-19); who was spared by Satan to tempt him! (Job 2: 9-10). By then, Job was covered all over with painful boils (Job 2: 7); and realized that his friends have come, not to comfort him but to increase his suffering, and to make them more intense!

Notice the extent of authority that God gave to the adversary to tempt ‘Job’ (Job 2: 1-6). Although he felt that *“the arrows of the Almighty are within him”* (Job 6: 4). Yet, as a good fighter, he did not surrender to pain, but intended to go on fighting.

What is my end, that I should prolong my life?

What strength do I have, that I should hope?

Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze?

“That it would please God to crush me, That He would loose His hand and cut me off! (Job 6: 9-14 LXX)¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ After everyone and everything has been taken away, including his own health, his wife was the only one spared, for one purpose: to be a snare to tempt him.

That is actually the reason why Satan did not destroy her together with the children. He expected her to be his deadly tool to bring down that righteous man, once and for all.

He said to himself: ‘If humanity was driven out of paradise through her, how handy she would be to bring this man down, when he is on a heap of trash!².

❖ The buildings were the same (the one built on the rock, and the other built on the sand); so were the temptations; but the outcome was different, because of the difference in the foundation. The one built on the sand fell down because of the foolishness of the builder, and not because of the nature of the temptations.

¹ *De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:2:4.* ترجمة جرجس كامل

² *Homilies on 1 Corinthians, homily 28:5.*

The talking here does not concern the building, as much as it concerns the soul; confirming that by her works, it would either heed the divine word or reject it. That is the way “Job” built himself.

Successive catastrophes came upon him: Rain poured, Fire came down from heaven and consumed all his flocks; Messengers came to tell him about the flood of destruction that swept his oxen, camels, and children; Then came the wind; namely, the words of his wife, saying, ‘Curse God and die’. Despite all that the house (of his soul) did not collapse; and was not shaken; The righteous man did not blaspheme; but thanked God, saying: **“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord”**¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ The adversary tempted ‘Job’ through his children and possessions (Job 1: 13); and when he failed to overcome him, he brought over his favorite tool;

He brought the daughter of Eve, who tempted Adam; and through her mouth he said to the righteous ‘Job’: *“Curse God”*; But ‘Job’ refused his counsel.

King ‘Asa’, did what is right in the eyes of the Lord; banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his father made; But when Satan tried to tempt him through his mother (1 Kings 15: 12-13), ‘Asa’ discovered his craftiness, and removed the queen mother from her high position, and cut down and burned her obscene image.

St. John the Baptist – the greatest among all the prophets -- as testified by the Lord Jesus Himself ; was slain by king Herod, for the sake of a dance by the daughter of Eve (Matthew 11: 11, 14, etc.).

‘Haman’, who was rich, and the third in dignity after the king, came to his destruction, when his wife counseled him to have all the Jews in the kingdom killed (Esther 6: 13).

‘Zemri’, a head of the tribe of Simon, was killed because of a Midianite woman, and in a single day twenty-four thousands of the children of Israel died in the plague (Numbers 25: 6-15)².

St Aphrahat

“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ And in all this ‘Job’ did not sin with his lips” (Job 2: 10)

❖ ‘Job,’ in his grief, has been more cautious than Adam in the climax of his happiness.

The first conquered amid his suffering; while the second was defeated amid his pleasure.

The first did not wither amid the most horrible pains; while the second consented to what seemed enjoyable

In his flesh, he endured his pain; and in his heart, he endured the faults of others; rebuking his wife for her foolishness; teaching wisdom to his friends; and keeping his perseverance in all circumstances³.

St. Augustine

❖ Notice, O brethren, how he never said that his tribulations were the work of Satan!

¹ Concerning the Statues, hom. 4:4.

² Demonstration 6, of Monks, 3.

³ On Patience, 9.

Refer the chastisement directly to your God; For Satan can do nothing except by the permission of Him, who ordains your affairs by the power of His authority; whether by punishment or edification; punishment for the wicked; and edification for the children; **“(God) scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrew 12: 6).**

You should not escape from the rod; unless you do not intend to inherit!¹

- ❖ When his body became covered with painful boils, his wife came to him, as another Eve, as a tool of Satan instead of as a helper to her husband; She came to rebuke him strongly and persistently, to shake down his faith, saying to him: **“Curse God and die”**.

‘Adam’ on the heap of trash, was wiser than ‘Adam’ who was in paradise.

‘Adam’ in paradise gave his ear to the woman, to end up being driven together from paradise;

Whereas ‘Adam’ on the heap of trash, pushed the woman aside, to get together with her, into paradise.

What did 'Job' tell his wife? **“You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (Job 2: 10).**

In this, he demonstrates to us that, while Satan was the one who did the striking, it was actually the hand of God on him; He did not consider the one who aimed the strike, but the One who gave him the authority².

St. Augustine

- ❖ I would rather have God visit my sins, and correct my iniquities, in this world; in order to hear there, what Abraham said to the rich man about poor Lazarus: **“Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented” (Luke 16: 25).**

That is why, when the Lord rebukes and chastens us, we should not be deniers.

Let us realize that being rebuked now, is to gain comfort in the future; according to the words of the apostle: **“When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned together with the world” (1 Corinthians 11: 32).** That is why ‘Job’ willingly received all his suffering, saying: **“Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”³**

The scholar Origen

- ❖ He became more blessed than anyone else; He did not just refrain from saying or doing what is wrong; but practiced what made him more steadfast. He although his wife added to his troubles; but he still glittered in everything⁴.
- ❖ A wife could be great goodness, and she can also be great evil. Notice through which point, Satan intended to break through the wall of the stronghold?!⁵

St. John Chrysostom

In the Septuagint version, it came as: **“He looked at her, and said to her: ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks’” (Job 2: 10).**

¹ On Ps. 31, Discourse, 2: 26.

² On Ps. 29, Discourse, 29, 7.

³ On Exodus, homily 8.

⁴ On Ps 128.

⁵ Homilies on Hebrews, homily 20:8.

❖ Namely, [You are not speaking as is befitting to your learning, nor to your stature as my wife].

He did not intend to rebuke her, as much as to take away that corrupt thought from her.

“Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”; Namely, Even if these things are indeed evil, we should still accept them!.

Being the Lord and the Master; Shouldn't He have the authority to bring anything upon us?

Were we worthy of the good things He gave to us?

So, let us no longer assume that we are unworthy of suffering!

It is completely in His power to give us even only the bad things.

So if He gives us the good things as well; Why then, would we complain?!

Notice how he talked, neither about transgressions, nor about good works, but just about how God has complete authority to do what pleases Him.

When we remember the good things we once had, we shall find no difficulty to endure our present problems.

To find comfort, it is enough for us to realize that it is God who sent them on us. We should not any longer speak about justice or oppression.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ *“He looked at her” (Job 2: 10 LXX)*; He looked at his wife; to make sure with whom he is speaking; and to beware of the serpent hiding in her words!

❖ Shouldn't we offer our perseverance as an acceptable sacrifice (See Romans 12: 1); through which we may restore what we have lost; and gain more blessings than we had?

❖ *“In all this ‘Job’ did not sin with his lips” (Job 2: 10)*. Did God deliver ‘Job’ to that struggle in vain? Was he not indeed sure of His fighter? Has he not indeed known His warrior?

As for us; Let us follow Job's lead in perseverance; Let us fight decently; Let us, like him, trust in God.

Let us without failure, conform to his faith; Let us be steadfast in his spirit, in the truth of his words, in his struggle against an invisible enemy, in his solitude, in his temptations, in his tranquility while confronting every disturbance; Let us stay strong and firm.

In all our tribulations, let us be strong, and let us consummate our test; to partake of the crowns of his victory; to have God testify to our righteousness; to Whom is the glory forever, Amen.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Let us ask help from the Almighty God, against the tricks of Satan.

If you dwell in Him, who cannot be conquered; You will certainly conquer him, who used to conquer those, in whom God does not dwell.

O brethren, you know for sure that, because Adam in paradise, despised God's commandment; raised his neck, as though intending to be his own master; and rejected the submission to the divine will; he fell from eternity and blessings.

But there came another Adam, well experienced, although also mortal; he who, while sitting on a heap of trash, consumed by worms, conquered Satan.

Yes, Adam himself has conquered Satan in ‘Job’; who is his seed, and of his own race.

Adam was defeated in paradise, and conquered on a heap of trash!

In paradise, he gave his ear to the woman in whom Satan entered; whereas, while sitting on a heap of trash, he said to her: “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks”.

There, He lend her an ear; But here, he gave her an answer.

When he was happy, he listened; and when he was tempted, he conquered.

That is why, brethren, **we should indeed learn how to put in our hearts to conquer Satan**; but not by our own power; saying: “*If you know that He is righteous, You should know that everyone who do righteousness is born by him*”¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ It is written that man’s enemies are his own household (Matthew 10: 26); When the crafty adversary sees that he is driven out of the hearts of the righteous, he seeks those whom they dearly love, and speaks to them with very sweet and beloved words; For once the power of love sneaks into the heart, the sword of his conviction can easily force its way into the innermost regions of defense in the righteous.
- ❖ By the 'good' here, he means, either the temporal or eternal gifts of God; and by the 'evil', the calamities of the present days, about which the Lord says on the mouth of His prophet: “*I am the Lord, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity*” (Isaiah 45: 6-7). God Himself is counted as the Creator of evil (affliction), when He turns it into punishment (or chastisement); which though evil endured by the transgressors; while, yet, at the same time, is goodness by nature.

It is great comfort, as far as our temptations are concerned, when, as we endure our sorrows, we recall the gifts given to us by our Creator... As it is said; “*In the day of prosperity, do not forget calamities; And in the day of calamities, remember prosperity*” (Sirach 11: 25).

Whoever receives God’s gifts at the season of gifts, and does not fear strokes, would fell with his joy in the maze of his thoughts. And whoever suffers punishments, and at the season of punishments, disregards the comfort of recalling the gifts that he got from God, would fall from the steadfastness of his thought, by despair on all sides.

Pope Gregory the Great

Job’s wife ridiculed him, because he was simple and fond of eternities; And counting his simplicity as foolishness, ignorance, and a deprivation of life and happiness, she believed that his death is far better than his life; and that blasphemy against God is more befitting than worshipping him, with all the sufferings that go with it.

- ❖ It is as though he says: [If we are looking forward to the eternal blessings, We should not marvel if we confront some temporal evils]. The apostle Paul, concentrating on those blessings with great interest, while taking into consideration the sufferings he endures, says: “*I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us*” (Romans 8: 18).

Pope Gregory the Great

‘Job’ did not sin with his lips, and did not utter a single word that does not befit him as a believer. The apostle St. Peter warns us against sinning with our lips,

¹ Homily 4 on, John 2.

saying: “*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters*” (1 Peter 2: 15 Vulgate).

4- JOB’S FRIENDS COME TO VISIT HIM:

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him” (Job 2: 11).

Here, only those three friends, who came to comfort ‘Job’, were mentioned by name. The young man ‘Elihu’ probably came with them; But as he was far too young to be a friend of ‘Job’; he probably came to listen to the debates; was probably fond of sitting together with the elders; Or was probably moved by seeing ‘Job’ in such a tragedy, and was ready to be of any service to him, or at least to comfort him.

As to the other three friends, they were advanced in age, famed for their knowledge, wisdom, and goodness; and their views were well esteemed (Job 32: 6). They probably occupied high positions in the state, as princes or rulers; and were probably relatives of ‘Jpb’. As the three of them were grandchildren of Abraham, they have probably inherited some of his good qualities and attributes: Eliphaz the Temanite, king of Teman, was the son of Teman the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36: 11); thought by some, not to be the older son of Esau, but his grandson called after him. Bildad the Shuhite was the son of Shuh, born to Abraham by his second wife, Keturah (Genesis 25: 2). And Zophar the Naamathite, was most probably Zepho another grandson of Esau (Genesis 36: 11). The three of them were Gentiles, of some good characters, that led them, out of all his other friends, not to forsake ‘Job’ in his tribulation, but to come to partake of his sorrow, as they previously did of his pleasures.

They came, not out of curiosity, nor through an invitation of someone, but agreed to work together well. They were sincere in their desire in the mourning, and the mourners turned out that they were tired because of lack of wisdom in dealing with the matter

We heard nothing about the multitude of the poor and needy that he used to sustain; or of the fatherless and widows for whom he cared; they did not come to comfort him in his adversity. Hearing about the successive tribulations that came upon him, they probably counted him as a wicked man who intended to hide his evil by the pretence of good works. Their absence undoubtedly had its burden on Job’s soul, who assumed that they were offended by his person.

“And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept, and each one tore his robe, and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven” (Job 2: 12).

Sorrow and bitterness often corrupt man’s appearance, that his close friends do not recognize him. Job’s boils and sores distorted his body, and the bitterness of his soul took away his pleasant attitude. A similar thing happened to Naomi, whose countenance was so affected by sorrow, that when she returned to her own town, the people there wondered, saying: “*Is this Naomi?*” (Ruth 1: 19).

Not able to control themselves, those elderly men raised their voices like children and wept; Each of them tore his robe; sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven; and sat with his friend on the ground; as though partaking of his humiliation.

They did not encounter him on a level of formal condolence; **but as friends, they shared the bitterness of his soul; and as fellows, his tough affliction, and in**

awe, they could not open their mouths for as long as seven days and seven nights. As, according to a commonly known proverb, 'Our light sorrows can talk; but the heavy ones tie our tongues in knots'.

At the beginning, they kept silent, not to make the temptation worse; or to give themselves more time to think over that confusing riddle. They were for sure aware of his great works of love, as is testified by everyone; But wondered whether there is some hidden sin that brought over him all those tribulations? Or that by them, God intends to reveal what is hidden in his heart and mind!

- ❖ Not seeing the purple robe, the high throne, the royal crown, nor the attending guards and slaves; At the first glance, Job's friends could not recognize him;. Instead of the throne, they saw the rough ground; Instead of the comfortable bed, they found a heap of trash; And instead of the magnificent house, they only found the open air!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great” (Job 2: 13)

Although they made an appointment together to come to 'Job', amazingly enough, they kept silent seven days and seven nights, not uttering a single word. And when they did speak, they furiously attacked him, with one accord! They started by an exaggerated show of grief; then, amid his suffering they followed it by bitter adversity and fierce debates.

After an unusual show of love, sitting with him on the ground, for as long as seven days and seven nights, in the midst of an unbearable smell of corruption; they suddenly and ferociously went to the other extreme.

I wonder whether they were true in their love, presented it with no discernment, Or there was a secret intention, hidden under a cover of an intense grief, that exploded to reveal what they truly embraced inside their hearts. That is why 'Job' said to them: *“But you, forgers of lies; you are all worthless physicians”* (Job 13: 4).

Pope Gregory the Great, believes that those friends **symbolize the heretics**, who similarly used to reveal at the beginning a great show of compassion, followed by action, that although apparently seem with true intention, yet lacked the spirit of discernment.

“Each one came from his place” (Job 2: 11); **and the place of heresy is pride itself**; they came with a previous appointment under the pretence of love and friendship.

Such is the way of **heretics; they often come with one accord against the church of God**; under the pretense of friendship, ministry, and walking in virtue!

Finally, God advised them to ask 'Job' to pray for them, and to offer a sacrifice on their behalf. **The church, likewise, keeps on praying for the sake of the heretics, hoping that they would turn back from their opposition**, resume their fellowship in the church, and enjoy again the heavenly life of the church of God.

- ❖ Although the initial show of emotions was good and befitting for true friends, who are supposed to sympathize with their buddy; Yet what followed unbelievably demonstrated hate and grudge!
- ❖ At the beginning, When they realized the extent of calamity of their friend, and saw how he sat in the mire, covered with such painful sores, they tore their robes, wept, and sat beside him on the ground, in silence; feeling that it was not proper for them

to utter a single word; because the situation was far worse than any show of sympathy¹!

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *Concerning the Statues, homily 11:2.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 2
ADAM ON A HEAP OF TRASH

- ❖ Not being possible for Satan to keep silent,
While seeing man enjoy life in the paradise of Eden.
He approached him through the serpent.
And daringly used the mouth of Eve.
In his hatred, he caused Adam and Eve to be driven out of paradise.
By sin, death reigned over them and their descendants.
- ❖ Now, seeing in every man, the broken Adam,
He assumed to be capable of destroying 'Job', as he did to his early father.
But this time, he did not speak to him through the serpent;
But dared to accuse him before You, O Creator of all!
- ❖ Arrogantly, he proclaimed that he was going to and fro on the earth;
And walking back and forth on it, as though a king with authority.
Yes, Take away, O Lord, our dust,
So that we are no more an earth, for Satan to walk on our hearts!
When he sees in us a second heaven, he would flee before us!
You would then let us sit in the heavenly places;
Where Satan cannot reach us!
- ❖ What amazing, that You, O Holy One, commend us!
When the evil Satan accuses us!
Is he so jealous on holiness, to accuse us for weakness?!
Or, in his evil, he intends to destroy everyone?!
To let them join him in blaspheming You, O Holy One!
- ❖ He aimed all his fiery arrows against poor 'Job'!
He, who used to be the morning star, stands against such a helpless human!
He would not stop before striking every part in his body!
With Your allowance, he killed all his sons and daughters; but spared his wife, to
use her against him!
He inflicted his whole body, except for his tongue, with yhe hope to use it to
blaspheme You!
Very craftily, he did his best to destroy that believer.
Not realizing that his arrows would eventually fly back toward him!
- ❖ Adam in paradise, inclined his ear, and listened to the counsel of the enemy;
Through Eve, his accomplice!
But 'Job' amid the ashes, opened his mouth to mute the satanic counsel!
While Adam wrongly kept quiet; and broke Your divine commandment;
'Job', on the other hand, uttered good words to save his wife from the satanic
tricks!
While Adam became naked in paradise, and the fig leaves failed to cover his
nakedness;
'Job', on the other hand, got covered by a robe of worms, more beautiful than a
royal one!
While Adam and Eve were terrified to hear Your voice;

The heavenly creatures stood in awe, listening to the praises sung by the one sitting amid the ashes!

While Adam assumed that forbidding him to eat from the tree of knowledge, is an oppression and injustice!

'Job', on the other hand, counted all what he lost, through your permission, for his own good!

While, among all the blessings and possibilities of paradise, Adam's eyes were concentrated on one

Forbidden tree;

'Job', on the other hand, despite all his temptations, had his eyes concentrated on You, O the Beneficent!

While Adam opened his mouth to justify himself;

"Job", on the other hand, although he opened his mouth; yet he did not sin with his lips.

- ❖ His friends came, each from his own place;
And I wish they never did!
Although intending to comfort him with their human thoughts;
They instead, added to his bitterness!
Although showing every emotions of compassion and of sharing in his suffering;
They failed to present You to him, O heavenly Comforter!
- ❖ You, my heavenly Friend;
Carry me over to Your place, to find rest in the bosom of Your heavenly Father.
You came down to me;
You were tempted, to help those tempted!
Be the secret of my comfort, peace, and true joy!

AN ANNEX TO CHAPTER 2

IN THE SEAT OF THE SILENT

(The Silence of Job's friends)

QUIESCENCE AND SILENCE:

Many think that, it is only the monk who should separate himself from the world, and lead a life of seclusion. Although this is necessary, yet St. Basil the Great confirms that the true separation from the world, is to sever the ropes that connect us to its worries, and to its problems. [The tranquility we get in the monastery is the beginning of the purification of the self; and the disregard of the things of the world, is the beginning of the care for those of God]. [The solitude is a cure for the desires and lusts; calms them down, and brings us nearer to God; Especially, if it is combined with prayers and hymns]. This should always accompany us, as it [abides the soul in joy, and brings it out of sorrows¹].

St. Basil, although he is an advocate of communal monasticism, yet he never stops confirming the importance of silence, and of the commitment to retreat and keep quiet. This is the condition, without which the monastic life would never go straight; As, how could a monk pray often during the day, study, read in the Holy Book. or concentrate on searching himself, if his soul and the monastery are noisy?².

St. Basil says: [Tranquility is the first step in our sanctification; The tongue gets purified of the nonsense of the world; The eye is not influenced by the beautiful colors, nor by the nice figures; The ear does not hasten to hear the lusty songs, and the harmful talks and acts].

❖ If you talk like St. John Chrysostom; Mar. Ephram; Mar. Basil the divine; Mar Gregory the Nezenzian; Mar. Gregory of Nyssa; and all those great teachers; Your words would never benefit those whom you encounter as much as your silence!³.

St. (Mar.) Jacob El- Serougi

What is better: the holy silence, or the holy talk?

❖ You are the Word, that gives a word to those who talk!
By You, all who talk would talk for Your sake.
A great ray of light, shines in me, when I look at You.
My soul gets enlightened, to acquire goodness.
Getting away from You, it becomes filled with darkness;
Concentrating on you, it gets clothed with light to utter Your words.
Silence and talk set their demands on me;
O Lord, ordain my life according to Your will.
I keep silent because I feel inadequate to talk.
And if I talk, my word is uttered according to Your glory and for Your sake.
When the soul is filled with silence, Silence becomes a kind of talk, full of benefit.
And when the soul moves to glorify You with love...
By love I talk to glorify You;

¹ Epistle 2: 7, 8, 10.

² لأب الياس كويتير المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 72.

Epistle 2; Hom. Regulae fusius tractatae 5, 13, 38; Regulae brevius tractatae 25, 38, 208; Hom. on Ps. 33, 28.

³ الرسالة التاسعة والثلاثون.

And in my silence, I would never stop glorifying You.
O Lord, enrich me, and grant me both the silence and the word.

ST. (Mar.) Jacob El- Serougi

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

- ❖ The righteous Keeps silent, knowing that there is “*A time to keep silence, and a time to speak*” (Ecclesiastes 3: 7); Yet he does not become mute; like the Sadducees – and all those who teach vanity – who are mute, yet not silent. That is how the Lord Christ rebuked the stormy sea, and not man, to “be still”¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ It is in vain, to rein our tongue, if our silence plays the same role as our screaming².

Father Joseph

- ❖ Zacharias the priest talked when he should have kept silent; And when St. Mary talked, she talked well.

Because Eve kept silent before the serpent, and did not talk back, she sadly died because of her silence. When the serpent gave her a deadly counsel, promised her deity; she did not enquire, argue, or fully and carefully discuss the issue; as she should have done. If she did, the deceiver would have flown away; But because she kept silent, the serpent dragged her down to the depth of the abyss.

As there should be time for man to keep silent, and for him to speak, it was befitting for Zacharias the priest to keep silent in the most holy place, when the angel gave him the good news of the birth of John the Baptist; And as he did not, the angel made him mute against his will; Because he loved him; he adorned him with the silence befitting for him.

The priest became silent, and went home. His loving friends who did not know what happened to him.

His wife Elizabeth was grieved for the silence of her man; Her household was already stricken with barrenness; And now, the mouth of the old priest was also barren. No children, and no more word that could bring comfort!

Then the old woman got pregnant by a great miraculous way!

By the birth of John, his mother’s womb and his father’s mouth, both opened up!

By his birth, the barren got a child, and the mute talked!

By his birth, the barren womb, the mute mouth, and the desolate household, were all blessed!

Blessed is the One who elected him, To whom is the glory, forever, Amen.

St. (Mar.) Jacob El- Serougi

- ❖ Both the silence and the talk, for the sake of God, are good³.

Father Bemen

¹ PG 13:1599.

² Cassian: Conf. 16: 18.

³ عن بستان الرهبان.

CHAPTER 3

THE LAMENTATION OF 'JOB'

The three friends sat around 'Job' for a full week in astonishment and silence, because of the horrible tribulations that dwelt upon him. Most probably 'Job' did not feel their presence, nor preoccupy himself with them. Then all of a sudden, he started to reveal the bitterness in his depths; **and presented what is considered as the most eloquent lamentation in the history of mankind; that bore a horrible portrait of despair.**

Although 'Job' cries out in bitterness, yet he did not blaspheme God; but like Jeremiah, he cursed the day of his birth (Jeremiah 20: 14-18). 'Job' coveted death, and preferred it over life; as for him, it meant a liberation from his sufferings in this world, . Although suicide did not cross his mind; yet he sought from God to intervene with His mercy, and relieve him of his misery.

'Job' did not utter a single word against God; He did not blaspheme Him, but cursed his own life, since the day he was conceived. Not just for the sake of his presence; nor for fear of what would come in his future; but despair made him hate his life even while he was still in his mother's womb. Namely, his mind went back to the past that would never return, and would never be changed.

Those friends were faithful to 'Job' in the days of his affliction, when all his other acquaintances deserted him. They silently sat around him for seven days and seven nights; after which 'Job' opened his mouth and talked. His talk can be divided into three parts:

1- Cursing the day of his birth, and wishing that he was never born

1 – 10

2- He marvels why did he not die at birth, and put in the grave.

11 - 14

3- A poem about he sweetness of death **15 – 19**

4- The riddle that those who covet death do not get it

20 – 26

1- CURSING THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH, AND WISHING THAT HE WAS NEVER BORN:

Although it was a weakness of 'Job', who was described as an upright man, to curse the day of his birth! Yet he did not blaspheme God

“After that Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth” (Job 3:

1)

When the prophet Ezekiel, while he was in the land of captivity, sat confused and in silence for seven days, with his soul moaning because of the desolation and destruction, that came upon his people, the holy city, and the temple of the Lord; The word of God came to him (Ezekiel 3: 15-16). Whereas 'Job', sitting among his friends, with his soul moaning because of what dwelt upon him, opened his mouth after a long silence, to curse the day he was conceived, the day of his birth, and the days of his temptations.

Both of them – Ezekiel and 'Job' – sat in silence. But, because the first was preoccupied with what concerns God, his people, his city, and his temple; While the second was preoccupied with what concerns himself, and with what other people

thought about him; The first enjoyed hearing the exalted word of God; and the second, overcome by despair and bitterness, went down to curse his life.

We need to sit in silence, to rise above ourselves', to be preoccupied with what concerns God and people; and not with what concerns ourselves and our dignity. Then, the Spirit of the holy God would lift us up, as though to heaven, to hear the divine voice, and to discover the divine secrets, that would grant us the living hope.

Unfortunately, 'Job' thought of the day of his birth as the worst in his history; and counted it as a starting point of his unbearable sufferings.... His mind became a prisoner of the bitterness in which he lives.... He forgot the good he has enjoyed.... His lean years devoured those filled with blessings;... and he looked at his whole life through a very dark glass.

What happened to 'Job', happens to many among us, when they pass through long days of affliction. We hear even a prophet like Jeremiah cry out, saying: "*Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me*" (Jeremiah 15: 10); and, "*Cursed be the day in which I was born!*" (Jeremiah 20: 14)

When we stop thinking, even for few moments, about the day of our eternal encounter with our Lord Christ on the clouds, world would grow narrow before our eyes, we would count even our creation as in vain; and would cry out, saying: "*How long Lord? Will You hide Yourself forever?... For what futility have You created all the children of men?*" (Psalm 89: 46-47).

Here, Let us pause for a moment to consider the care of mankind for the day of birth since the old times. We find out that, while the wicked see it as an opportunity to reveal what they treasure in their hearts of the love for vain pleasure; The children of God, on the other hand, seriously look forward to their entrance into the way of passion; and count their day of birth as the day of their entrance into the valley of tears; Yet, they do that with a joyful living hope, to cross over to the new heavenly life.

❖ During the celebration of their day of birth, the wicked, being submitted to a hidden desire for an authoritative attitude; they express that desire by dancing through vigorous movements of their bodies.

I may quote what came about the celebration of the day of birth of the Pharaoh of Egypt in the book of Genesis (40: 20), when he hanged his chief baker; and about that of Herod, who was more oppressive than Pharaoh, when he killed St. John the Baptist . But, on the other hand, I find in the Holy Book, no mention that any righteous man has ever celebrated his day of birth¹.

The scholar Origen

The scholar Origen have a long comment on the words of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "*Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me, a man of strife, and a man of contention...*" (Jeremiah 15: 10). Having previously dealt with that in my commentary on the book of Jeremiah, I shall include here a little quotation:

❖ Who am I, to be borne, only to become a man of contention to everyone on earth, for my admonishing, blaming, and teachings them?!².

The scholar Origen

Whoever experienced his second day of birth by the water and Spirit, and became a son of God, would never curse even his carnal birthday; but would rather count all his passions as a crucifixion and a burial together with his Lord Christ; and

¹ A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, 1998, p. 69- 70.

² In Jerm. hom. 14:5.

as a narrow road, along which to walk, to enter ultimately into the open wide gates of heaven, and the eternal resurrection.

Here, we should notice that, despite the bitterness in Job's heart, that made him curse the day of his birth, he did not blaspheme God, nor expressed any regret for worshipping Him. Although what he uttered, reveal the bitterness of his soul; yet he submitted himself to the will of God. ... He is under suffering as we all are!

- ❖ We understand the words: **“After this” (Job 3: 1)**, as (after the arrival of his friends)... Who did not greet him as a fighter, ... Nor cared to enquire about his health! ... Did not apply ointments to soothe his soars; ... Nor said to him: [Do not lose heart; Your Comforter is at hand; ... Fear not, Your enemy will be defeated; ... Do not feel ashamed, The end of your troubles is not far, And the day of victory is near!]
- ❖ **“May the day perish on which I was born” (3: 3)**; Not the day on which I was created, but on which I was born... ; God created me well; but the rebellious Eve delivered me with pain and labor (Genesis 3: 16). The prophet David, aware of that, by Spirit, says in a prophetic psalm: *“I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51: 5).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ What amazing facts that defy nature!

Death, that used before to be hateful and condemned, is now commended and considered as a happy event! Instead of bringing forth mourning, grief, and tears; it became a cause for joy and celebration!

As far as all God's ministers are concerned, their death proclaims delight; as it is only the end of their life that would give them certainty that they are accepted by God. Their death is blessed because it crowns their perfection, and reveals their good fortune! According to the inspired word: *“Call no one happy before his death”* (Sirach 11: 28). Yet this saying does not apply to you, O Virgin Mary; because your good fortune is not brought forth by your death; nor your consummates your perfection... It is not at your death, but since the day of that divine conception, on which you are called blessed by all generations. No, it is not the death at all, that made you blessed; But you have cast away death, scattered its gloom, and revealed that it is joy (by Christ born from you)¹.

Father John of Damascus

- ❖ Is it not shameful to moan because of death, while Paul sighs because of the present life; and writes to the Romans, saying: *“The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together... But we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves”* (Romans 8: 22, 23). He says this, not to judge the present things, but longing for the coming ones².

St. John Chrysostom

“And Job spoke and said...” (Job 3: 2)

St. John Chrysostom believes that the silence of the friends all along the week reveals their horror to see what happened to their friend; that they were unable to utter a single word before he, himself, starts talking.

“May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, ‘A male child is conceived’” (Job 3: 3)

¹ عن دير سيدة حماطورة بكوسبا لبنان، عظات في ميلاد السيدة ورقادها للقديس يوحنا الدمشقي، 1997، ص 58.

² Concerning the Statues, hom. 5:5.

'Job' was most probably a king or a ruler, whose birthday used to be celebrated by the people; Yet, when he became a portrait of misery. He wishes that it perishes, and become cast into the sea of forgetfulness.

- ❖ Considering his birth to be the beginning of all his tribulations and troubles, he wishes that that day would be taken away, in anticipation of that day of his resurrection from the dead; according to the words of the prophet David: "*Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am*" (Psalm 39: 4). Realizing how it is not possible to attain anything perfect in this life, David longed for the things to come. Now, we know partly; but it will be possible to attain perfection when the fact – and not the shadow – the divine and eternal greatness, begin to shine, to see it with an uncovered face (1 Corinthians 8: 12)¹.
- ❖ The carnal lust and pleasure have swept us along in this life; and we became fearful to consummate this journey, in which bitterness surpasses happiness. Whereas the saints and the wise lament their long life, counting their departure from it and being with Christ far better for them (Philippians 1: 23). Yet they have not cursed the day of their birth, as 'Job' did, who said: "*May the day perish in which I was born*" (Job 3: 3) ².

St. Ambrose

- ❖ That is what the preacher said: "*I praised the dead who were already dead, more than the living who are still alive*" (Ecclesiastes 4: 2).

What David also says: "*I had said in my alarm...*" (Psalm 31: 22); and: "*I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved*" (Psalm 30: 6); all those words that reveal a troubled and desperate soul; which were also said by 'Job' in his grief. Can we blame those in harm when they cry out loud the way they do? No, we do not! Because, if they do not do that, they would seem unnatural. Don't you hear the prophet Moses say to the Lord: "*If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now*" (Numbers 11: 15).

Don't listen to bare words, but go deep into the foundation of thought. You heard that 'Job' "*did not sin with his lips*" (Job 2: 10); Well, he still did not sin, even after uttering these words. You hear God Himself say to him: "*Do you believe that I could do, but proclaim your righteousness?*" (Job 40: 3 LXX).

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ You probably say that, as long as God is the builder and maker of the world (Hebrew 11: 10); We could not but love it! You speak the truth; The bearers of God, indeed, disregard the world; Yet, not the world created and shaped by God; but that which is created by by our behavior – a different and corrupt world; over which we made the deceitful enemy a ruler (John 12: 31; 14: 30; 16; 11).

That what the Lord Jesus confirmed to his disciple, saying: "*The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me*" (John 14: 30). It is not without reason that he calls him "*the ruler of this world*" ; He so says, that you do not assume that he means this seen creation, on which our enemy could never be a ruler, nor could have the least authority.

When he says: "*the ruler of this world*" **he means that world created by us, and not according to the will of God; by which we give foundation to our lack of faith, our rebellion, and every kind of sin.**

¹ *On the Belief in the Resurrection, 2:32.*

² *Death is Good, 2: 3.*

To that same world, Paul clearly refers, according to the word of God, when he says in his epistle to the Ephesians: *“And you, He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2: 1-2). Such evil world, we have formed, in which we made ourselves rich from corrupt sources.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ He says: *“May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said: ‘A male child is conceived’”*; as though he says: [May the pleasure perish, that brings man forth in haste to sin, and the weakness of his mind, by which he becomes blind, as though in the darkness conforming to evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

“May that day be darkness; May God above not seek it, nor the light shine on it” (Job 3: 4)

He wishes that the day of his birth be darkness, for the light of his life has turned off, and the sun has set on it; He probably wishes that his life would be all night, to sleep and never wake up.

Despite what ‘Job’ has reached of piety, uprightness, and faith; his book reveals his human weaknesses; We do not marvel to see such thoughts of despair cross his mind, that make him wish that he was never born. Against this kind of erroneous thought, the early fathers have warned us.

- ❖ There is a contrition of heart, spiritual and beneficial, that touches the depths of the heart; And there is as well another sort of contrition, harmful and disturbing, that only leads to defeat (like despair) ¹.

St. Mark the monk

- ❖ When we get exhausted by our strife to keep the good thoughts, and we eventually fall into despair, I wish we would hasten to the rock of knowledge, recite the psalms, and play the music of virtues on the strings of the guitar of knowledge².

Father Oghris the monk

“May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; May a cloud settle on it; May the blackness of the day terrify it” (Job 3: 5)

- ❖ *“May darkness and the shadow of death claim it”*; As darkness is truly our enemy; And Christ is the Light (John 8: 12; 9: 5; 12: 46); the traitor is the darkness. And as Christ is Righteousness (1 Corinthians 1: 30); the traitor is sin. And as Christ is the Foundation and the essence of life (Psalm 36: 9); the traitor is the shadow of death.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ There is no more terrifying than Satan! Yes, But to confront him, there is no stronger shield than faith (1 Peter 5: 9). An invisible shield, against an unseen enemy, who aims different sorts of arrows **in the darkness of the night** (Psalm 11), toward those unaware. So, as long as our enemy is unseen, we should have faith as a strong military tool; according to the words of the apostle: *“taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one”* (Ephesians 6: 16). When the devil aims the fiery darts of lust, faith, to

¹ مقالاتان عن "الناموس الروحي"، 18.

² عن "الأفكار الشريرة الأخرى"، 16.

cool down our minds, and to quench the fiery dart, would put the portrait of judgment before our eyes¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“As for that night, may darkness seize it; May it not be included among the days of the year; May it not come into the number of the months” (Job 3: 6)

Father Hesyichius discerns between two kinds of days: The day of disobedience that brought forth darkness over us; and the day of the Savior, about which He says: *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* (Luke 4: 21). The first day brought forth darkness and grief over mankind; Whereas the second is a day of joyful salvation, in which the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah is realized (Isaiah 61: 1-2). When we encounter the Savior, we would not any more compare our joyful evangelic days to the gloomy days of darkness, corruptive to life. That is why ‘Job’ sought his day of birth in sin to be cursed, taken away, and not be counted among his days in the Lord.

- ❖ May that day and night of disobedience, be cursed; May the darkness carry them away; May they not be counted among the days of the months... May they not be counted among the benefits given to us by the Savior... May the grief of darkness coming from them, not be mixed with the blessings given to us by the Savior; or corrupt them by their curse.

Father Hsyichius of Jerusalem

“Oh, May that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it!” (Job 3: 7)

His ears could no more bear to hear the sound of music, shouts, or rejoice. There are no more places for joy in his depths; It is as though he has completely lost his hope.

St. Augustine likens hope to an egg carrying life inside it that can develop through the warmth of afflictions and sufferings; saying, [It is still an egg, and not a chick as yet; it is protected by a shell; you should patiently keep it warm until it produces life²].

- ❖ Hope moves man forward toward eternity and the future, in practical faith, perseverance in joy and rejoice amid the sufferings³.
- ❖ Let us be joyful in hope; even when the present life is not so nice; We should have the strength to endure all its temptations⁴.
- ❖ When we rejoice in hope, looking forward to the coming comfort, we joyfully walk amid troubles⁵.

St. Augustine

- ❖ He, who does not look forward to what could be seen; but eagerly anticipates what could not be seen, would rejoice in hope⁶.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ **What is the hope of the gospel but the Lord Christ?** His is our peace, who does all these things... Whoever does not believe in Christ would lose everything¹.

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 5:4.*

² *Ser On N. T.55: 7.*

³ *Cf. St Augustine: Faith, Hope and Love.*

⁴ *In Ioan. tr 111: 1.*

⁵ *Letter, 55.*

⁶ *Comm. On Romans 12:12.*

- ❖ Hope is surely like a rope dangling from heaven to help our Spirits, steadily lifting up those who cling to it, above this world, and the temptations of this evil life. If man is weak, and forsook that holy anchor, he would instantly fall down, and would suffocate in the abyss of evil².
- ❖ There is nothing that gives the soul courage, and love of adventure, like hope! But before we gain the things we hope for, it presents to us as a reward, an, “*endurance in temptations*”. Before gaining the anticipated things, we would enjoy in the present life, great goodness through the temptations; becoming patient and more experienced.

Love makes things easy; Spirit helps, and temptations make you more experienced, and endure everything with courage; beside a very capable weapon – the prayer³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Man’s perseverance produces hope; and the good hope glorifies man.

St. Oghris

“May those curse it who curse the day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan” (Job 3: 8)

Like the professional mourning women who come to funerals to help the family and friends in lamenting the deceased; he is counting the day of his birth as a bitter funeral; and asking everyone to help him in cursing that day.

Some believe that some crocodile hunters used to keep on cursing the crocodile, with the hope that their curses would eventually make it weak, that they could catch it.

The Jesuite version included ‘Leviathan’ instead of (the dragon); whose description mentioned in chapter 41 applies to the crocodile. Here he means the curses recited by magicians and astrologers to agitate the devil.

St. Gregory the Nezenzian warns us against comparing things according to size or weight. We should not marvel when the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove; When the Lord Christ is called a ‘lamb’ (Isaiah 53: 7); a ‘Pearl’ (Matthew 13: 46); and ‘dew’ (Psalm 72: 6); Whereas the adversary is called ‘a great mountain’ (Zechariah 4: 7); ‘Leviathan’ (Job 3: 8; 40: 20); and the king that lives in waters; And we should not despise the kingdom of heaven, when it is likened to a ‘mustard seed’ (Matthew 13: 31)⁴.

“May the stars of its morning be dark; May it look for light, but have none; And not see the dawning of the day” (Job 3: 9).

- ❖ **“May the stars of its morning...And may Lucifer not never stand up again” (Job 3 (LXX);** The stars of the morning here as dim light refer to the devils, who sometimes take the form of an angel of light; But once the true light shines (John 1: 9), they darken and fade away.

The text means **“Let them stay dark”**; they will not come to the light, as they will never resume their authority.

Besides, they will never see ‘Lucifer’ stand up again; about whom Isaiah says: **“Lucifer son of the morning ...”** (Isaiah 14: 12); Then adds: **“You are cut down to the**

¹ St. Chrysostom: In Colos., hom 4.

² سنعود بقوة أعظم " للقديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم.

³ In Rom. hom 21.

⁴ Oration 39 on the Holy Lights, 16.

ground”, referring to the fact that he will never be able to stand up again and resume his past honor.

Falling down from heaven to earth, he intended to destroy man; But God gave man the authority to crush the deceiver under his feet, and to cut him down to pieces.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

St. Augustine speaks to us about the defeat of the devil, whose false light has been darkened by killing the Lord Christ (according to the flesh), the true Light, the Righteous, who scatters the darkness. He assumed that he could destroy Him, as he did to the first Adam; but he ended up destroying himself.

❖ What can be more righteous than to go as far as to death on the cross for the sake of righteousness?

And what work is of greater authority than the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension to heaven, with the same body in which He was killed?

First of all, righteousness has overcome Satan; then got the authority!

The righteous overcomes, because He has no sin; He unjustly died by Satan!

He gets authority; As He lived again after death, and will never die...

Satan was defeated by His victory...

By deceiving the first man, he slayed him; And by slaying the second Man, the first man got away from his net!¹.

St. Augustine

❖ In the Holy Book, the term ‘*stars*’, is sometimes used to describe the righteousness of the saints, shining in the darkness of this life; And sometimes, to refer to the vain outer appearance of the hypocrites, who practice goodness for the sake of praise from men. If the doers of goodness were not stars, Paul would not say to his disciple: “*In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*” (Philippians 2: 15).

And again, if, among the members of the church, we do not find those who apparently look as though they uprightly walk, we would not recognize those, who are worthy, by their behavior, of being honored by men; And St. John would not have seen the stars falling down from heaven, when he said: “*The tail (of the dragon) drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth*” (Revelation 12: 4).

❖ “*The dawning of the day*” is when the church set forth in the light, and the wicked are no more seen; are shut in, committed to go down to darkness through the weight of their evil works; and are never to see the righteous Judge. It is truly said by the prophet: “*The wicked will not learn righteousness,... and will not behold the majesty of the Lord*” (Isaiah 26: 10 LXX).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Because it did not shut up the doors of my mother’s womb, Nor hide sorrow from my eyes” (Job 3: 10)

Here, Job’s wisdom betrayed him; wishing for something so cruel; namely, wishing that his mother had delivered him prematurely; that her womb had opened, to release him as a dead fetus; something that would have probably put her into the danger of death!... a dreadful thought caused by his bitterness

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us a marvelous symbolic interpretation of this phrase; by which he sees the believer return to his early parents while in paradise,

¹ *Sermon 261:1.*

as though in a mother's womb. He would rather be born there and then, and the gates of paradise are not opened to drive him out through the work of the serpent.

He says [The serpent opened the door of that womb, and man was driven out of that joyful paradise, to live in the valley of death. He wished that the gate of that early paradise was kept shut, and that humanity was delivered there, and increased in a heavenly joy!].

2- HE MARVELS, WHY DID HE NOT DIE AT BIRTH AND PUT IN THE GRAVE:

He wished that he died at birth, believing that it would have been better for him to find rest in the grave, together with the great kings and counselors of the earth. Death for him would have been better than life!

3- A POEM ABOUT THE SWEETNESS OF DEATH:

Having presented a lamentation, wishing that he died at birth; and looking at his present life with its sufferings and tribulations, he presented a poem about how death is sweeter than life; seeing in the abyss a salvation from what he is suffering on earth.

Pope Gregory the Great presents a symbolic interpretation of the poem about the sweetness of death; in which he sees "Job" wish that he died in the womb; Namely, that he was there in paradise,, together with his early parents, Adam and Eve, before being driven out to the world through the envy of the evil one. He saw in joining the kings and the counselors of the earth, in the grave, an encounter with the giants of faith and the great spiritual leaders; where all would rest in one eternal life, where there is no moaning, suffering or envy; "*where the prisoners rest together; and do not hear the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master*" (Job 3: 18, 19).

"Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?" (Job 3: 11)

'Job' probably recognized his fault, that his erroneous wish to be prematurely delivered as a stillborn child, would imply putting his mother into the danger of death. Now, he is trying to correct himself, by wishing instead, that he would be born, then would die directly once he came out of the womb.

'Job' considered his life since he was born, as a curse and a catastrophe; and counted death as the greatest blessing that could ever happen to him. In contradiction to that, the prophet Jeremiah presents in his bitter lamentation, a praise of thanksgiving to God for His '**gift of life**', saying: "*Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassion fail not*" (Lamentation 3: 22).

According to a fiction, an old man, very exhausted for carrying a heavy load, cast his burden to the ground, and in despair, he wished he was dead. When confronted by death who enquired from him what he wants, expecting to hear him asking to let him die; he was surprised to hear him say: 'Please help me to carry this heavy load!'¹.

'Job' presented to us a lamentation, expressing in it his preference for an early death at birth, and commending the grave. It is as though death and the grave have become his intimate friends.

¹ Matthew Henry: *Comm. On Job.*

But, after the Lord Christ came with His free will and authority, to death and to the grave, turning them into a joyful song; not to be sung by the desperate, but by those who are full of hope for the heaven lies; who seek fellowship in the eternal glory; and who desire to encounter their heavenly friends, to partake of their praises.

By the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, the Grantor of resurrection, we sing: *“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s”* (Romans 14: 8).

“Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts that I should nurse? (Job 3: 12).

Pope Gregory the Great rejects the literal interpretation of the two verses 11-12, saying that the righteous ‘Job’, who has been granted such exalted spiritual knowledge, and who has presented in his depths such praises to the divine Judge, would never wish to die through miscarriage, or directly after birth. He rather sees in these two verses, the righteous ‘Job’, bitterly crying, either because of embracing a sin in the heart, or practically committing it.

He suggests four stages for embracing a sin in the heart, and four stages for practically committing it . These four stages are:

a- **Conceiving it in the womb:** This is the first stage, when the sin is 'suggested' in the heart.

As to its execution, it is practiced in secret.

b- **Coming out of the womb, or being delivered:** This is the second stage, when the suggestion transforms **into pleasure in the heart**. As to its execution, it transforms from practicing the in secret, **to shamelessly doing it before the eyes of everyone**.

c- **Received by he knees;** this is the third stage, when it transforms from a mere pleasure of the heart into an inner consent and acceptance. As to its execution, it transforms from a **public** practice of the sin, into a habit to which the sinner is enslaved.

d- **Nursed by the (breast):** The fourth and last stage, when the sin transforms from being accepted, **to being defended by the sinner**, as though he is committing no sin. As to the execution, it transforms from being just a habit, **to a complete maturation in practicing the sin**.

The four stages	The sin in the heart	Practicing the sin
a- Conceiving it in the womb	Suggesting the sin	A secret practice
b- Coming out of the womb	A pleasure in the heart	A sham less public practice
c- Received by the knees	An inner consent in the heart	Turn into a habit
d- Nursed by the breast	The sinner fending the sin	Maturation in practicing the sin

Pope Gregory ends his comment by saying:

[We should know that the first three stages could be easily corrected...; whereas correcting the fourth stage is not as easy.

Our Savior raised the little girl in her home; raised the young man outside it; and raised Lazarus from the grave.

Whoever commits the sin in secret is as though being laid at home; while he, who commits the sin in public, is as though carried outside it. Whereas he, who commits the sin, once and several times, openly and shamelessly, as a habit, would be as though cast into the grave.

However, the merciful Savior, brings all these back to life. His grace shines with its light on the dead, not only through committing secret sins, but also through practice it publicly; and even through falling under the pressure of habit.

Yet, our Savior does not bring those of the fourth category back to life. It is indeed difficult for those who, not only persist on their evil habit, but defend it, to be healed of the death of the soul; About whom it is said: “*Let the dead bury their own dead*” (Luke 9: 60)].

So, **Pope Gregory** believes that the fourth stage of sin; namely, defending, and covering it, up, is reaching its maturation; And that no possibility of resurrection from its death; unless the sinner confesses his sin, stops justifying it, or searching for an excuse, the way Adam and Eve have done.

“For now, I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest” (Job 3: 13).

Pope Gregory presents, as a justification for the bitterness of Job’s soul, that he is thinks about how man could have been, if sin did not enter into his life; saying:

[Man was placed in paradise, connected to bonds of love, to follow his Creator in obedience; and could be eventually transferred to the heavenly city of the angels, even with no death of the body. **He was created eternal, in a way by which he would become mortal, in case he sins; but if he does not, he would remain without death; And with his complete freedom, he would gain the blessing of a world with no possibility of wrong or death.**

Since the day of redemption, the elect are sent, through the death of their body, to the place where the first parents could have been without the death of the body, if they abided to how they were created. By that, man would have “*lain still and quiet*” (13); reaching his eternal city in peace; He would have found a place of rest and comfort, away from the chaos of the human weakness.

That quietness of peace, man enjoyed when he was created, and received the freedom of his will to confront his enemy. But having submitted to him through his free will, the human weakness instantly dwelt in him. **Although he was created by his Maker in a state of quietness filled with peace; yet, once he bowed under his enemy by his free will, he fell under the chaos of war. The tendencies of the body itself became a sort of screams against the peace of mind; something that was unknown to man before his disobedience, as it did not exist; He started to suffer from the chaos of his thoughts, as the body wrestles against the Spirit].**

❖ Joy in the creation of God is a good thing; by which man, receiving the image of God, becomes mature and happy, but going astray in an unclean way of life, following the lead of several others; that is hated by the righteous men.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“With kings and counselors of the earth who built (pyramids) for themselves” (Job 3: 14).

‘Job’ counted death as rest together with the kings and counselors of the earth; who, in order to preserve their memory, built huge pyramids and magnificent tombs; Yet, nobody can distinguish their ashes from those of others; as the pyramids, gold, silver, and every thing they left behind represent nothing.

Pope Gregory believes that the kings here, are the angelic spirits, who dedicate themselves to minister to the Maker of all the creation submitted to them. They are also called ‘Counselors’, as they present counsel to the spiritual world; receiving us as fellow partakers of the kingdom.

“Or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver” (Job 3: 15).

Kings and rulers used to have gold and silver placed in their tombs, to honor them even after death; and probably to distinguish their tombs from those of the poor. But death does not discern between the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the master and the slave; As according to the wise Solomon: *“The rich and the poor have this in common”* (Proverb 22: 2).

Pope Gregory believes as well, that the princes could be the leaders of the holy church, who fill their houses with the precious word of God – the gold purified by fire (Psalm 12: 6).

“Or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light” (Job 3: 16).

In a tomb, after a while, nobody can distinguish between the remains of a king or a ruler, and that of a stillborn child who never saw the light of the day; whom ‘Job’ believes to be in a better state than him; as he desires the rest of sleep and does not get it.

And he never realized that the true rest is in Jesus Christ, in whom alone, we sleep – namely, we are buried together with Him – to be risen in the eternal life with an exalted un-expressible glory.

Pope Gregory believes that the stillborn child who has found rest, are the elect since the beginning of the world, who, although have lived before salvation, yet they died to the world. Those, having no tablets of the law, and fearing God through the natural law, were as though they have died in the womb; Those elect, having believed that the Intercessor is going to come, strived as much as they could; brought themselves to death, as far as pleasures are concerned; and kept the concepts, still not written in a law. That period before the law, presented to us fathers who likened stillborn babies who died in the womb.

Among those early fathers, Pope Gregory presents to us:

a- Abel: About whom there is no indication that he gave any resistance when his brother murdered him.

b- Enoch: Who was justified, *“walked with God, and was no more, because God took him”* (Genesis 5; 24).

c- Noah: Who, by a divine decree, became the only man (together with his household) to survive the great flood that came on earth.

d- Abraham: Who was called a friend of the Lord.

e- Isaac: Who with his weak physical eyes, because of old age, could not see the events of his days; But, by the spirit of prophecy, he was enlightened, through an exalted supernatural insight, to see the future events, .

f- Jacob: In **humility**, he avoided the wrath of his brother Esau; and by his good nature he overcome him. He was fruitful in his descendants; and more fruitful in the Spirit, to have his seed connected to the bonds of prophecy.

“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest” (Job 3: 17).

Death puts an end to the oppression of the wicked who persist on resisting the truth, and persecuting the children of God. As it had put an end to the persecution by

Herod against the early church (Job 12: 1-6, 23); it grants true rest to those who endure the persecution with thanksgiving for God's sake: "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on*", *that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them*" (Revelation 14: 13). "*The righteous is taken away from evil; he shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds*" (Isaiah 57: 1-2).

- ❖ Death is here praised and thanked; as it takes away some from evil; and frees others from their misery; Some would find in it a refuge from evil; and others, an obstacle in the way of deceit.

St. John Chrysostom

"There, the prisoners rest together; they do not hear the voice of the oppressor" (Job 3: 18).

Prisoners often long for death to save them from humiliation. Samson preferred to die, together with all those who ridiculed him, to go on living as a grinder in the prison (Judges 16: 21)

- ❖ Death puts an end to everything. There would not be any possibility to support evil; but the voice of evil would even cease to reach the ears.

St. John Chrysostom

"The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master" (Job 3: 19)

In death, all become equal, the one who dictates forced labor, together with the one who is under him; the small with the great; All are laid together in the grave, that does not distinguish between them.

- ❖ Nobody can escape from its authority, neither a slave nor a free man. By it, all human affairs come to an end: the riches, as well as the dignity. Inequality in this life is huge; but great is freedom after we depart and be there..

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ "***The servant is free from his master" (19)***; and according to the Scripture: "*Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin*" (John 8: 34)... In the present life, even if a slave escapes from his master, yet he is not free from him; But there, he is completely free. There, there would be no doubt concerning the forgiveness of sin; as, when the memory of the sin is no longer condemning the soul, the soul becomes secure; and the conscience would not be terrified because of its feeling of the crime, but would rejoice for forgiveness and the enjoyment of freedom.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Both slaves and their masters are brought to death; where masters are not honored more than their slaves¹.

St. Afrahat

4- THE RIDDLE THAT THOSE WHO COVET DEATH DO NOT GET IT:

In astonishment, 'Job' looks at those who covet death, and do not get it; As though God surrounds them with a fence, to keep them practicing the life of suffering, without realizing God's plan for them.

When 'Job' realized that there is no use for him to go on wishing that he was never born, or that he died at birth; he started complaining that his life continued and

¹ *Demonstration 22 of Death and the Latter Times, 7.*

not cut off; and for the extended span of his temptation. He justified his strong wish for death by the following:

1- All the time, he felt tired amid his awful afflictions, that seemed as though have no end in sight.

2- Even during his past days of prosperity, As he always used to fear trouble, and never felt peace of mind; he said: *“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest”* (Job 3: 26).

Testifying to ‘Job’, St. James says: *“You have heard of the perseverance of Job”* (James 5: 11). Yet, despite his endurance of all those temptations without sinning with his lips, When he saw how grieved for him, his friends were, he opened his mouth and began complaining that he was ever born, that he did not die at birth, and that his tribulation has no end in sight. He felt that he persevered long enough, but he cannot endure any longer; However strong, man may be, he is actually weak and vulnerable. It is as though this book warns us, together with the apostle Paul, saying: *“Let him who thinks he stands, heed lest he falls”* (1 Corinthians 10: 12).

“Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?”
(Job 3: 20).

‘Job’ complains here, that his life continues and is not cut off; and wishes for death to come to him soon. Although light is a good gift; yet, in the midst of his bitterness, he counts that light is increasing his misery; and letting him see it more clearly; ... He would rather do without it.

❖ *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous”* (Psalm 34: 19); those about whom is said: *“It is by many affliction, that (they) enter into the kingdom of heaven”*; and, *“For (they) have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled (their) drink with weeping”* (Psalm 102: 9). They would rather pass through temptations in this world; and consider themselves fortunate to have them; saying with David: *“I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears”* (Psalm 6: 6).

The same way the righteous covet death, *“searching for it like for a treasure”*; the prophet Elijah says: *“It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers”* (1 Kings 19: 4).

The apostle Paul conformed to this as well, when he said to the disciples in Caesarea, who tried to keep him from going up to Jerusalem fearing for his life: *“What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of Lord Jesus”* (Acts 21: 13).

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

❖ **Those who live in pleasure, always fear death;** whereas those living in grief, long for a soon departure.

The rich fear death; whereas the poor wish for it to get rest from their troubles.

Whenever they remember it, the strong get terrified; whereas the sick hope for it to relieve them of their suffering¹.

Father Afrahat

❖ It is probably for the benefit of the righteous, to be chastened here in this world, for any transgression they may have done, to spare them the eternal judgment; While, the wicked, may get a break in this life, to be drawn to the future utter sufferings. That is why it is said to the rich while burning in hell: *“Remember that in your*

¹ *Demonstration 22 Of Death and the Latter Times, 8.*

lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented” (Luke 16: 25)... The saints usually have more fear of the pleasures of this world, than of its risks!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ As far as rest is concerned, **what is there in this world, but war against Satan,** and a continuous struggle against his darts and swords? Our war is perpetual against love of wealth, pride, anger, and vain appearances; and our struggle is continuous against carnal lusts and seductions of this world.

Man’s thoughts are surrounded by the enemy on all fronts, and are threatened by the attacks of the devil on all sides. His thoughts are hardly capable of defense: If he disregards the love of wealth, he is tormented by lusts; And if he overcome lusts, he will face the vain appearance; And if he conquers this, he will have to deal with anger, pride, envy, and jealousy, that would corrupt his good relationships with others.

Despite such multitudes of persecutions and great risks that afflict the heart; we still rejoicing to stay here in the midst of all these wars with Satan, rather than **longing to hasten to be together with Christ,** through soon death. The Lord Himself taught us, saying: *“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy”* (John 16: 20).

Who among us, does not wish to be without grief?!

Who among us, does not long to hasten to have joy?!

The Lord Himself has also proclaimed about the time when our grief would turn into joy, by saying: *“But I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you”* (John 16: 22). **Now, as long as our joy lies in seeing Christ... What blindness would be inflicting our mind; and what foolishness would be coming to us, when we covet for grief, afflictions, and tears of the world, more than for hastening toward the joy that would never be taken away from us?!¹.**

- ❖ What a great benefit we will surely acquire by going out of this world!

As the disciples became sad, when they heard the Lord Christ proclaim to them that He is going away, He said to them: *“If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father;’”* (John 24: 28); teaching us to rejoice when one of our beloved depart from this world; according to the words of the apostle Paul: *“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1: 21).

We should then count , that to die is the greatest gain; something that we can not acquire through the snares of this world, nor through the sins and iniquities of this body. **For by death we forsake the painful troubles, and get rid of the venomous fangs of Satan, to respond to the call of our Lord Christ for us, to rejoice in the eternal salvation².**

Cyprian, the martyr

“Who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures” (Job 3: 21).

By saying, *“Search for it more than hidden treasures”* 'Job' reveals his readiness to do anything possible to search for death, as one would do to acquire the greatest treasure.

¹ *Treatise 7 On the Mortality, 4.*

² *Treatise 7 On the Mortality, 7.*

Despite his readiness to search for death for whatever expense it may cost him; Yet 'Job' never thought of committing suicide; As his life is in the hands of his God, and it is not for him to put an end to it.

- ❖ Those who seriously search for death, do so as though searching for hidden treasures; And the nearer they get to their goal, the greater their zeal for work becomes.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Death of the righteous became rather like sleep, and even like life.

(St. Basil the Great)

St. Gregory the Nezinian, looking at his older sister, **St. Gorgina**, as a living Christian role model; was immensely influenced by her; and greatly fond of her piety and godliness. He informs us here, how she fearlessly got ready for death, and **how she even longed for it:**

- ❖ Gorgina's home was the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrew 12: 22, 23)... dwelt by Christ, and shared by the church of the first fruits, whose names are written in heaven....
- ❖ Everything she could take away from the prince of this world, she put in secret places; not leaving behind her except her body. She forsook everything for the sake of the exalted hope; and the only inheritance she left for her children, was to follow her lead, and to enjoy what she was worthy of.
- ❖ Here, let me talk about her death, in order to give her due... **She strongly longed for the time of her departure; because she knew for sure, by whom she was called; and that she would rather be with Christ than anything else on this earth (Philippians 1: 23).**

As a saint, she longed for getting free from the shackles of the body, and for fleeing from the mire of the world in which we live. **Yet, what was most exalted was that she tasted the beauty of her beloved Christ, in whom she continuously meditated.**

Knowing beforehand the time of her departure from this world, doubled her joy; Most probably God give her that grace, in order to get ready, and not to be disturbed when it happens.

She spent all her life cleansing herself of sin, and seeking perfection. She gained the talent of the perpetual renewal by the Holy Spirit, and abided in Him, according to the worthiness of her early life...

She did not disregard praying for the sake of her husband to reach perfection; a request that God granted her. She wished that everything related to her, would be as perfect as is so intended by God; that nothing on her side, would be imperfect before Christ.

And when the end came, she gave her husband, children, and friends, her last commandment, as was expected from such saint who loved all.

Her last day on earth was a great celebration. We cannot claim that she died fully fulfilled by the days of men; as that was not her wish; for she realized that the days, according to the flesh, are evil, and nothing but dust and mirage; But she died, rather fulfilled by the days of the Lord.... She was set free; or let us say, she was taken to her God; escaped; changed her dwelling place; or ultimately delivered her soul to the Lord.

At the moments of her departure, there was an awesome silence; as though her death was some sort of religious rites, during which her body was laid motionless after her Spirit left it. But her spiritual father, who presided over that magnificent scene, heard her reciting the words of the psalmist: *“I will both lie down in peace and sleep”* (psalm 4: 8). Blessed is she, who dies with these words in her mouth.

That was how you, the beautiful among women sang; and the song became a fact; how you entered into the sweet peace after suffering; and how you ultimately departed, as is befitting for a woman, beloved by God, who lived and died in the midst of good words.

How precious is your portion! more exalted than anything the eye could see; Your departure among a multitude of angels and heavenly creatures; in a procession filled with aplendor, purity, and perfection.

More exalted was her vision of the Holy Trinity; Something that became, not any more far from realization and sensation, that were before under the limitation of the body.

St. Gregory the Nezenian

❖ Death for those who understand it, **is eternity**; whereas, for those fools who do not, is just death!

We should not fear death, but we should fear the perdition of the soul, which is the lack of knowledge of God. This is truly, what should terrify our souls.

❖ Being sure of the fact, that It is impossible to escape from death, the prudent practice virtues; and thinking about the love of God, they can face death with no sighs, fear or tears; being convinced, on one aspect, that death is inevitable; and on another, **that it sets us free of the maladies to which we are submitted in this life.**

St. Anthony the Great

“Who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave” (Job 3: 22)

❖ Such was the way the apostle Paul saw his disciples, as though dead, and buried in the grave of meditation; to whom he said: *“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3: 3). Whoever seeks death would rejoice to find the grave; And he, who wishes to be brought to death, would rejoice more, when he discovers the comfort of meditation; As, dying to the world, he becomes covered and hidden in the bosom of the inner love, away from all the outer disturbances of things.

Father Gregory the great

“Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?” (Job 3: 23)

He had no hope of getting any better; He saw no opening to safety; nor a way to walk; as God has hedged him in, and he become motionless; As is said in Hosea: *“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked”* (Lamentations 3: 9).

❖ Although even death has entered as a fruit of sin; Yet, God’s exaltation, compassion, and great care, have turned it to the benefit of our race. Tell me: What burden does death bare? Is it not actually freedom from troubles? Is it not freedom

from worries? Haven't you heard Job' spraining it, saying: "Death is a help for man; whose way is hidden"¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ **"Whose way is hidden"**; namely, it is not for him to know when, or by what way will be his departure; God hides this knowledge from him; or does not allow him to know it. God does this for our benefit; as when we stay all our days anticipating death, we tend to be always prepared for it; and by that God grant us the chance to consummate what he commanded His disciples, saying: *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24: 42).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ My beloved brethren... We should take into consideration that, living in this world as sojourners and guests, we go on meditating for as long as God allows us to be in it.

I wish we love the day designated for our departure; for on it, we shall be liberated from the snares of the world, and return to paradise and the kingdom of heaven.

If someone finds himself in a foreign land, would he not wish to hasten to return home?! And if it so happens that his return trip is by sea, will he not pray for an appropriate wind, to help him sail fast to his beloved country?!

As we consider paradise as our home, and the holy Patriarchs as our fathers; so why should we not hasten and run back home to greet them?!

How great would be our happiness to get together with our many beloved friends waiting for our return?!

How great would be our pleasure to be in the heavenly kingdom, where we fear death no more?!

And how great would we be in the eternal life?!

There, would be the glorious fellowship with the holy apostles;... There, would be the rejoicing chores of prophets;... There, would be the multitudes of uncountable martyrs, crowned with conquest in their fight against lusts;... There, would be the multitudes of the virgins, who overcome the carnal lusts with their chastity;... There, would be the merciful, crowned for doing the righteousness, through feeding and caring for the poor; for keeping God's commandments, and for transforming their earthly possessions into heavenly treasures.

Therefore, let us hasten to be with these beloved brethren; Let us hasten to join the Lord Christ. When God sees our great longing; And when He beholds the goal of our thoughts and faith, He will bestow on us that great reward, He sets for those who have such a great desire for honoring Him².

Cyprian, the martyr

"For my sighing comes before I eat; and my groaning pour out like water"
(Job 3: 24).

Job's sighing and suffering became his indispensable daily bread; and his groaning became like an incessant flowing river.

- ❖ If all creation is eventually going to dissolve, and nature is heading to be changed, Why then, being a part of creation, should we marvel, **when we feel such a devastating pain**; and be delivered to such a great grief, as allowed for us by God,

¹ On Ps 111.

² Treatise 7 On the Mortality, 26.

according to the measure of, and never to go beyond, our endurance; But, together with the temptation, He gives us an opening, by which we can endure it?!¹.

- ❖ God “*arranged all things by measure and number and weight*” (Wisdom of Solomon 11: 20); He brings over us temptations, that would never exceed our endurance. He tempt all those who strive on the way of true religion, and “*gives tears to drink in great measure*” (Psalm 80: 5) to all those who should demonstrate, amid their suffering, that they keep on thanking Him².
- ❖ I am convinced that, if there is ever a voice that would move the good Lord, His mercy would not be far off, But he would give, together with the temptation, an opening by which you can endure it³.

St. Basil the Great

“For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me” (Job 3: 25).

So 'Job' says, as It seems that he, in the days of his prosperity, he was always in fear that tribulations would eventually come upon him.

- ❖ As long as I am here, in this world; ... As long as I carry a mortal body; ... As long as I, while standing, I dread lest I fall; ... And as long as my well being is always threatened by uncertainties, man’s whole life is vain!⁴.

St. Augustine

- ❖ If our hope as Christians, is limited to this life, our portion would truly be bitter; being so confined in the body, before the time of eternity. Whereas, if we have the love of God, and our souls surpass the limits of the body, we would count that as the beginning of the true life. Why should we therefore grieve like those with no hope?! You should have comfort, and should never fall under your troubles; you should show that you are above, and more exalted than troubles⁵.
- ❖ Beloved brethren, Is the temptation tough? Let us endure the difficulties; As he, who avoids the spears, and the dust of battles, would never be crowned. Or is the enemy deceiving you; and his war is in vain?

Although these temptations are troublesome, yet they are actually weak. Let us then not scream loudly, because of such a little pain; because we would be guilty, and would deprive ourselves of the eternal reward, given to the righteous.

You are the children of those who confessed Christ; You are the children of the martyrs, who strived even to blood against sin. Therefore, make their examples near and dear to you, to be brave as is befitting for your Christianity.

No one among us had his flesh cut off by scourging...No one suffered confiscation of his possessions... We were never led into captivity... We were not put in prison... Therefore what is the actual extent of our suffering?!... The source of our suffering may probably be, that we have not suffered; and that we are not worthy of the passion of Christ!⁶.

St. Basil the Great

¹ Letter 139.

² Letter 219.

³ Letter 256.

⁴ On Ps. 39 (38).

⁵ Ep. 101.

⁶ Letter, 240. ترجمة دكتورة ايغا ادوارد بدمياط.

“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have not rest, for trouble comes” (Job 3: 26)

Going back with his memory to the days before temptation, he finds out that he was never at ease, dreading all the time an imminent catastrophe. Yet that did not cause him to be slothful, but worked with more watchfulness and seriousness.

- ❖ He, who is not watchful, as enjoys prosperity, prevails over his enemies, and is always praised and admired by other people, would need more pity than any one else! Because, expecting no change in his life, he cannot even confront the problems of his prosperity as he should. And once difficult times dwell upon him, he would become disturbed and depressed. ‘Job’, on the contrary, was not like this; but, even during his prosperity, he was always expecting difficult times...; according to the wise words: *“In the time of plenty, think of the time of hunger; In the time of wealth, think of poverty and need”* (Sirach 18: 25)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ What grieved ‘Job’ were not the things imagined by his friends; But his soul was worried whether his enemy can rob him of his inner riches; or can manage to take away from him the good things; because this would be his greatest fear! That is why he proclaims: **“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have not rest, for trouble comes” (26)**. As he kept worrying about his children; every day he offered sacrifices on their behalf (Job 1: 5). Then, in one day, he lost his children, possessions, and health! Even the righteous who pleases God in every thing; still cannot live without *“falling into various trials”* (James 1: 2); and without going through the grieves of this world, as the Lord told His apostles (John 16: 6-22); and according to the words of the apostle Paul: *“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3: 12); But the Lord Christ says: *“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16: 33); and *“He who endures to the end will be saved”* (Matthew 10: 22; 24: 23); through the power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

The desire for death is no longer brought up by a wish to escape from affliction and temptations. A true Christian, being a living member connected to the head – Lord Jesus Christ – would receive the features of the crucified Christ, who received death by His free will; Would love suffering even to death; And would even search for it; not for the sake of the suffering in itself, nor as an escape from the world; But because it is a sign of the true fellowship of love, and of the union between the crucified and suffering Groom and His bride. So, the cross, as far as the true believer is concerned, set forth by suffering as well as by death, from being a sign of sin, and of the denial and deprivation of man of God, the Source of happiness, to become a sign of love and fellowship; according to the words of the apostle Paul: *“Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus”* (2 Corinthians 4: 10); confirming that they are the passion of Christ: *“For as the suffering of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1: 5).

- ❖ Having stretched His hands on the cross, He cast away *“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2: 2).
- ❖ When He raised His body high, the things in heaven are manifested².

¹ On Ps 10.

² Ep. to Adelpsius 8; De Incarn. 25.

- ❖ After the physical resurrection of our Savior, there is no more cause for the fear of death. Those who believe in Christ tread upon death, as though it is nothing; They would rather die, than deny their faith in Christ; being convinced that death does not mean destruction but life; Through the resurrection, they became indestructible.

An obvious proof of this is that, before believing in Christ, men thought of death as a terrifying subject, that would make them cowards; But once they received faith, and the teachings of Christ, they, on the contrary, count death as something of no significance, that they can tread upon; and have become witnesses to the resurrection, realized by the Savior against death¹.

Pope Athanasius the apostolic

- ❖ After Christ came and died for the sake of the life of the world, death is no longer called death, but sleep and repose².
- ❖ Do you wish to know how the cross corrected many faults? Has he not destroyed death, wiped out sin, put an end to the power of Satan, fulfilled the being of our good body? Has it not made good the whole world? Despite all this, do you still not trust it³?
- ❖ “*Who talks of all the wondrous works of the Lord*” (Psalm 105: 2); After death, we became eternal. Do you recognize the extent of our conquest? Yet you should know that you acquired it without labor or sweat; You have not been wounded, nor your weapon been smeared with blood; You did not stand on a battle field!, nor even watched a battle. Strife is our Christ; and the crown of victory is ours.

Now, as long as the conquest is ours, It is thus befitting for us, as soldiers, to sing in a joyful voice, the songs of praise for our Lord, saying: “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15: 54, 55) ⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *De incarnatione Verbi*, 27.

² *De coem. et cruce*. PG 49:394 B.

³ *Baptismal Instructions*, 12:57.

⁴ *De coem. et cruce*. PG 49:396D-397A.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 3 LET ME DIE TO LIVE WITH YOU

- ❖ In every newborn infant I see a living portrait of my birth.
Born to cry out, the moment he enters into the world.
As though he is entering the valley of tears.
Who among mankind, who has no yoke to bear?
The righteous 'Job' cursed the day of his birth.
And Jeremiah cried out, saying: "*Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me*"
And the Psalmist groans, saying: "*For what futility have you created all the children of men?*"
If these are the cries of such pious men of God;
What can I say, and what can talk?
- ❖ We were driven out of the joyful paradise.
To become, as though in perpetual darkness
We have no more hope that daylight will ever shine on us.
Our days are filled with moaning.
We often cry out together with the righteous "Job"
'Why didn't we die while still in our mother's womb?'
Or, 'why didn't we deliver the Spirit at childbirth?'
- ❖ We thank You, O amazing Sun of righteousness!
You shone on those sitting in the darkness.
You even came down to our land, and partook of our suffering.
Now, having been yourself tempted, you help those under temptation.
Let me carry the cross, as you have done.
Let me receive shame, and be driven out of the camp!
There, I shall find you crucified between two robbers.
Counted among the transgressors!
You, who alone is Holy.
I will enjoy suffering, as long as you are with me.
And the grave for me will turn into heaven, as long as you have dwelt in it.
- ❖ Let me die to live with you.
In you, my soul will find rest.
You are my happiness and the rejoice of my heart.
You are my joy, my peace, and my treasure.
For me, you are everything.

THE TOPIC OF THE TALK OF THE THREE FRIENDS

As 'Job' expressed the bitterness of his soul, appearing as someone who has lost his hope and has fallen into despair; His three friends found their chance to reveal what they had in their hearts; namely, that he is a hypocrite. They probably have discussed the matter among themselves, and reached this conclusion; Yet, before the horror of the temptation, they could not utter a word, until he started to express himself.

The elderly friends took the role of adversaries; And 'Job' turned into an defendant. 'Alihu', after being a listener for a while, later became an intermediate. Ultimately, God intervened to re-evaluate the position of each of them.

The first speeches of Job's three friends, have the significance that every tribulation is actually a fruit of sin; That God and man are limitlessly afar; And that, although 'Job' is a sinner; Yet, through repentance, he can get hope, to regain the divine pleasure. 'Job' responds to all that in detail; and answers all those who spoke.

His friends insisted that catastrophes are nothing but punishment for 'Job's hidden crimes; and presented the following proofs of their view:

- 1- The wicked have to face successive catastrophes.
- 2- The righteous are always content.
- 3- Nobody is pure before God.

All that is based upon two principles: That God deals with man even in the present world, before His coming in His eternal kingdom; And that God in His justice, parallels between works and dealings.

'Job' then wished for death to save him from his pains and sufferings, being an escape from the bitter life. **While his friends talked about God, 'Job' talked with God;** which made him the more sincere among them.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST TALK BY ELIPHAZ THE TEMANITE

A SPIRITLESS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Every one of the three friends had a true faith in God, whom we should worship by walking in righteousness. Each of them proclaimed his faith from a different angle; Yet Eliphaz was probably the most experienced and deep among them; even though he was unable to interpret God's work through the bare mind and thinking. Although it is more befitting for man to realize that he is unworthy to interpret God's plan and dealings, or to realize His secrets; Yet he should offer Him sacrifices for the sake of the forgiveness of his sins (1: 5).

Eliphaz was proud of his personal experience, beside his visions and dreams, that led him to claim being able to recognize the voice of God.

Now, having the Holy Book in our hands, we are no more in need of visions and dreams.

Eliphaz, beside demonstrating God's majesty and holiness, he also showed man's weakness and failure, in case he behaved or thought outside the circle of God's care. The Holy Book is the record of the reconciliation between God and man, when man could not realize it on his own, being unable enjoy salvation through his human ability; or to enjoy wisdom and life by himself.

Being the oldest and of the best character among the three, Eliphaz started talking, about himself and his endeavor (Chapters 4 – 5), in an eloquent and a beautiful poetic style, and in the most decent and polite way.

We can divide his talk into four divisions:

1- **He marvels how 'Job', an experienced elder**, who used to comfort others, would fall into such despair, "*Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?*" (4: 6).

2- **Eliphaz' vision** (4: 8; 5: 7); In which he responds to the criticisms of 'Job'; trying to arouse in him the feeling of God's exalted purity, and of the weakness of His creatures, among whom 'Job' is one; As they are prone to errors (4: 17-19); Why should 'Job' protest against God?! Having lost his children and possessions, that must be a result of his sins, as "*Those who plow iniquity and sow trouble, reap the same*" (4: 8). Then he tries to comfort 'Job' with the notion that trouble prevails on all men; so he should not expect to be an exception; and should endure it with submission and perseverance.

3- **He informs him, what he (Eliphaz) would have done in his place** (5: 8). Although he commends Job's exalted attributes (4: 5); and compassionately incites him to raise his case to God; Yet basing his talk upon a somewhat weak principle, aroused in 'Job' a spirit of resistance (6: 7). He claims, that, if he is in Job's place, he would deliver himself to God, the Almighty, the amazing in all His ways, who lifts up the humble, brings the flock to safety, and save the poor and the miserable.

4- Why should 'Job' protest against God for His chastisements; that are blessings on those who endure them; Because God wounds and heals; crush, and cure with His hands.

1- Seeking Job's permission to talk	1 - 2
2- Commending 'Job';	3 - 4
3- Rebuking 'Job' for not being steadfast	5 - 6
4- A general theological principle	7 - 11

1- SEEKING JOB'S PERMISSION TO TALK:

“Then Eliphaz the Terminate answered and said ...” (Job 4: 1).

It is obvious that the three friends had some discussion among them, and agreed to confront ‘Job’ in a serious way; on the assumption that he has deceived them, as well as the people, by pretending piety and generosity; when his appearance hides evils, known only to God.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem says that Eliphaz talked shamelessly and unfittingly to ‘Job’, as though intending to bring down that mighty and well-built tower of a man. He noticed how ‘Job’ *“opened his mouth”* (3: 1); while Eliphaz *“answered”* (4:1); How the first innocently opened his mouth to utter some words, hoping to draw some comfort from his friends, for what has dwelt upon him; While Eliphaz’ answer reveals as though he and his friends harbored within them, a bitter intention to destroy their friend. Eliphaz’ words came as a response to some boiling feelings inside him.

“If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? (Job 4: 2).

It seems that the three friends were looking at ‘Job’ on his heap of trash, not with compassion, but with intense resentment, assuming that he deceived them, as well as every one else; Yet God put an end to his deception, and exposed his evil and iniquity.

When ‘Job’ opened his mouth in protest, they counted him as awfully surpassing his limits; and decided not to keep silent any more. For a whole week, they endured his deception, when he was silent, But now, when he opened his mouth, and cursed the day of his birth; they, counting themselves as men of God; felt that it is their duty to defend His justice and righteousness. Counting Job’s protest as an insult to God, they decided to respond to him with firmness.

The way Eliphaz started his talk, although apparently polite and decent, Yet, he openly and bluntly told him, that despite their sympathy for his sufferings, they could not afford to flatter him. Eliphaz probably intended to ask ‘Job’ not to misunderstand their intentions, or to assume that they are not caring for him; and to assure him that they do not intend to add to his grief, but to try to find a sound way to deal with his condition.

❖ By his words, Eliphaz seems as though blowing a horn to declare war against ‘Job’.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Not every one knows how to minister to someone passing through such kind of tribulation; Some add to their pains; either with wicked intention, or with foolishness and ignorance.

It is obvious in the present case, that those who came to comfort 'Job' lacked proper experience; and deserved to be called by him: *“wicked physicians”*; who violently increased the inflammation of the wounds of someone, helplessly lying on the ground, and gave him more unwarranted troubles, instead of more compassion.

Notice how, their words, not only lacked comfort, but also gave him serious depression; how they aroused long debates with renewed accusations; against the sound advice saying: *“Do not add to the troubles of the desperate”* (Sirach 4; 3).

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Eliphaz said: **“Who can endure the harshness of your words?”** (The Septuagint version)... Now, What did ‘Job’ say to warrant such accusation?! ... He wished for death to be saved of his present life. ... Did he say: ‘Several evils have come upon me, despite my righteousness and my great virtues?’ ... No, but he said: ‘I wish I can hide among the wicked, among my servants, together with the stillborns; ... to get what the wicked have got’.

St. John Chrysostom

2- COMMENDING JOB:

Eliphaz began his talk by commending ‘Job’, regarding his teaching, preaching, and guidance of many; He had to say so; as Job’s life testifies to all that. On one aspect, Eliphaz intended to show that he is a just and a reasonable man; And on another aspect, he intended to use that commendation to attack ‘Job’s alleged vanity.

Anyway, the words of Eliphaz reveal to us the actual personality of ‘Job’, as a living leader, who bears the spirit of fatherhood, demonstrated by his care for instructing others, and his generosity in giving.

“Surely you have instructed many; And you have strengthened weak hands” (Job 4: 3).

He commends him as a teacher and a practical instructor, who taught others, and strengthened weak hands to work and to serve. But, he seems as though saying to him: [If you have strengthened others with your qualities, how could you not strengthen yourself?]

- ❖ Let us meditate in the high standards reached by that man 'Job'; How he instructed the ignorant, supported the weak, and strengthened the slothful; amid his great responsibilities of caring for his household, his several commitments, and his worries about his own children; How he dedicated himself to put others on the right path. But the heretics and the wicked, while showing the exaltation of the good, intend to turn these qualities into accusations. So did Eliphaz, when he was searching for a chance to revile ‘Job’ from the same angle by which he is commending him.

Pope Gregory the Great

Thanks to Eliphaz, who, although not out of love, has provided us with a marvelous aspect of Job’s person. As a king, a ruler, or a head of his tribe, he was not someone who loved practicing authority, as much as he, in fatherhood used to instruct, advise, and strengthen the weak hands. There are many instructors, who do not support the weak, nor bear a spirit of fatherhood. St. Paul says: *“Though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 4: 15). The true spiritual instructor bears the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, about which the Lord Christ says: *“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth”* (John 16: 13). Whoever bears the Spirit of truth, would present, together with the instruction, a practical help, to strengthen the weak hands; according to the words of the apostle, saying: *“Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all”* (1 Thessalonian 5: 14).

St. Augustine believes that this is the way of him, who provide the citizens of God’s city along their journey on earth, with the proper medication, that gives the

chance for the Holy Spirit to work, to grant healing to the sick souls, to bring them over to the heavenly home¹.

❖ In case you hate the wicked and the disobedient; namely, all the sinners; You would consequently find out that you have cut yourself off most of your brethren; or practically off everyone; as nobody is without sin.

If we are going to hate God's enemies more than voracious animals, we shall be disgusted of all, and shall become puffed with pride like the Pharisees.

Paul commands us otherwise, saying: "*We exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all*" (1 Thessalonian 5; 14)².

❖ "*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers*" (1 Corinthians 4: 15)... Here, Paul seeks no honor for himself, but he rather shows the depth of his love. As honor concerns the instructor, but love is the sign of the father³.

St. John Chrysostom

"Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees" (Job 4: 4)

How many weak hands has 'Job' strengthened for proper work? How many, has he upheld from the dust, and strengthened their feeble knees to carry them along the way of life by the power of God?. So, Eliphaz commends 'Job', so that if he rebukes him, he would not assume that he is against him, or disregard his past with all its good points. Having comforted many, he deserves to find someone to comfort him.

Some interpreters believe that Eliphaz said that to rebuke 'Job', as though he is telling him:

[You, who instructed many, Why could you not instruct yourself?!

You, who strengthened many weak hands, Why could you not find comfort for your weakness?!

You, who, by your words, upheld those who stumbled, Why are you so cast on the ground, body and soul?!

You, who strengthened the feeble knees, Why don't you strengthen yourself; instead of collapsing before the ailments that dwelt upon you, acting as though paralyzed?!

Is this not a proof of your hypocrisy? Providing others with medication, and refraining from using it to be healed of your own ailment?

You, who teach others not to collapse; You do collapse! "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4: 23)].

❖ Neglecting our brethren would bring upon us a great punishment, and chastisement without mercy.

Persistence on instructing and teaching would make man constructive and in a better condition. To confirm this, I may quote a public parable, saying: [Consistent drops of water will break the rock].

Is there anything softer than water? And is there anything more solid than a rock? Yet, consistent work may overcome nature; and would rather overcome human nature.

In case you see a great part of the church, as motionless as a dead body!

¹ *City of God, 15:6.*

² *On Corinthians, homily 33;5.*

³ *Homilies on Corinthians, 13:4.*

Could you say: This does not concern me?!

You have great responsibility toward your brethren; and would be held accountable if you do not counsel them, try to keep them away from evil, and draw them from their slothfulness. It is not befitting for a church member to be of benefit just to himself, and not to many others!

The Lord Christ made that clear, when He called us *“salt”* (Matthew 5: 13); *“leaven”* (Matthew 13: 33); and *“light”* (Matthew 5: 14); As all these items are of benefit to us and to everyone else a lamp does not give light to itself but to those sitting in the darkness. You are a lamp, not to enjoy the light alone, but to bring back someone who lost his way. What is the use of a Christian who does not benefit others? Or who does not bring someone back to virtue?

So is *“salt”*, It does not preserve itself, but preserves food against corruption... God made you a spiritual salt to preserve the lazy and the slothful; to pull them away from their corrupt condition, and to rebind them to the body of the church.

For the same reason, the Lord called us *“leaven”*; As the leaven does not raise itself; but, although it is so tiny, yet it raises the whole dough, whatever its size may be. So you should be; however small in number, Yet you are a strong multitude in faith and zeal toward the Lord. Like the leaven which looks weak, as far as its size is concerned, yet its nature is actually mighty and strong... So are you; You can draw to the church a multitude, of greater numbers than you are, to make them as zealous as you are!

That is why I keep exhorting you with zeal, as I always did, saying: [Bring your brethren along; ... Guide those who go astray; ... Instruct them by your example; namely, by action, and not only by words.

May the Lord of love, to whom we pray, take away from our Spirits, every hate, bitterness, and anger, to grant us – through our binding to each other in a tight union, as different members of one body (Ephesians 4: 16) – To present to Him, by one accord, one mouth, and one Spirit, the praise of thanksgiving due to Him¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Disregarding the real intension of Eliphaz, we shall find a living testimony to a pious man who, although not referred to Isaac the son of Abraham, a king and not a priest, Yet he put in his heart to support those who stumble, and to strengthen the feeble knees. That man is going to judge many of God’s ministers and priests, of both the Old and the New Testaments. As there is no task of shepherding greater than bowing low toward the fallen, to hold their hands, and to bring them and ourselves up. If the divine Word, incarnated; humbly came down to our earth; and carried us in Him to heaven; it is also befitting for every minister, even for every believer, to support and to help others; that all would enjoy the fellowship with God.

Eliphaz provided us, by showing the good attributes of ‘Job’, with a living program for shepherding, and even for life of faith; how every believer should care for his brother’s life through love; without disregarding his care for his own salvation and that of his household.

3- REBUKING JOB FOR NOT BEING STEADFAST:

“But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you and you are troubled” (Job 4: 5).

¹ To Those Who Had Not Attended The Assembly.

Eliphaz rebukes 'Job', saying that, when it is his turn to drink of the cup of affliction, he collapses, becomes weary, and terrified. Here, he starts attacking him, by **accusing him of hypocrisy**. It is as though he says to him: 'When you were prosperous, you were good in teaching; but, falling into poverty, you became out of patience, and your weakness is exposed.

- ❖ Those who are fond of debating, attack the life of the righteous by two ways: Either confirming that what they say is wrong; Or that the truth they say, is not reflected on their own behavior; which was the way, the righteous 'Job' was rebuked by his friends, after they started by commending him. The wicked, so as not to appear as such, sometimes say about the righteous, the good things they are known to have, and are difficult to deny.

Pope Gregory the Great

St. John Chrysostom justifies the weariness in Job's behavior, as a natural reaction to the horrifying catastrophes that dwelt upon him, so suddenly and successively; beside the vicious attacks and accusations of his friends.

However, we cannot disregard the fact that it is more befitting for the one who is in a position of a leader, an instructor, and a father, not to be quickly disturbed before tribulations; but to be a role model of strength and comfort to others.

- ❖ There is nothing that bring more harm to the church, than those who have the image and title of holiness, but show otherwise in their behavior. It is a grave error to give the responsibility of shepherding to such a person; and such an unwise choice would certainly have drastic consequences; as his high position would cause his shortcomings to give the wrong message to his flock. I wish those who feel unworthy, would keep themselves away from bearing such a heavy burden; and would rather let the ears of their hearts listen to the voice, saying: "***Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea***" (Matthew 18: 6; Luke 17: 2). Here, the millstone symbolizes the whirlpool of this life; and the depth of the sea, to the eternal perdition. The punishment of hell would be lighter, for a layman, who puts on an appearance of false holiness, to perish on his own, than to put on the attire of shepherding, and causes others to perish through his evil example!¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Not everyone, who can keep himself pure of sin, even on an exalted level, is capable of leading others to virtue. It is not enough for whoever takes the responsibility of shepherding, to be free from sin... But he is committed to rise up, in doing good, to the level of the commandment, saying: "***Depart from evil, and do good***" (Psalm 37: 27).

His Spirit should, not only be free of every trace of wickedness; but it has to acquire virtues. He should surpass his flock not only in dignity, but rather more in virtues. He should know no limit in doing well, or in spiritual growth; and should not consider his mere prominence on others, a great gain.

He should never compare himself to others, whether spiritually advanced or otherwise; but should measure himself in the light of the divine commandments. He should not measure virtue with a small balance, as long as it comes from God "***For of***

¹ Pastoral Care. 1:2.

Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen”
(Romans 11: 26).

St. Gregory, the Nezenzian

“Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?” (Job 4: 6)

Here, he rebukes him on showing vain appearances of reverence, hope, and uprightness; all of which, he thinks, have actually no roots in his depths!

Eliphaz in this, is consummating the work, and serving the purposes of Satan; He is trying to provoke ‘Job’ to blaspheme against God, **through accusing him of hypocrisy; and of having vain appearances of reverence, hope, and integrity.**

❖ Eliphaz intends by these accusations to distort the past good history of ‘Job’, and even his intentions.... He means to say to him: You either did not work; your life is full of deceit; your reverence to God was not with a good intention, but was only vain talk; Or your hope was unreasonable, and foolish.... If your actions were true, and your life was pure, you would not fear of these evils!

You see how Eliphaz is attacking him; How he is doing his best to prove to him that, it is his foolishness that brought upon him all those troubles!

“By the blast of God they perish; and by the breath of His anger they are consumed” (Job 4: 9 LXX). Now, you notice something else; He is telling ‘Job’: Do not assume that, it is the devils and the wicked, full of envy, are those responsible for what came upon you; No, It is actually God Himself who is chastening you; and His chastisement, therefore, is undoubtedly just.

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory commenting on Eliphaz' words: **“Where is your reverence, your confidence, and the integrity of your ways?” (Job 4: 6);** says that , although he unjustly reviled 'Job', yet he accurately described the steps and stages of the ordainments of virtues; namely, the reverence to God, the confidence in him; followed by patience, and finally reaching perfection:

a- **Reverence to God;** namely, the fear of God, is the start of the way: **“In the fear of God, there is strong confidence”.**

❖ I wish we do not count wealth as a very good thing; as the great goodness is not to possess riches, **but to acquire the fear of God, and every way of piety¹.**

❖ Fear is not less important than the protection of a high wall, and a mighty tower².

St, John Chrysostom

b- Through the fear of God, we cross over to **“Strong confidence”** in Him; something that appears only in tribulation.

❖ Fear of God includes all the necessary requirements of the (continuous joy); because he, who fears the Lord as is befitting, and have confidence in Him, will gather all sources of happiness, and will acquire a complete spring of rejoice. **Like when a drop of water falls on a spacious range of ground, and it would soon vanish; It would be the same for him, who fears God, Whatever dwells upon him will scatter and vanish in the spacious range of huge joy.**

It is really amazing; although there would be reasons for grief, Man would be rejoicing. Any bitterness he may encounter, would be of no significance for him, compared to his enjoyment of that perpetual joy¹.

¹ Concerning the Statues, homily 2.

² Concerning the Statues, homily 15.

St. John Chrysostom

c- Through confidence in the Lord, a believer would enjoy **perseverance** or patience. He would be justified, in the true sense of the word, and would grow in strength through his endurance of the faults of others. As he, who is not capable of fronting opponents, would be wounded by the sword of cowardice.

- ❖ For the last four days, we are preoccupied with commenting on the parable of 'Lazarus and the rich man'; demonstrating that treasure we find in a body covered with wounds; a treasure, not of gold or silver, but of wisdom, **endurance, and perseverance**².

St. John Chrysostom

d- Patience would lead to integrity. Man would be perfect, if he is long-suffering before the weakness of others. *"By your patience you will gain your souls"* (Luke 21: 19).

This is the **ladder of integrity**: The **fear of God** will grant us **confidence** in Him; and that will give us **strength** amid tribulations; and this strength will provide us with **patience** in enduring the weaknesses of others; and with that patience we will reach ways of **integrity**.

- ❖ Integrity has two forms: a regular form, and a higher one. The first of them is acquired here, and the other will be acquired later on. One is according to human capabilities, and the other concerns the perfection in the coming world. God, on the other hand, is just through all, wise above all, and perfect in all³.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ The apostle speaks of himself as perfect and imperfect. He counts himself as imperfect, when he thinks about the righteousness he still lacks; Yet He is perfect, not to be ashamed to admit it; and that he is making progress toward perfection⁴.

St. Augustine

4- A GENERAL THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE:

"Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? (Job 4: 7)

Here, Eliphaz introduces a practical proof of what he accuses 'Job'; as, according to him, no righteous man has ever perished; nor an upright man ever cut off. He asks 'Job', with his long experience, to provide him with a single example of a righteous or an upright man, who has passed through what 'Job' is passing through.

This is an ethical theological principle, that prevailed on the minds of many; As even after the law, we find David admonishing the Lord, how could He make the ways of the wicked a success!, And how could He allow the righteous to be afflicted! But he was soon to discover the truth; that the righteous will get their heavenly reward; whereas the wicked, which persist on their evil, will fall under the judgment. The Psalmist says: *"Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb...I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; Indeed I sought him, but he*

¹ Concerning the Statues, homily 18.

² W. W. Wiersbe: *Treasury of the World's Great Sermons*, 1993, p. 130.

³ *Duties of the Clergy*, 3:2:11.

⁴ *Two Letters of Pelagius*, 3:19.

would not be found... But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble” (Psalm 37).

What Eliphaz said would be true, if he meant by perdition, what is eternal; But he is not right to apply it on temporal tribulations. That is why what he said does not apply to ‘Job’, who did not eternally perish.

The prophet says: “*The righteous perishes*” (Isaiah 57: 1); And the wise Solomon says: “*One event happens to the righteous and the wicked*” (Ecclesiastes 9: 2); till the temporal life comes to an end; Then this is separated from that.

❖ “**Who ever perished being innocent? Or where the upright ever cut off?**” (7); although this may mostly happen in the present life; Yet, in their perdition, they are kept for eternal glory. If no innocent ever perished, the prophet would not say: “*The righteous perishes; and no man takes it to heart*” (Isaiah 57: 1). And if God, in His care, does not let the righteous perish, the wisdom would not say about the righteous: “*They were caught up so that evil might not change their understanding*” (Wisdom 4: 11).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The wicked non-believer, even if we assume that he is clothed with a heavenly body, would remain naked, for he has not done anything to gain the attire of the inner man!¹.

St. Dedymus the blind

❖ The temptations and sufferings, thought by some as evil, are not avoided by the saints, but rather strongly sought by them, and bravely endured; to make them beloved by God, and given the crown of eternal life... The blessed apostle says: “*I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12: 10)².

Father Tadrus

“**Even as I have seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same**” (Job 4: 8)

Eliphaz, in his sayings depends on two main factors: his experience and his personal views; saying: “**As I have seen:**”(8), and “*from the visions of the night*” (13 etc.).

He assumes, through his experience, that he presents a sound theory; having found out that, on the wicked, tribulations would justly dwell, according to extent of their evil. But what happened to ‘Job’ would prove that this theory is not correct (21: 17) etc.

It so seems that Eliphaz has not reacted well to the affliction of ‘Job’; and counted the sufferings which he faces, as little, compared to the extent of his hidden evils; But his most serious evil is rather, going too far in protesting against God. Although he was hoping that ‘Job’ would eventually repent, so that his afflictions would go away; Yet, cursing the day of his birth, is what would destroy him completely.

A fact that happens every day, is that what man sows, he will reap; According to the apostle Paul: “*Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you*” (2 Thessalonians 1: 6); And as is said: “*He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the*

¹ Pauline Comm. From the Greek Church.

² مناظرات يوحنا كاسيان، طبعة 1968، ص 150.

sword” (Revelation 13: 10). Yet God, in His long-suffering, anticipates the repentance of the wicked; and in his love, He allows tribulations for the righteous, in order to be justified!

Job’s friends who came to comfort him, were pressing on him; and like enemies, they were disturbing him with bitter words.

- ❖ The only comfort for those who find themselves in misery and grief, is to be found innocent of their iniquity; so as not to appear bearing their sufferings as a punishment for their sin. But it so seems that Job’s friends were trying to deny him even this comfort; counting him as the actual cause of his own misery; that he brought on himself the wrath of God, by his serious iniquities; and that he suffers those tribulations as a price for his evil deeds! They mentioned the punishments of the wicked (compare Job 4: 8-9), who sowed iniquities, and reaped grief for themselves! Who perished through God’s command, and were consumed by the breath of His anger, that was blown on those who dwell in houses of clay (Compare Job 4: 19, 21 LXX); by God who “*catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them*” (Compare Job 5: 13, 16 LXX). What they said would be true, as far as the power of God is concerned, but not true concerning the worthiness of that great righteous man ‘Job’¹.

St. Ambrose

“By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed” (Job 4: 9).

It is a fact that, all what the wicked people plan, would fail and perish by a blast of God. He is long-suffering on them, the way he was on the Pharaoh of Egypt in the days of Moses. But when the cup of their evil becomes full, He consumes them; so that the “*rod of the wicked would not fall on the righteous*”; He destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea! That, however, does not apply to ‘Job’, for what has dwelt upon him was meant to justify, and not to destroy him.

Eliphaz intended to put the terror in ‘Job’ heart, by telling him that the tribulations that have dwelt on him, were only just the beginning; And in case he does not confess his hidden evils, and stop his arrogance, he would definitely face utter perdition.

- ❖ Eliphaz intended to say to ‘Job’: You are not what you claim to be! In deception, you wish others to count you righteous! See, what you have brought upon yourself! Your body is corrupted; Your children, your possessions, wealth, and the crown of your inheritance are all destroyed. You are truly, not as pure and true as you claim to be, and as you think of yourself. You are a sick man! And it is not unjust that you are facing all these tribulations that God has brought upon you!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Anyway, if both the righteous and the wicked are subjected to temptations and afflictions, Yet, the soul of the first would rejoice inside him amid the sufferings, for he feels that they are brought by the hand of God to purify and justify him. Whereas the wicked would groan within himself, and would feel as though he has fallen in a net. He would have the option, either to reconsider his position and return to the Lord his Savior, or, foolishly and stubbornly persist on his evil, to fall in the bitterness of this world, as well as in the coming age.

¹ *De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:4:10.* ترجمة جرجس كامل

❖ God justifies the righteous by testing them, but hates the oppressor.

He judges both the righteous and the wicked; But as the wise Solomon says: *“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul”* (Proverb 15: 32); whereas *“He who gets wisdom loves his own soul”* (Proverbs 19: 8).

“Upon the wicked He will rain coals” (Psalm 11:6); Or, (according to another version), He rains upon them (traps), to catch, and commit them to take the straight road, under the control of His rein; and to give them the possibility of abiding to his words: *“I am the Way”* (John 14: 6)¹.

❖ *“How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts!”* (Psalm 84: 1); where the dwelling place of man will move from earth to heaven... The mind and heart, filled with longing to the dwelling place of the lord, are fruitful and happy! Whereas the sinner's mind, at the time of his death, will not be preoccupied, with that dwelling place, but with the punishments awaiting him; He would not be meditating in the kingdom of heaven, but in the terrifying fire of hell!².

❖ The wicked are *“like the chaff which the wind drives away”* (Psalm 1: 4). The Holy Book says that the wicked will be miserable, not even as the dust of the earth, that may seem as though without being, but, as it scatters here and there by the wind, with no power to resist, definitely has a sort of existence in itself... . The same thing with the wicked; Once he denies God, he would be driven away, to wherever the vain blast of Satan casts him³.

❖ Miserable is he, who has the masks of evil; and happy is he, who has the many masks of goodness⁴.

St. Jerome

“The roaring of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken” (Job 4: 10).

He likens the fierce oppressors and persecutors to roaring lions; whose voice, by God's justice, would no more terrify the wilderness and forests; and whose teeth would be broken, to make them unable to tear their prey apart; namely they would be stripped off their weapons by God (11); to starve, and leave no young ones behind them.

Eliphaz probably intends to accuse 'Job' in an indirect way; that he used to be like a fierce lion, with no one in the whole region to challenge his authority; His commands were like the terrifying roars of a lion that oppressively and unjustly devours and robs his prey. But behold, his authority is now no more; his wealth is scattered; his family is lost; and no son to take up his place.

So Eliphaz turned from commending 'Job' to cursing him!

“The old lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered” (Job 4: 11).

❖ It is easier for the lion to become coward, than for the righteous to lead an easy life.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Eliphaz compares 'Job' to a lion, because of his past royal authority; Yet he adds: *“the roaring of the lioness”* (according to the Septuagint version), as a hint to the greatness of Job's virtue; Then he further adds: *“the arrogance of the dragons”*;

¹ Homily 60 on Ps 11 (10).

² Homily 63 on ps 84 (83).

³ Homily, on Ps.1.

⁴ Homily 14 on Ps.82 (81).

hinting to his Spirit; as the dragon is counted as a king among the reptiles. Anyway Eliphaz, treading more upon the sufferings of the righteous man, says that all that would be broken, and come to an end.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

5- SUPPORTING HIS VIEW BY A VISION OF THE NIGHT:

“Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it” (Job 4: 12).

Here, Eliphaz, with the intention to condemn ‘Job’, tells him about a vision he saw before coming to encounter him. Some believe that God granted Eliphaz that vision, secretly in a whisper, to bring peace to his soul that was disturbed for what he heard about his friend ‘Job’.

Humbly, Eliphaz admitted that he got a little portion of the divine secret, although he failed to understand it all as he should.

“In disquieting thoughts from the vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men” (Job 4: 13).

During the night, when deep sleep falls on men; and while Eliphaz was preoccupied with what is behind what happened to his friend, God gave him this vision. The Psalmist David calls on us to talk with God in our hearts; and to keep still when He talks to us: *“Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still”* (Psalm 4: 4). And St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian says to us: [Keep your mouth still, for your heart to talk; and keep your heart still, for God to talk].

It is befitting for us during the night to remember God, and to meditate in His law; He would then proclaim to us His secrets and wisdom: *“When I remember you on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches”* (Psalm 63: 6).

“Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake” (Job 4: 14).

It seems that before he saw the vision, he felt that all his bones trembled, and his heart was filled with the fear of God; he realized His might; and felt that he is too small to admonish God. By that he was prepared to receive the divine message. The Psalmist exhorts us, saying: *“serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling”* (Psalm 2: 11).

“Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair on my body stood up” (Job 4: 15).

It was most probably an angel sent by God, to minister to His word. The hair of his body stood up; as the heavenly creatures became a subject of horror to men since the fall of Adam; for fear that they may be carrying a painful message, never expecting good news.

In the old days, the Levites used to shave all their body hair (Numbers 8: 7), regarding it as dispensable carnal things. Eliphaz, carrying evil intentions toward ‘Job’, could not bear the spirit passing before his face; He lost his peace, and was wholly disturbed, that the hair on his body stood up.

“It stood still, But I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes” (Job 4: 16).

Eliphaz clearly saw an angel, passing before him like a spirit, **as though he was looking in a mirror; Yet he could not discern its figure.**

As we do not hear god’s voice amid the noise of the world, it came to him as a whisper. ... Elijah *“did not encounter God in the wind, but through a still small voice”* (1 Kings 19: 11, 13).

Having carried bitter carnal thoughts toward 'Job'; as the spirit passed before his face, he could not, with his carnal mind distinguish the spiritual things; but saw imaginary forms; And could not discern the small voice of the Spirit. So Eliphaz unintentionally confessed that he has lost his peace, the night vision disturbed him, his bones trembled, his body hair stood up, and he could not sleep in peace. That is the fruit of man, who unjustly accuses his brethren, turning the truth into vanity.

“Then I heard a voice saying: Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?” (Job 4: 17).

The message came to rebuke 'Job'; who could not claim that he is more righteous than God, nor more pure!

“Woe to him who strives with his Maker!... Shall the clay say to him who forms it, What are you making?” (Isaiah 45: 9)

“Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You” (Jeremiah 12: 1).

“Do You enter into a judgment with Your servant? For in Your sight no one living is righteous” (Psalm 143: 2)

“Let God be true, but every man a liar. As it is written, ‘That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged’” (Romans 3: 4).

“By the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Romans 3: 20).

- ❖ To be righteous, man is committed to keep the whole law; something that is almost impossible for the human nature to realize. As every man is a liar, on that day when the lord comes to judge mankind, he will alone be justified in what He says; as His words are true in everything; they are the words of truth¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ I do not trust myself, but I seek the mercies of the truth and justice that are Yours. *“Do not enter into a judgment with Your servant” (Psalm 143: 2).* See how, in saying this, the prophet clearly proclaims his trust in the compassion of Christ!².

St. Jerome

- ❖ If every man is a liar, and God alone is truth, what is befitting for us, the ministers and bishops of God, to do, but to put off the human faults, and to keep the commandments of God?³.

Cyprian, the martyr

“Even in His servants He puts no trust and His angels He charges with errors” (Job 4: 18).

St. John Chrysostom believes that he speaks here about the heavenly hosts, in whom God puts no trust; namely, that their nature is prone to error.

St. Basil, in his letter to 'Emphelicus', says that, because the heavenly hosts have the freedom of will, and can lean, either to good, or to evil, they are in need of the help of the Holy Spirit.

In his third essay against 'Omonius', he also says, that the rulers and principalities, etc. derive holiness from their strife, and continuous meditation in God; as they are not holy by their own nature; longing to goodness, they gain holiness according to the level of their pure love for God.

And in his essay on the Trinity he says that those heavenly creatures get their holiness from the Holy Spirit according to the rank of each of them. This indicates that

¹ *Commentary on Romans (3:4).*

² *Homily 53 on Ps 143 (142).*

³ *Letters, 67:8.*

they are not good by nature, but through the freedom that draws them to goodness and grace.

What keeps the angels now from falling is that firstly, their meditation in God steadily grows and increases; and secondly, their knowledge of what has once dwelt upon the falling angelic hosts, as a result of their vain pride. That is beside their persistent opposition against the evil angels, makes them longing more and more to goodness and justification before God.

- ❖ The lilies represent to us, the beauty of the heavenly angels, whom God clothed with the splendor of His glory. Like the lilies, they did not labor nor spun, but received from the beginning what is, and will perpetually be theirs. And as in the resurrection, men will be like angels, He intends for us to wish for the beauty of the heavenly attire, to become like the angels in splendor¹.

St. Hilary

- ❖ Men and angels are indeed counted as cruel, if compared to You; As You alone is the wholly compassionate King... We supplicate You to be the Judge, as You are compassionate on all nations².

St. Jerome

- ❖ The nature of angels, is uttering, rational, and free; and it is also changeable; namely, their will is transferable. All creatures are transferable; and it is the non-created, who is alone un-transferable. As long as the nature of every creature is both uttering and rational, it is free. And as long as it is created, it is transferable (changeable); has the ability to persist and to progress in goodness, or to transfer to evil... The angel is eternal, not by nature, but by grace³.

Father John of Damascus

It seems that the words concerning the angels are not a part of the vision, but a commentary by Eliphaz. Although angels are holy creatures, yet they could not be trusted on the secrets of God that He reveals to whom He chooses. God is the good Vinedresser who takes care of His vineyard by Himself; and does not trust neither the heavenly nor the earthly creatures with it; however holy or pure they are. As angels, if compared to God in wisdom, they are considered ignorant and fools.

- ❖ There is no need to say, how, when Moses and Aaron disobeyed God at the waters of 'Maribah', they were denied entrance into the promised land (Numbers 20: 12). The righteous 'Job' says that angels and all creatures are prone to err⁴.

St. Jerome

“How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust; who are crushed like a moth?” (Job 4: 19).

Comparing the wisdom of angels to that of God, the former is considered a folly; and comparing the life of man to that of angels, the former is considered like that of a moth.

If this is the case of the angels who dwell in heaven, how would it be for men who dwell in houses of clay? By the houses of clay here, he probably means the bodies created from dust. Angels do not die, whereas men are easily and swiftly

¹ *Catena Aurea.*

² *On Ps. Homily 14.*

³ الأرشمندرت أدريانوس شكور: المئة مقالة في الإيمان الأرثوذكسي للقديس يوحنا الدمشقي، بيروت 1991، كتاب 2، مقال 17.

⁴ *Against Jovinianus, Book 2, 4.*

crushed like moths between the fingers. If God does not trust the angels, the pure and eternal spirits who dwell with Him in heaven, ; Will He trust man who dwells on earth, created from dust, and may die for the smallest reason like moth?!

- ❖ We dwell in houses of clay; namely in earthly bodies. Meditating in this, Paul says: *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels”*; and, *“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands”* (2 Corinthians 4: 7; 5: 1).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ It is obvious that God did not trust the righteous the way you trust yourself; being aware of their nature and the tendency of their bodies to fall. The corruption of the fallen angels (Satan and his hosts); thinking evil on God, made Him reject them; took away their original honor, and ranks, and made them lowly. If that was the case with those who dwelt in the heights amongst the virtuous hosts; and who, by nature are more exalted than us; What can we say concerning men, who are still sinners; whose nature is dust, dwell in houses of clay (Genesis 2: 7); who are easily corrupted as sinners, like moth-eaten garment (James 5: 2).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Between morning and evening, they are destroyed ,they perish forever with no one regarding” (Job 4: 20).

Man should not boast to God, thinking that he has knowledge; as between morning and evening of the same day, he may die, and exist no more; with no one aware of his death.

- ❖ The sinner could be cut off between morning and evening; namely, from the beginning of his life to its end; Contrary to that, Paul exhorts us, saying: *“... redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5: 16). We redeem the time, if by tears we correct our past life that we have lost through our negligence.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Their tent-cord is plucked up within them? And they die devoid of wisdom!” (Job 4: 21).

Their human wisdom, of which they are proud, is taken away of them; They perish together with their wisdom, and their foolish thoughts.

- ❖ Here, Eliphaz presents an accusation against sinners as a whole; and shamelessly includes ‘Job’ among them.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ As though he says: ‘Those I said will perish forever, and will surely die devoid of wisdom... are the wicked that distantly look at the elect, believing that they are walking toward an unseen life, through the seen death’. Although what Eliphaz said about the wicked is true; Yet, **in haughtiness of wisdom**, he also counted the righteous ‘Job’ worthy of rebuke.

Pope Gregory the Great

That was how man became because of sin; but the incarnation of the divine Word, and the presentation of salvation, have utterly changed the situation.

- ❖ We have gained all that because of the “body” offered by the Lord; He offered the Father the firstfruit of our nature. And because of the honor of the One who offer, and the perfection of the One who receives, the Father found the **gift** acceptable;

received it with His hand, embraced it, and said to (the incarnated Lord): “*Sit on My right hand*” .

Hasn't (the Manhood united to the Godhead) risen above heavens?! Isn't this an un-measurable honor?! (Our nature in the Person of the incarnated God) was raised above heavens; and exalted above the angels. It surpassed the Archangels and the Cherubim, soared above the Seraphim and all the heavenly hosts, and found rest in the true divine throne.

In the past, the behavior of our race was evil, to the extent that mankind was in danger of being wiped out altogether from the face of the earth. Now, we, who were counted unworthy of remaining on earth, have been raised up to heavens. We, who were before unworthy of the earthly glory, are ascending now to the kingdom of heaven, to enter into heaven, and to take our place before the divine throne.

Our nature, against which the Cherubim stood guard on the gates of paradise, now soars above the Cherubim!

How could we, so lightly pass over such a great event (the feast of Ascension)?!

We, who did wrong to such great mercies, to become unworthy even of the earth itself; and have fallen from every authority and honor; by what worthiness can we, are raised to such exalted honor?!

How did the struggle come to an end?!

How and why God's anger came to an end?!

It is indeed amazing; that peace dwelt; not through something done by those who aroused the wrath of God... But He, who got angry against us, is the One who calls us to peace! The apostle says: “*We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us*” (2 Corinthians 5: 20). What does this mean? Despite the fact that we wrongly behaved against Him, He is the One who seeks us, and who calls us to peace! It is indeed like that; the loving God is calling us¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ He, who knows the weakness of human nature, gains the experience of God's power.

Father Maximus the Confessor

❖ When you hear how the divine majesty is exalted above heavens; its glory is unexpressible;; its beauty is un-describable; and its nature unapproachable; Do not despair to be able to see what you long to see. It is in your capacity; As within you, is the level by which you can realize the divine things. He, who created you, has granted you, at the same time, that amazing exaltation.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

¹ *In Ascensione, PG 50.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB'4

ANOINT MY WORDS WITH LOVE

- ❖ Job' s friend put in their heart to destroy him.
They thought of the bitter moments of his tribulation as a chance to attack him.
Yet, Let the whole world attack him;
What would come upon him, as long as You are on his side?
What would insult him, as long as You testify to him?
- ❖ I often think of myself as wise;
And count all my words as true.
Yet, what is the benefit of understanding and wisdom without love?
Anoint my lips with Your Holy Spirit.
Put a guard on my mouth.
That I only utter what my heart bears of the abundance of Your love.
Let my love for You reflect on my love for Your creatures.
And instead of the bitter criticism, let me fill every soul with hope in You.
- ❖ Eliphaz saw in the righteous 'Job' a hypocrite.
And in the tribulations that dwelt upon him,
A natural fruit of his hidden sins.
Although 'Job' is wise in the sight of men;
And although he saw him teach and instruct others;
When he is unable to instruct himself.
He saw him unable to follow what he instructs others to do.
- ❖ Grant me holy eyes; not filled with hate like those of Eliphaz.
Who waits in hiding for his righteous brother, to accuse him of vain charges.
- ❖ Grant me eyes, compassionate on my brethren.
Let my cry out within myself: "Who is weak, and I do not become weak?"
"And who stumbles, and I do not flare inside?"
- ❖ In compassionate fatherhood, 'Job' knew no feeling of authority.
He was not the commanding type to those under his authority.
But in compassionate fatherhood, he instructed many.
All his life, he was only preoccupied with the salvation of every soul including his household.
He was a support for those with weak hands;
To lift those who stumble, and to calm down the trembling knees.
He carried Your image, O Philanthropic.
And did nothing, except according to Your divine pleasure.
- ❖ Temptations surrounded him to swallow him.
Mercilessly, tribulations dwelt upon him successively and suddenly.
He seemed to have lost every thing, even his health.
But, being human, he cried out to You in bitter moans.
Yet his heart did not go astray.
And his lips never uttered a word of blasphemy.
He counted himself as though he lost nothing;
As long as You are his treasure, and the source of his goodness.
He lost nothing, because he acquired You.

- ❖ Eliphaz found his chance;
 To show off his wisdom and his theological understanding.
 He said: No righteous has ever gone through such tribulations!
 And no upright man, has experienced such perdition!
 This could be nothing, but a divine testimony to the hidden evil of 'Job'.
 And as no one in history has gone through such calamities;
 He must then be the wickedest of the wicked!
 And the worst of all sinners and hypocrites.
 He saw 'Job' walking about like a roaring lion, threatening and terrifying.
 And now, he is dying of hunger with no prey to devour.
 He lost everything, and has no cub to take his place.
 The lion became a laughingstock to kids, and a helpless toy.
- ❖ Eliphaz saw a heavenly vision;
 Yet, instead of learning a lesson from it, he trembled and became terrified.
 And again he confirmed that 'Job' is no more righteous than the angels.
 Whom God charges with error.
 Who is 'Job', the dust and ashes, to justify himself before God?
 There he is, with the cords of his tent taken away!
 And there he is dying in shame and disgrace before the eyes of every one.
- ❖ In longsuffering, God let Eliphaz and his friends go on mocking 'Job'.
 And by His heavenly wisdom, he allowed them to insult him.
 But behold, the insults became for him a deposit for a heavenly and earthly glory.
 And every charge against him turned into an eternal crown.
 Let the wicked unjustly accuse the children of God.
 But He will never let their rod settle down upon His righteous.
- ❖ Indeed, no one will be justified before You!
 You are alone the Holy One.
 Before the splendor of Your light, all lights will disappear.
 Before Your righteousness, no creation will ever be justified.
- ❖ If, when You are the Judge,
 You came down to save and not to judge;
 How would I dare judge my brother?!
 How would I dare rob Your authority, O who search the hearts?!
 Together with wisdom; grant me love;
 And together with my longing for the salvation of all, grant me a compassionate heart.

CHAPTER 5

HOW COULD ONE BE BLESSED?

Having supported his view by his personal experience, and by a divine vision; Now, in this chapter, Eliphaz presents the holy ones (the saints) as faithful witnesses to God's truth; making it clear that "Job" is not among them. He also clarifies the following facts:

- ❖ Those who accuse God are fools (Psalm 14: 1)
- ❖ If the fools seem to take root, that will only be temporary, then they will lose their possessions, for they are cursed by God.
- ❖ Affliction does not grow like flowers, but men bring them upon themselves through their evil foolishness, like lightening coming from above.

Job's friends have undoubtedly uttered some true facts, and others that are not; so did the righteous 'Job'. That is if we look at their words aside from the events; and away from the intentions lying in their hearts and minds.

Finally, Eliphaz says to 'Job': If I were you, I would return to God, who crushes the wicked, and blesses the poor and the righteous. He, alone, can make your path right, and grants you every material blessing that you wish for (17-27).

1- The holy ones are witnesses to the wisdom of God 1	
2- Sin kills the fools	2 – 5
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1- THE HOLY ONES ARE WITNESSES TO THE WISDOM OF GOD:

"Call out now, Is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?" (Job 5: 1).

Because Eliphaz was very sure of his position, he gave 'Job' the right to choose his judges, saying: *"Call now, Is there anyone who will answer you?"*; namely, search by yourself in the whole world, is there any holy one who faced the tribulations you faced?

As God never dealt with any holy one, the way He did with you, you are definitely not one of them!

Is there, among the holy ones, anyone who has cursed the day of his birth?

Has any holy one rebelled, and hastened to judge, the way you done?

"To which of the holy ones will you turn?" They would all stand by me; and confirm what I say.

Eliphaz, puffed with the pride of wisdom, uttered those words, counting 'Job' as worthy of rebuke.

- ❖ *"To which of the holy ones will you turn?"* He mockingly says: 'You cannot acquire the support of the holy ones; Those whose company you did not have, when you were prosperous!'

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *"Call now, Is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?"* It is as though Eliphaz says: You are wasting your time, if you think that God is testifying to you. You are even denied a visit by an angel in your

prayers. You probably encountered a false one, who let you think that he is sent by God, which was not true.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

The activity of the prayers of the holy ones is proved by what came in the book of Acts, that an angel of the Lord appeared in a vision to St. Paul, and said to him: ***“Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you”*** (Acts 27: 24).

- ❖ If that was a ship in danger of sinking; and all prisoners were saved for Paul’s sake; Just meditate in what it would be for a righteous man in his own home; who is subject to temptations more furious than those of nature! But God grants us salvation, if we only obey the holy ones, like those on the ship, who have done according to their commands; and were accordingly, not saved alone, but were the cause of others to have faith and to be saved.

St. Paul, the holy man, in chains, performed greater works than those of free men; The free centurion needed the help of his chained prisoner; and the captain of the ship needed him who was no captain; he who actually was the true captain of a ship, not of that earthly kind, but of the church of the whole world; where there is trouble on every side: conflicts on the outside,, and fears inside (2 Corinthians 7: 5); educated to navigate it by God – the Lord of the sea; not by human skill, but by the wisdom of the Spirit¹.

- ❖ **I wish we exhort those who have more favor with God, to raise more supplications, with more consistence, until the storm that threatens to destroy the whole world, calms down.**

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ **The world continues to exist, only for the sake of the prayers raised by Christians.**

Aristide of Athens

- ❖ Our prayers are both general and public; we do not pray for the sake of just one person, but for the whole congregation.
- ❖ I wish we keep on praying for the sake of the brethren, before the presence of the mercies of God the Father.

Cyprian, the martyr

2- SIN KILLS A FOOLISH MAN:

“For vexation kills the fool; and jealousy slays the simple” (Job 5: 2).

The sinners are counted as fools; for not accepting the wisdom of God; who are killed by vexation, and their bones are corrupted by jealousy. Eliphaz probably means to say, **that what dwelt upon ‘Job’ is nothing but the fruit of his foolishness and idiocy in listening to the deceiver who aroused his anger that would eventually kill him. In all that, Eliphaz, intending to justify himself, demonstrated his own foolishness!**

- ❖ According to another version *“Anger kills the fool; and envy slays the child”*. It is to be noticed, that the former, when aroused by anger, chooses to bring death upon

¹ *Homilies on Acts, hom. 53.*

himself; and the latte, by his envy, is like an immature child, led by someone superior to him¹.

St. John Cassian

- ❖ There is nothing greater than love; and nothing lower than anger. We should not care much for anything, even if it seems of benefit; to avoid disappointment and consequently anger, in case we do not get it. To keep our peace intact, we should not disturb ourselves with things, even those we consider necessary; and we should realize that nothing is more destructive than anger, and nothing more beneficial than love!².

Father Joseph

- ❖ There is nothing more dangerous or more cruel than anger.
- ❖ There is more danger in being drunk by anger, than in being drunk by wine³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Let us meditate in the extent of danger of the sin of wrath (or vexation); by which we get separated from compassion; and distort our likeness to the image of the Almighty God.

By anger, we drive out the wisdom, and become ignorant in everything we do, and in what we are committed to do; according to the wise saying: “*Anger rests in the bosom of fools*” (Ecclesiastes 7: 9). By the retreat of the light of understanding, agitation corrupts the mind.

By anger, life is wasted; and even wisdom is as though imprisoned; It is written: “*The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly; But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness*” (Proverb 15: 1); And, “*Wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*” (James 1: 20).

Whoever cannot control his emotions as is fitting for a wise man is committed to live in isolation like an animal.

Anger leads to the loss of the light of truth; As it is written: “*Do not let the sun go down on your wrath*” (Ephesians 4: 26).

Because wrath brings about the darkness of confusion; God keeps from the angry the rays of knowing himself; And by wrath the splendor of the Holy Spirit is shut in. On another aspect, according to an old version: “*On whom shall My Spirit dwell; but on him who is humble, contrite in spirit, and who tremble at My word*” (Isaiah 66: 2).

Pope Gregory the great

- ❖ If someone gets angry, being human; Yet he should rein his anger, being a Christian.

St. Eronimus

- ❖ Who is prone to anger, is devoid of longsuffering and love; would become easily irritated by things of no importance; and would arouse controversy for things of no importance; and would have nowhere to go. Who does not feel sorry for such a man, offending both God and men.

St. (Mar) Ephram the Syrian

¹ *The Institutes, Book 5:22.*

² *St. John Cassian: Conferences, 16:7.*

³ *In Matt. hom 10:7; 15:4.*

- ❖ **As the Holy Spirit is called “Peace of the Spirit”; and the anger is called (the worry of the soul); We should deduce that nothing would keep away from us the presence (work) of the Spirit, like anger.**

St. John El-Dargy

It is no wonder that Eliphaz accused ‘Job’ of jealousy and envy; which are actually the sins of Eliphaz himself, which he reflects on the righteous 'Job'; saying, *“Envy slays the simple”* (2).

- ❖ The envious does not consider the calamities that come upon him, a tribulation; but a tribulation, as far as he is concerned, is the good things that come to others. On the contrary, success for him is not to become happy, but to see tribulations dwell on others. The envious becomes sad, when he sees good things happen to others; and is happy to see catastrophes dwell up them. Like the birds of prey which feed on dead corpses, are driven away by good fragrances; as their nature conform with everything evil and corrupt; Anyone who is overcome by the authority of this disease (the envy), would be devastated by the good fortune of his brethren; But, on seeing an evil temptation, he rushes to it, dives in it with his curved beak, and search for the catastrophes hidden in it¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ Before anything else, it is befitting for a man put under the yoke, to be steadfast in his faith... He should free himself of envy, anger, and the deceitful lips².

St. Aphrahat, the Persian wise

- ❖ Healing would be fast, when the wound is obvious, on the surface; whereas wounds of the envious, because they are inaccessible for treatment, they shut in themselves their hidden pains, within the secret places of the conscience. Those people enjoy neither food nor drink; are perpetually grieving and sighing, and their hearts, day and night, are torn to pieces.

All evils have limits; and every crime ends once it is committed; whether it is adultery, robbery, murder, or deceit; But envy, on the other hand, is perpetual and with no limit.

Cyprian, the martyr

- ❖ *“Envy slays a simple (little) one”* (Job 5: 2). Man only envies those whom he thinks are better than him, some way or another. The envious therefore, testifies against himself, that he is inferior to others.

Cain when God rejected his offering, and accepted that of his brother Abel; his envy made him mad, and got him to murder his brother (Genesis 4).

Esau persecuted his brother Jacob, because to him, he lost his birthright and blessing for the sake of a meal of lentil stew (Genesis 27: 38; 25: 29).

So it was with **Joseph’s** brothers, as the secret of proclamation was hidden from them, and they did not want him to be better than them, got envious, and sold him to the Ishmaelite passersby (Genesis 37: 5-11).

And Saul persecuted his servant David; Out of envy, and for fear that he would reach a higher stature in virtue than his, he tried to kill him by throwing a spear at him, (1 Samuel 18: 10-11).

¹ *The Life of Moses: 2:258, translated by Magdy Fahim Hanna.*

² *Demonstrations, 6:8 (Of Monks).*

Therefore the envious feeling that he is inferior to others, is grieved for the good that come to them. Solomon say: “*A sound heart is life to the body; But envy is rottenness to the bones*” (Proverbs 14: 30).

Whoever longs to become perfect and sound, should avoid the poison of envy; and should concentrate his emotions on the heritage that would never decrease by the multitudes of heirs; One heritage for all, and whole for everyone. It is a greater heritage, the greater the number of those who inherit it.... When man does not covet bad things, nothing would come in the way of love.

Pope Gregory the Great

“I have seen the foolish taking root, But suddenly I cursed his dwelling”
(Job 5: 3).

Eliphaz sees that Job, who took root; Being a fool, his success did not last long; and there he is cursing his dwelling. He is now presenting a new charge against Job: Beside hypocrisy, and hiding behind his apparently good works, evil secrets known only by God; That calamities, such as never heard of in the history of mankind, dwelt upon him; He accuses him of being foolish, who runs after riches and love of the world; something far from the life of that righteous man.

This probably does not mean that Eliphaz wished for the destruction of ‘Job’; but – according to his mind – What dwelt upon him is the result of God’s wrath over him and his wickedness. He realized that it is God’s justice for ‘Job’ to fall under that curse, to be uprooted from the world with which he became so bound.

The Holy Book warns us against the love of this world, saying: “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world*” (1 John 2: 15, 16). “*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity to God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*” (James 4: 4).

❖ The foolish takes root in the earth and holds fast to it, for he loves the world and its temporal goods with all his heart, and takes pride in taking root in it, until he gets the whole lust of his heart, submitting to no one, prevailing over the weak, and realizing better positions by wicked ways.

When the weak in heart see that the wicked prosper, they get terrified, and their thoughts become confused; according to the words of the psalmist: “*As for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My step had already slipped; For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*” (Psalm 73: 2, 3).

However, the strong in heart, when they see the wicked prosper, their thoughts concentrate on the punishment (the chastisement) awaiting them; And with a deep inner understanding in their heart, they despise the vain pride of the boastful; according to the words: “***I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his dwelling***” (Job 5: 3) Cursing the dwelling of the foolish is condemning his glory; as his boasting is temporary, while his chastisement is perpetual.

Anyway, the more the wicked takes root in this world, the more number of people he draws to destruction; according to the words: “***His sons are far from safety***” (Job 5: 4); As the sons of the foolish follow his lead in loving the world and practicing evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ You want now to inherit the earth? Be careful lest the earth would inherit you!

If you are meek, you will inherit the world; and if you are arrogant and cruel, it will inherit you!

You will certainly inherit the earth, if you hold fast to the Maker of the earth and the heaven.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Who, after having tasted the sweetness of the fruits of tree of life; intends to run after the corrupt fruits of the love of the world¹!?
- ❖ Like fire that does not hold fast to water, The knowledge of God does not hold fast in a heart entangled in the lusts of the world².
- ❖ No one has utterly despised the world, except him, in whom your fire perpetually kindles³.

St. John Saba

- ❖ To receive the Word the Logos, the soul should be “*crucified to the world*” (Galatians 6: 14), and should be “*buried with Christ*” (Romans 6: 4; Colossians 2: 12); As this is the kind of acceptance sought by Him⁴.

St. Ambrose

“His sons are far from safety They are crushed in the gate, and there is no deliverer” (Job 5: 4).

The gate of their house, where Job’s sons securely gathered to celebrate their feast, must have been so high and huge, that when it collapsed, it crushed them under its weight! There was no deliverer, as the curse of Job’s evil – according to Eliphaz – has dwelt over his children and destroyed them.

- ❖ He means to say: [Why would your children's perdition terrify you? The sons of the foolish, being justly chastened by God, would not only perish, but would also grieve while still living, “*and there is no deliverer*”. And the profit they have unjustly got, would be taken by the righteous; and their strength would all be lost in lusts by the will of God.

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

Job’s sons and daughters, who – according to Eliphaz – are as wicked and hypocrites as their father, are there in their stronghold, celebrating their feast, feeling safe and secure, guarded by their numerous servants and slaves. But they are not safe, because the house and its huge gate, the source of their feeling of security, collapse and kill them under its weight.

These words carried a prophecy about the Lord Christ who said: “*I am the door, If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture*” (John 10: 9). The Gentiles who believed in this door, entered into faith, and went to the heavenly life, to find a divine pasture. That same door, became an offense to those who assumed to be safe, holding fast to the letter of the law, and thought that they are, and no one else, within the divine gates.

Having rejected faith in the Lord Christ, the “door” – the entrance for the believers – became an offense to them; He who says: “*If I had not come and spoken to*

¹رسالة 33.

²مقال 3.

³رسالة 43.

⁴ *Escape from the World*, 9:55.

them , they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin” (John 15: 22).

- ❖ I wish, O brethren, we do not get confused when we hear Him say: “*I am the door*”, and “*I am the doorman*”. As, what is the door? It is the way to enter. And who is the doorman? He is the One who opens the door, and reveals Himself to be seen!¹ .
- ❖ Their great sin is not believing in the Lord Christ who came specially to renew their faith. If He had not come, they would have no sin.

By His coming, the life of non-believers became more prone to destruction; and became for the salvation of those who believed; Being the Head of the apostles; He became “*To one, the aroma of life to life, and to the other, the aroma of death to death*” (2 Corinthians 2: 16)² .

St. Augustine

- ❖ “***They are crushed in the gate***” (Job 5: 4)... As the entrance to the city is called a gate, So is the entrance to the Kingdom of heaven on the day of judgment, through which all the elect enter into the glory of their heavenly city. “***There is no deliverer***” (4); as the Truth would save from the eternal woe, those who are temporarily afflicted by chastisement. Whoever rejects affliction would be forsaken then, with no way of salvation. As the wicked did not care to receive Him (the Savior), as a Father to chastise them; in their tribulation, they will not have Him as a Deliverer to help them.

Father Gregory the Great

- ❖ Now, let us meditate in what the gospels say, **concerning the promises of good news proclaimed by the apostles; those good news are simply, “Jesus”**.

One of this good news is the “resurrection”; which is another name for “Jesus”, who says: “*I am the resurrection*”.

And Isaiah says: “*How beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of him who brings good news*” (Isaiah 52: 7); seeing how beautiful and befitting is the proclamation by the apostles who walked (in Christ), who said “*I am the Way*”. He is commending the feet of those who walk along the “Way”, thinking of Jesus Christ; and who go through that “Door” to God the Father.

They proclaim the good news, the beautiful feet; namely “Jesus”³.

The scholar Origen

“Because the hungry eats up his harvest, taking it even out of the thorns, and the thirsty pant after their wealth” (Job 5: 5)

Job’s wealth became a spoil to the Sebeans and the Chaldeans. Dr. Thomson in his explanation of this phrase says that the farmers used, after separating grains from hay, to store the grains covered by thick thorny branches, to keep animals away from them. And if thieves intend to rob them they would first have to remove these thorny plants⁴ .

Whoever does not open his heart by the inner true love, before the hungry, the thirsty, and the needy; his wealth would become a spoil to others, who would give

¹ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 46: 4.*

² St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 89: 1.*

³ *Comm. on John, 1:10.*

⁴ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 208.*

themselves the right to devour everything he has; the hungry would invade his storehouses, take it even out of the thorns; and the thirsty would pant after his wealth.

So that was how Eliphaz' saw 'Job' and his children, not generous with their love; And if they do, it would be only for the sake of appearances and vain glory; While their hearts were actually hard and cruel. That is why they deserved what the hungry, thirsty, and needy have done to them!

In bitterness 'Tobit' cried out to the Lord, saying, "*Because we sinned against You, and disobeyed Your commandments, You gave us over to plunder, exile, and death, to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach among all the nations, among whom You have dispersed us*" (Tobit 3: 4). And the Psalmist says: "*You make us turn back from the enemy; and those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves. You have given us up like sheep intended for food. And have scattered us among the nations. You sell your people for naught, and are not enriched by their price...*" (Psalm 44: 10-14). And the Lord says: "*Your wealth and your treasure, I will give as plunder without price, because of all your sins, throughout all your territories*" (Jeremiah 15: 13; 17: 3; 30: 6; 50: 37; Ezekiel 7: 21; 23: 46; Isaiah 10: 13).

❖ "***Your wealth and your treasures, I will give as plunder without price, because of all your sins***" (Jeremiah 15; 13). What is this wealth of the sinners? Is it the wealth they have gathered on earth? Every man actually treasures for himself, either on the earth, if he is wicked; or in heaven if he is a good man (Matthew 6: 19-20). Is God saying to this people: That **because of their sins**, He will take away from them the wealth of prophets, like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Moses. He actually did take that wealth away from them; And said through Christ: "*I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it*" (Matthew 21: 43). This nation is us; **God gave away the wealth of that people** (the prophets) to us.

"*To them (the Jews) were committed the oracles of God*" (Romans 3: 2); Then they were taken away from them and given to us. We can also say that the proclamation of the Savior: "*The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation bearing its fruits*", has been realized in Him. Not that the Holy book has been taken away from the Jews; but today, they do not possess, neither the law nor the prophets, as they do not understand or realize what is written in them. Yes, they may still have the books; but what is taken away from them is the 'meaning of the holy books'. They do not care to know any interpretation of the law or the prophets. By the coming of the Lord Christ, the following prophecy is realized: "*Go and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive; Make the heart of this people dull'*" (Isaiah 6: 9, 10; Matthew 13: 14-15); as well as the prophecy by Isaiah, saying: "*For behold, the Lord of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah, the stock and the store, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water; the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder; the captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the skillful artisan, and the expert enchanter*" (Isaiah 3: 1-3). All that, God took away from them and gave to us-- the Gentiles.

He says: "***without price, because of all your sins throughout your territories***" (Jeremiah 15: 13). There is no place not filled by the sins of those people. How could their territories not be filled with sins, those who killed the truth, as the lord Christ is the truth; They killed the wisdom, as the lord Christ is the Wisdom; They killed the

justice, as the lord Christ is the Justice. By condemning the Son of God to death, they have lost all that: the Truth, the Wisdom, and the Justice. And when the Lord of Glory was risen from the dead, He did not appear to those who killed Him, but appeared only to those who believed in Him.

“And I will make you cross over with your enemies, into a land which you do not know; For a fire is kindled in My anger, which shall burn upon you” (Jeremiah 15: 14). That was realized when He gave that people up to slavery by their enemies, and in a land they do not know. And following those words of threats directed to them, Jeremiah (or the lord Christ) continues His prayer, adding these words: *“O Lord, You know; Remember Me and visit Me; And take vengeance for Me on My persecutors. Do not take Me away in My longsuffering” (Jeremiah 15: 15 LXX)*¹.

The scholar Origen

3- MAN IS BORN FOR TROUBLE:

“For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground” (Job 5: 6).

After Eliphaz tried to prove that what happened to Job was a just chastisement from God, He is as though starting to encourage him, lest he would fall into despair.

Affliction is not like natural crops that grow in fixed seasons, nor spring like plants from earth, but everything happens according to divine will. In other words, do not blame the soil, for affliction is not her doing; but put the blame upon yourself, as the cause is actually within you, according to the words: *“If you are scoff, you alone will bear it” (Prov 9: 12).*

As we do not expect the appearance of a tree without planting a seed; It is befitting for us not to think that afflictions dwell upon someone who did not commit evils. What happened to ‘Job’ is not haphazard, but is the crop of evil planting.

This fact was revealed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ the Creator of the soul and of the world, who says that the fault is within the soul and is not outside it. The human souls are like similar earthen vessels that differ only in the nature of their content. If one contains gasoline and another contains plain water; In case you bring fire near them, the first may explode, while the other will quench the fire.

St. John Chrysostom wrote more than one essay, confirming that no one or event can harm man, unless man harms himself.

❖ Someone may say: Didn’t Satan harm Adam; corrupted his being, and made him lose paradise?

The cause for what happened lies in the negligence of the one on whom the harm was done, and his lack of self-control. Satan despite using all his various strong tricks could not submit ‘Job’; So, how could he manage to submit Adam with such minor way; unless Adam has defeated himself by himself?!

What then? Is it not possible to harm someone by false accusations, to let him suffer such calamities as came upon the righteous ‘Job’?!

No, But man can get benefit if he strives as well! Did these things harmed the apostles? Did they not persist on striving against hunger, thirst, and nakedness?! And ended up glorified and justified by God?!

Did ailments, boils, poverty, and the absence of anyone to care for ‘Job’, cause him any harm?! Did they not give him a crown of victory?!

¹ In Jer. hom. 14:12, 13.

And Joseph's brothers, through their intention to harm him, did they not cause him instead, to be glorified?!

Yet, God Does not lift up the punishment from him who planned the harm, on account of the happy ending for the one he intended to harm; But the punishment is rather confirmed on him because of his evil intention.

St. John Chrysostom

“Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards” (Job 5: 7)

Man is created to live in peace, comfort, and the rejoice of heart; Yet, through disobeying the divine commandment, and giving his back to God, the Source of his happiness, he ended up ***“born to trouble” (7)*** ; and *“conceived in sin”* (Psalm 51: 5). Trouble has become an integral part of our being; as though we were created to bear them, as the sparks (the birds of prey, in another version) fly upwards. *“Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you, to test you, as though something strange is happening to you”* (1 Peter 4: 12); Because *“By the sweat of your face, you shall eat your bread”* (Genesis 4: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that man’s life is a continuous strife and an incessant battle against the devil, ; Yet these battles will end up with victory and a crown for those who strive well.

❖ Human nature was so created. ... The earth has produced nothing more pitiful than man! ... We should not marvel then that we are born to be harmed, and to cause harm, according to the words of the prophet: *“The days of our lives are... years; yet their span is only toil and trouble”* (Psalm 90: 10); And as said by Jacob: *“few and hard have been the years of my life”* (Genesis 47: 9). Man may say: But ‘Job’ is righteous! Yes, he is righteous, But human nature is created to bear trouble!

St. John Chrysostom

❖ We should not withdraw from our strife because of despair; For: *“The kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force”* (Matthew 11: 12). **No virtue could be gained without strife**; and the mind could not be controlled without deep grief of the heart. ***“Man is born to trouble”***, And for the sake of reaching *“a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4: 13), we are committed to be perpetually in a great strife, and a limitless awareness¹.

Father Cerinus

❖ Let us then, have great awareness and strife, as far as the outer circumstances are concerned; when we go through a burden of grief, until we reach the hope to gain the higher things through those outer chastisements.

❖ Enjoying the grace of reason, man realizes that it is impossible for him to pass through his earthly sojourn without grief. That is why, St. Paul enumerating his afflictions to his disciples, he added: *“for you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for”* (1 Thessalonian 3: 3).

The more the body is stricken, the higher the mind soars to seek the higher things; as also testified by Paul, saying: *“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4: 16). The mind flies freely higher; for the same cause the body is burdened to bow downward!

¹ Cassian: Conferences, 7:6:3.

“Man is born to trouble” The word **“man”** here, represents life according to the flesh; according to the words of Paul: *“Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal?”* (1 Corinthians 3: 3); then added: *“and behaving as mere men?”* (1 Corinthians 3: 4 Vulgate).

In this life, **“Man is born to trouble”** Every man, seeking the temporary things, is carnal, bowing under the burden of his lusts.

It is much trouble to seek the glory of the present life, to acquire it, then to strive hard to keep it, once you do! It is trouble and limitless suffering to holdfast to things that you know, will not last long. The saints, on the other hand, not longing for temporal things, would not only let themselves fall under the burden of temporary lusts, but they are free of labor before crosses, and in the time of What is there, more painful than scourges? And yet, as is written about the apostles when they were scourged, *“They departed, ... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (Acts 5: 41).

“Man is born to trouble”; truly feeling the evil of the present circumstances, as he looks forward to the future reward... That is why he adds: **“As the sparks fly upward”** (According to the Arabic language version: *“As the bird flies upward”*).

Hoping for the higher things, the soul withdraws from the pain of trouble. Wasn't Paul like a bird, born to fly? Despite enduring limitless crosses, he says: *“For we know that, if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made of hands”* (2 Corinthians 5: 1). Like a bird he soared up above the lowly things. Although he was still on earth in flesh, the wings of hope were carrying him up to heavens.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The fears of him who strives, turn into a cause for his salvation; And, on the contrary, for his enemies, they become a cause for their shame and ridicule. He would stand firm against all their attacks and turn all their seductions vain. Satan, in his battle against 'Job', moves in a horrible way between heaven and earth! ... Lucifer has fallen from heaven (Isaiah 14: 12); But the saints did not let him rest on it, and enjoy our destruction. Having been defeated several times by 'Job', Satan would not stop the battle before achieving a decisive victory; So he persisted on exhausting the strength of the righteous man.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

4- GOD IS A REFUGE FOR THE AFFLICTED:

“But as for me, I would seek God, And to God I would commit my cause” (Job 5: 8).

If we disregard the intention of Eliphaz, and his wrong view of 'Job', we shall find his words faultless. Man, having not kept God's commandment, became born to trouble; And there is no other way out for him but to return to God, and to lean on Him, being the true support for the afflicted. It is as though Eliphaz says to 'Job': **If I were you, I would not protest against God, and curse the day of my birth; But I would instead, resort to God, and submit to His will**, being the source of every good and comfort. I would commit my cause to God; and *“Let Him do what seems good to Him”* (1 Samuel 3: 18); And as the Psalmist says: *“Commit your ways to the Lord. Trust also in Him. And He shall bring it to pass”* (Psalm 37:5); and, *“I will say to the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust”* (Psalm 91: 2); And according to the words of the apostle James: *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray”* (James 5: 13).

- ❖ As though Eliphaz says to ‘Job’: [If I find myself in such a situation, I would be persevere; knowing that the Lord is the Master. You are actually confusing yourself; in your place I would wait on God, and would never cease on calling him without ever losing hope. He is capable of changing any situation. I may find myself now, in the midst of evils, But God is capable of putting me in the midst of goods; He is the Almighty; namely, He is the Lord of men, situations, places, and all things].

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ As though he also says to him: [As you are no more worthy of praying; I will call the Lord of all on your behalf. Being so proud of yourself, you no longer call God; and consequently all these calamities came upon you!]

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ O Lord, You crown us with your good will; namely, You guard us, and make us victorious; Then You give us a crown¹.

St. Jerome

- ❖ Tell Him what ails you; Tell Him what you desire².
- ❖ Say to the Lord: “*You are my refuge and my fortress; My God, In You I trust*” (Psalm 91: 2).

He, who says: “*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High...*” (Psalm 91); and not in his own shelter? Is he, who does not boast, like those two, who, in paradise, ate (of the tree of knowing good and evil), to become two gods; and consequently ended up losing the eternity, with which they were created. They chose to dwell in their own shelter, and not in that of the Most High; they listened to the counsel of the serpent (Genesis 3: 5), and despised the commandment of God. Ultimately they discovered that, what was realized in them, was God's threat; and not Satan's promise. Therefore, I wish you also say: “*In Him I will trust,... He shall deliver me*” (Psalm 91: 2)³.

- ❖ No one will be helped by God, unless he does something himself:..., He would be helped if he prays⁴.
- ❖ The complete result of faith is: He urges us to ask, and it will be given to us; to seek, and we will find; and to knock, and it will be opened to us (Matthew 7: 7). Whereas he, who argues would cause the door of God's mercy to be shut before him⁵.
- ❖ You have created us, O Lord, And our hearts will not settle down until they rest in You⁶.

St. Augustine

“Who does great things, and unsearchable, wondrous things without number” (Job 5: 9).

We should deliver ourselves, and all our affairs in the hands of God; “*No one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end*” (Ecclesiastes 3: 11).

¹ Homily 20 on Ps. 92 (90).

² On Ps 37 (36).

³ On P.s 91 (90).

⁴ On Man's Perfection in Righteousness 20:43.

⁵ On Man's Perfection in Righteousness 20:40.

⁶ Confession 1:1:1.

- ❖ The heretics dared to blaspheme Him, He, whom the prophets proclaimed to be God the Almighty. As for you, you should worship God, the only and the Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Never worship several gods; Escape from every heresy, and say: *“I will seek God, And to God I will commit my cause – who does great things, and unsearchable, wondrous things without number...”* To whom is the glory forever, Amen¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

God is called the One “Who does wonders”, not to show off His power of doing what surpasses the nature which he Himself has created in the first place, nor to break its laws; But for the sake of His love for man, He makes His people a wonder!. Because His exalted love for mankind is utterly amazing; The men of God find pleasure and happiness in praising Him!

“For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God” (Psalm 86: 10).

“The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones” (Psalm 89: 5).

“Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples” (Psalm 96: 3).

“Sing to Him...Talk of all His wondrous works” (Psalm 105: 2)

“Oh those men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men”

(Psalm 107: 8).

“Who is He that we may praise Him? For He has done wonders among His people” (Sirach 31: 9).

- ❖ *“I will tell of all your wonderful deeds”* (Psalm 9: 1). Not only had those openly realized, in my body, but also, in an unseen way in my soul. Yet, these wonders are far more exalted; Men, being earthly, tend to be impressed by what they see by their own eyes, Their amazement to see the dead Lazarus, rise in flesh, surpassed their amazement to see the persecuted Paul rise in the Spirit (John 11; Acts 9). awhile the seen wonder calls the body to enjoy the light; By the unseen ones, man crosses over to realize the unseen, to talk about all God’s wondrous deeds².
- ❖ When you rejoice in God’s wondrous deeds, you forget even yourself; and rejoice in Him alone; For what could be better than Him? You proclaim: *“I will remember the wonders of the Lord of old”* (Psalm 77: 11); *“You are the God who does wonders”* (Psalm 77: 14). You are truly the great God who does wonders in the body, as well as in the soul; You let the deaf hear; the blind see; the weak heal; the dead rise; and the paralyzed strengthen. But all those wonders took place in the body; How about those that happened in the soul? Those who were recently drunkards, became laborers; Those who were idol-worshippers, became believers; And those who used to rob others, became givers to the poor³!
- ❖ *The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord”* (Psalm 89: 5)... Every work of mercy toward the lost souls, is a work of justification of sinners. What would you praise but the amazing works of God? You praise Him when you see the dead rise; Praise Him more, when the lost are saved. Yesterday you were in a whirlpool of drunkenness, Now, you see beauty in controlling yourself! Yesterday the one you

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 8:8.*

² *On Ps. 9.*

³ *On Ps. 77 (76).*

saw blaspheming God; you see him today praising the Lord! The idol-worshipper, you saw yesterday, became today a worshipper of the Almighty Creator! I wish those who have been so transformed from such horrible things, would not look at their own worthiness; to become heavens, but praise Him, who made them heavens¹!

St. Augustine

“He gives rain on the earth, and sends water on the fields” (Job 5: 10).

Here, from nature, He presents the first example of the great wonders of God. We often do not care much for rain; but it is actually a great work that reveals the might of God; as without it, there would be no life!

In the midst of our sufferings and afflictions, when we cry out to the Creator of heaven and earth, He will cover our souls, being His heaven, with the clouds; and will rain on our life with the water of His Holy Spirit, the Grantor of heavenly comforts. Then we may say: *“In the multitude of my anxieties within me, your comforts delight my soul”* (Psalm 94: 19). **St. Jerome** believes that the cloud which cover the heavenly soul, are the multitudes of prophets and apostles; And that the rain granted by God, is His joyful commandment and His divine teachings.

- ❖ *“Who covers the heavens with clouds; Who prepares rain for the earth”* (Psalm 147: 8). The earth needs water; if our earth does not receive rain, which is the divine teaching, it will produce no fruits².
- ❖ Moses was a cloud; That is why he says: *“Let my teaching drop as the rain”* (Deuteronomy 32: 2). His message is a spiritual rain that comes down on us. And Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews says: *“Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God”* (Hebrew 6: 7); And another time, he says: *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase”* (1 Corinthians 3: 6)³.
- ❖ The clouds are the prophets and the apostles who water the barren hearts of men with their teachings⁴.

St. Jerome

Pope Gregory the Great translates the verse saying: ***“He sends waters on the fields” (10)***, as “... on everything”; Man represents everything; he represents the whole world: [As man shares the being with the rocks; the life with the trees; the feelings with animals; and the discernment with the angels; he therefore truly represents the whole world, as in him the whole world is included. The Lord said to His disciples: *“Go... and make disciples of all the nations,... teaching (all creation) to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28: 19, 20). As (all creation) was made for the sake of man alone].

- ❖ Man was not introduced into the world until the sixth day of creation; as it is not befitting for the (Ruler) to appear on the stage before those on whom he will have authority!

But, once the Creator prepared everything, as a royal dwelling for the coming Ruler, He proclaimed him!

¹ On Ps. 89 (88).

² Homily 56 on Ps. 147 (146).

³ Homily 73 on Ps. 97 (96).

⁴ Homily 66 on Ps. 89 (88).

That royal dwelling is the earth, the islands, the sea, and the heaven, which is like a dome towering over everything.

In this palace, riches of every kind are stored: All the world of plants and animals; everything that has body, soul, and life. Added to that are everything beautiful and valuable in the sight of man, like gold, silver, and precious stones.

The divine Creator hid an abundance of these things, as though a royal treasure in the womb of the earth; that when man appears in the world, he would contemplate in some, and have authority on others. Enjoying the use of this and that, he would give thanks to the great Beneficent; and would be drawn to the incomprehensible power of the great Creator¹.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa

❖ The Almighty gives rain on the earth; when He waters the dry hearts of the nations, with the heavenly grace of preaching; And sends water on everything; when with the fullness of the Spirit, He transform the barrenness of man into fruition; according to the words of the Truth Himself: *“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst”* (John 4: 14).

Pope Gregory the Great

“He sets on high those who are lowly, And those who mourn are lifted” (Job 5: 11).

The second example is God’s might that sets on high those who is lowly, and grants security to those who mourn.

The successive tribulations sent ‘Job’ down to dwell on a heap of trashes, having no more place to dwell and have rest. But, being humble, without murmur, he soared high to heaven; As humility is the ladder, by which the soul climbs, by Jesus Christ to the bosom of God the Father.

Grief indeed crushes man and sends him down to destruction and bitterness; Yet, If he grieves in the Lord, he will ascend to the true security.

“He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans” (Job 5: 12).

The third example of the greatness of God, is His intervention in the affairs of men. Although He gave them the freedom of will, Yet He would not let things go on with no control. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands would not settle down on the heads of the righteous.

By resorting to God, the believer enjoys the divine Truth; So that the crafty would not be able to lay their hands on him; The darkness of vanity and deceit would not be able to appear in the presence of the light of the Truth; On them the Kingdom of light would never reign, But that of darkness.

The Jewish leadership oftentimes craftily assumed that they could catch the Lord Christ in their nets; Allowing them to tempt Him; through their craftiness, they condemned themselves by themselves. Craftiness and deceit, carrying corruption within them, cannot stand before the Truth.

❖ Through planning evil devices, the crafty expose their inner self; And as they become unable to carry them out, God keeps those, against whom they plan evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them” (Job 5: 13)

¹ De hom. Opif. 2.

The apostle quoted this verse in his first epistle to the Corinthians (3: 19).

God very easily destroys the evil counsel of the cunning, who count themselves as wise; As He did to the counsel of Ahithophel, who was helping Absalom to kill his father David, and take over his throne; to that of Sanballat (Nehemiah 4: 7-23); And to that of Haman (Esther 8). Every tool formed against the church of God, would indeed never prosper (Isaiah 54: 7).

“In the net which he hid, his own foot is caught” (Psalm 9: 15); *“He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown”* (Psalm 7: 15-16).

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us two examples, for how God catches the wise in their own craftiness: The first from the old Testament, and the second from the new Testament. In the first, Joseph’s brothers had the intention to get rid of their brother, lest he would exalt above them, and they would submit under his authority. By their human wisdom, they sold him as a slave; But by the divine ordinance, Joseph became so great in Egypt that his brothers came and prostrated themselves before him.. The second example from the New Testament, when the Hebrew priests and the religious leaderships intended to get rid of the Lord Christ, lest the whole world would go and follow Him (John 21: 19). They condemned Him to death; But by the tool -- the cross – they killed Him, the whole world followed Him.

- ❖ How does God catch the wise in their own craftiness? While they assume that they can manage without God, they find themselves more in need of Him. They realize that they are less knowledgeable than the illiterate fishermen, without whose wisdom they cannot now work¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ A rich young ruler once tried to flatter Jesus; pretending to be on His side. In (Luke 18: 18) we can see how he, who knows everything, *“who catches the wise in their own craftiness”* (Job 5: 13)² responded to his deceit.

St. Cyril the Great

***“They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noontime as in the night”* (Job 5: 14).**

The life of the true believer is a perpetual daytime with no darkness; And according to the words of the apostle: *“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness”* (1Thessalonian 5: 5). ‘Lot’ did not know the darkness when he received the two angel, and intended to give them hospitality in his house. But the wicked people who were in the darkness, intending to do corruption to them, were struck with blindness, and as though in the darkness, they were unable to find the door (Genesis 19: 11). Instead of enjoying the angelic light they fell in the darkness of evil, and lost both their outer and inner insight.

- ❖ ***“They meet with darkness in the daylight”***; For, in the presence of the ‘Truth’ Himself, they are struck with blindness, through the deceit of lack of faith... The ‘Light’ Himself advises them , saying: *“Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtakes you”* (John 12: 35).

When the wicked see others do good, their hearts are struck with painful envy. They become preoccupied with searching for something with which to accuse them.

¹ Homilies on 1 Corinth. 10:3.

² Commentary on Luke, homily 122.

Although they find nothing wrong in them, Yet by the eyes of their evil hearts, they seek to find some hidden dark corner!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The worst thing about envy is that it is a disease that implies secrecy. You find the envious looking down, pale-faced, and always complaining of inner pains that consume his body; Yet he would be ashamed to say: ‘Because I am envious, I feel sad and bitter for anything good that happens to others; I suffer for the happiness of my brethren, and hearing of their success would be like a sword that tears me up, and stabs me deep’. He cannot admit it, but, he keeps his feelings in his heart; which would progressively consume him¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ The beasts, birds, and reptiles, all partake of the sufferings of their own races in nature, and cooperate together against their adversaries; Whereas the envious human being; on the contrary rejoices for the fall of his brother, relative, and friend.
- ❖ The envious counts the tribulations of others, as of more benefit to him than any success of his own... He becomes as though an enemy of mankind, and a slap on the face of the congregation of his church; ... There is nothing worse than envy?!
- ❖ The devil is envious; Yes, But he would never direct his envy against another devil. Yet, you, man, envy your fellow man; and particularly those within your own family and circle of friends; something that the devil never does!
- ❖ “*Through the devil’s envy, death entered the world*” (Wisdom 2: 24). When Satan saw man honored, his envy kindled, and he did his best to finish him up. He had Abel killed; David, nearly killed; beside a score of righteous people; And finally the Jews became the killers of Christ.

St. John Chrysostom

“But he saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hands” (Job 5: 15).

The counsel of the crafty intends to destroy the poor; But the Almighty God saves them from their sword, their mouth, and their hands; He always works to the account of the poor. When the believer puts his whole life in the hands of the Lord, he will no more fear the sword of the devil, the killer of the soul; or lose his hope because of him. And if the devil carries the sword of accusation and destruction, being a killer from the beginning; Yet, the one with us, is greater than the one against us. The One with us is our Lord Himself, who also sends His angels to guard us. In Him we enjoy hope, and no despair can ever have the authority on our hearts and minds.

- ❖ “*The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars*” (Psalm 29: 5). The devils who were before puffed up and haughty, will be all destroyed; will be scattered in the air like broken branches of trees².
- ❖ The Lord commanded the unclean spirit, saying: “*Be silent*” (Mark 1: 25). I do not need your voice to commend me; Your suffering and punishment will be commendation enough for Me; I would rejoice in your departure; “*Be silent and come out of the man*”. It is as though he says to him: Come out of my dwelling

¹ راجع الأب الياس كويتز المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 307. عظة 11.

² Homily 89, for Epiphany on Ps. 29 (28).

place, I want to enter into my own guest room! So, Be silent, and come out of the man, Come out of the room prepared for Me. I want my dwelling place back... Acquiring him is against my will... I, myself, have taken a human body... The body, you now acquire, is sharing my body;... Come out of it¹!

- ❖ The devils intend to aim their arrows in the darkness toward the heart of the upright... But I stand firm on the line of battle, alert, girded, and ready to fight... I will not disregard the strife that has already started; I hear you say, that the enemies have already set their bow strings, filled their bag with arrows, And there they are, waiting in hiding, in the dark, to attack and wound the true hearts of my holy men. Seeing them so well prepared, I shall put myself between them and the enemy; I will stand in the way of their arrows, that, through My pain, My ministers would not feel pain; by My wounds, they would be cured, and by My sufferings, they would not suffer; But would say instead: *“With favor You will surround him (the righteous) as with a shield”* (Psalm 5: 12)².

St. Jerome

- ❖ *“So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth”* (Job 5: 16)... Eliphaz was preoccupied with debating against ‘Job’ to debase him. But God lifts up the weak, debases the mighty, and put to shame the deceitful.

St. John Chrysostom

“So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” (Job 5: 16).

Looking at the crafty, the poor collapses to despair; But looking at God, he becomes filled with hope, when the mouths of the crafty is shut, that the sin inside them wouldn’t be able to utter a word; as God Himself speaks.

- ❖ Even if these evil forces happen to prevail and overcome, Knowing that this is a chastisement of God, you will realize that they will be soon justly judged! Be sure that the beast will be slain in the right time; but you, brother, Be zealous in seeking the mercy and peace of God³.

St. Aphrahat

“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5: 17).

Eliphaz discerns between God’s correction of His believers, and His punishment over the wicked; He acknowledges the fatherly chastening of the fallen believer.

In his first talk, Eliphaz presents some comforting words; that he himself needed more; namely, the acceptance of the chastening of the Almighty Lord.

As what dwelt over ‘Job’ was nothing but a correction from the Almighty, the loving God, It would be an utter idiocy and foolishness to oppose the Lord, and to disregard His compassionate fatherhood, even during the moments of the chastisement.

The Hebrew word for *“Do not despise”*, came to mean (Do not hate). It is befitting for the believer to submit readily to the will and chastening of God, even if it is bitter; Being in need of the rod of chastisement. We should count ourselves deserving it, as a useful, albeit a bitter medicine! We should bow before Him, and trust His wisdom and care.

¹ Homily 76 on Mark 13:31.

² Homily 60 on Ps. 11 (10).

³ Demonstrations, 5:25 (Of Wars).

We should not also disregard it; as though it happened haphazardly, and not according to a wise and a sound divine plan. We should count the chastening as the voice of God, and a heavenly message.

That is how it is befitting for us to receive the chastening of the Lord, to appreciate its wisdom, and to submit to Him with fear and trembling, and be sure that it is for our eternal edification. He is actually weaning us from the world and the temporal pleasures, to get attached to the Beneficent Himself, who grants us the eternal glory.

How befitting it is for everyone, to draw his attention to the blessings of God's chastening to His believers; However great its bitterness and troubles may be, Yet they are not destructive, and are of temporary nature, and give the believer the strength to confront the beasts of the earth; ... How befitting it is to feel that what dwell upon him are allowed by God for his own edification, correction, and justification.

Eliphaz' goal here, is not to encourage 'Job' to accept the pain from the hand of God, But rather to convince him that God, does not seek to chasten him, but to destroy him. Having crossed the line, his sufferings are actually punishment, albeit extremely painful; And they are, but a down payment of what he should expect on the day of judgment, on account of being, according to Eliphaz, the worst of the wicked!

❖ **The pomegranate** fruit is protected by an inedible, firm, and bitter cover, although, on the inside are beautifully arranged and sweet seeds. **So is philosophy (the spiritual wisdom), It is dry and unattractive from the outside, Yet, when it becomes clear, it proves to be full of good promises.** When the divine Gardner (God) opens up the pomegranate of life, at the right time, and reveals its hidden beauty, those who taste it will enjoy its sweetness. The apostle Paul says: *“Now, no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous (like the first impression of the pomegranate cover); Nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (Hebrew 12: 11) – namely, the sweetness of the fruit inside¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

“For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole”
(Job 5: 18).

Although God allowed for Job's body to get covered with painful boils; Yet, like a clever Surgeon, He bandages the inner wounds of the soul, and grants them the comforts of His healing Holy Spirit.

In chastening, He seems as though crushing; Yet He restores to His believers every honor and glory, on an eternal level; namely, *“His hands make whole”*. The prophet Moses sings, saying: *“Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us; and the years we have seen evil”* (Psalm 90: 15); And the prophet Hosea says: *“He (God) has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up”* (Hosea 6: 1).

❖ He bruises, but He binds up; We, being pierced with the spear of His fear, will be restored to the sound sense.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ That is why, God's wrath does not dwell on all, but only on some; the strikes coming on some, would chasten all, to keep them away from evil²!

¹ *The Life of Moses, 1:193.*

² *The Life of Moses, 1:206.*

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ **“For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He accepts” (Hebrew 12: 6).** He first wounds, then heals; after bringing pain, He then binds up.

The same way He says to His prophet Jeremiah: *“See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant”* (Jeremiah 1: 10). Anyway, We are committed first to remove what is bad in us; As God cannot build, where there is still a lowly building; *“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”* (2 Corinthians 6: 14).

We are committed to uproot evil by its roots; We are committed to bring down the building of evil from within our souls; So that the Word can build and plant¹.

- ❖ If the evil is not first uprooted, we cannot receive goodness. He would rather destroy the frail buildings of the lack of faith; As it is the Lord who erects the true tabernacle which He Himself makes, and not man (Hebrew 8: 2); About which the apostle Paul said: *“You are God’s building”* (1 Corinthians 3: 9)².

- ❖ **“Nevertheless in these days, says the Lord, ‘I will not make a complete end of you’ (Jeremiah 5; 18).**

God does not hasten to condemn those who are worthy of punishment, before giving them the chance to repent. He does not punish for the sin on the spot, nor make a complete end of the sinner.

We see in the book of Leviticus an example of this, concerning the curses on those who disobey the law. After proclaiming the first punishments, it is said: **“And if in spite of this you will not obey me, I will continue to punish you sevenfold for your sins” (Leviticus 26: 18).** Then He mentions another punishment: **“But if, despite this, you disobey me, and continue hostile to me, I will continue hostile to you in fury” (Leviticus 26: 27).** From this, it is obvious that God brings punishment very gradually, For He intends for the sinner to repent, instead of letting him pay the price on the spot; After threatening the people with the sufferings that would dwell on them, God said to them: **“Nevertheless in these days,... I will not make a complete end of you”³.**

- ❖ **“For that is the day of God’s revenge”** The Holy Book states that chastisements are put on him who endures them with patience. If man is not punished here on earth, he will be punished on the Day of Judgment. God says on the tongue of the prophet Hosea: **“I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery” (Hosea 4: 14).** When God punishes a sinner, it is not because of his anger on him, as some people think; But, on the contrary, A sign of God’s anger on someone, would be refraining to punish him; A punished man, even if he suffers, the goal of his punishment is to correct his path; according to the words of David: **“O Lord, Do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure” (Psalm 6: 1).** And as the prophet Jeremiah says: **“O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest you bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10: 24).** There are many who corrected their path, because of God’s punishments and chastisements on them. According to the Holy

¹ Homilies on Jeremiah, homily 1: 16: 2.

² Fragments from Catena on Jerm. 70.

³ Homilies on Jer.,7.

Book, the children of Christ when they do wrong, they are punished, in order to get a chance of mercy from the Lord: ***“If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in my judgments; If they break My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, Then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness I will not utterly take from him”*** (Psalm 89: 30-33).

From this we understand, that if someone commits iniquities, and was not punished so far, that would be a sign that he is (still) unworthy of punishment¹.

The scholar Origen

“He will deliver you from six troubles, In seven, no harm will touch you” (Job 5: 19).

The previous talk was general, but now, it is directly and specifically addressed to ‘job’; presenting to him God’s precious promises, and proclaiming His great mercies.

Although Job’s friends were not guided by the Spirit of God in all what they said; Yet they presented divine promises which they knew through oral tradition; albeit they sometimes uttered some words about God, as well as about ‘Job’, which were not right.

By saying: ***“He will deliver you from six troubles, In seven, no harm will touch you”***, Eliphaz confirms, the afflictions and troubles, together with the help and salvation. As long as we are still in the world, we should expect afflictions; But we also trust in the help of God, our Father, and His care for our salvation and our peace. The apostle Paul says: *“What persecution I endured. And out of them all the lord delivered me”* (2 Timothy 3: 11).

“No harm will touch you” . No real harm will result from the afflictions; as *“The wicked one does not touch (the children of God)”* (1 John 5: 18).; They are kept secure in the hands of God their Savior.

❖ The figure 7 refers to the labor during the present life. God, after consummating everything on the sixth day, He created man, then rested in the seventh day. That day, he designated with no evening, as there will be no end to the rest that followed the consummation of creation. After the good works in the present life, there will be the reward of the eternal rest. That is why ***“He will deliver you from six troubles; In seven, no harm will touch you”***. By the fatherly guidance He lets us get trained on the troubles of the present life; But when the Judge comes, He will hide us from evil, and will bring us over to His more confirmed salvation.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Because ‘Job’ is one of those whom God warns and corrects, and not of those He will strike by punishment of destruction; That is why, in six troubles God will deliver him; Troubles that would otherwise wear him out; Yet, because he is His servant, friend, and soldier, Harm will not harm him in the seventh time; He will be kept safe by God’s help. But, because this might not be the way Eliphaz sees it; He tells ‘Job’: The first time it was the burning of the flock; the second, the attack on the oxen; the third, the loss of the donkeys; the fourth, the robbery of the camels; the fifth, the death of the shepherds; the sixth was the sudden death of your sons and daughters; then, in the seventh, the evil personally touched you, as demonstrated by the pain of your body, and the boils on your organs. **Anyway, as**

¹ Homilies on Jer. ,L II

It seems that you are not one of those who are worthy of the divine mercy, you are not going to be delivered by God, who strikes and heals, .

By what he said, he meant to lead 'Job' into despair; not aware that his words have actually encouraged the warrior more; As in six times God has delivered him from troubles, as those troubles we mentioned, came from the enemy. But God, looking down at His righteous subject, has put beforehand, limits to what the evil one can do; saying to him: "*Behold, All what he has is in your power, only do not lay a hand on his person*" (Job 1: 12); Meaning, 'You can touch his outside, but you have no authority to enter into his person'... Notice how God has actually kept 'Job' safe from all those tribulations; despite all the vain claims uttered by Eliphaz.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Notice how he, in what he says, distorts every benefit, and gives his friend a cruel slap; and in what way? By showing that 'Job' is neither among those who are warned, nor among those who may get hope. Yet, actually, what he says, beside having its general application, exactly apply to the person of 'Job'; saying, [That is what we saw and heard; And if it did not happen in your case, and you still remain in your afflictions, This will be for your own benefit to realize the extent of your iniquity!].

St. John Chrysostom

***"In famine, he shall redeem you from death, and in war, from the power of the sword"* (Job 5: 20).**

Famine cannot destroy them; as "*In the days of famine they shall be satisfied*" (Psalm 37: 19); "*To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine*" (Psalm 33: 19). Man needs the Word of God – not only as the Savior, who restores his soul to its early nature, but also to satisfy all his material needs. He presents Himself to man, as though He is everything to him. In the Lord Christ, famine cannot destroy us, because the Lord is our fulfillment. The Lord Christ presents Himself to those who feel their need to Him; because this feeling give them the worthiness of His existence and dwelling in their hearts. Being One, He presents Himself to every believer according to his spiritual status.

❖ Probably, as the apostle says: "*to those, who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*" (Hebrew 5: 14), Christ has become all these things, to befit the different states of the soul.

He is called the '**true Light**', for by Him the eye of the soul is illuminated.

He is the "**Logos**", for her ears to find something to hear.

He is the "**Bread of life**", for the soul to find something to taste.

And somehow He is called the "**Nardine or the oil**", for her to sense the sweet fragrance of the Word.

And because He could be felt and touched; He is called the "**Incarnated Logos**", for the soul to touch Him concerning the Word of life (John 1 – 1: 4; 1 John 1: 1).

But above things, He is the "**ONE**" – the Word of God itself – who adapts to the different reactions of the one who is praying, according to all these various names; So as not to leave any of the aspect of the soul without His grace¹.

❖ Indeed I can say that He becomes all things needed by every creature, capable of setting himself free. That is why He becomes the Light of people; if they – while in

¹ *Comm. On Song of Songs, book 2:9.*

the darkness of evil – seek that Light which shines in the darkness, and cannot reach it. He would not be the Light of the people, if they have not become in the darkness¹.

The scholar Origen

The Lord redeems man from the swords of the enemy, however numerous they may be; the wars of the demons cannot destroy us. “*A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not com near you*” (Psalm 91: 7).

❖ Jesus, the Son of God, my Lord, grants and commands me to crush under my feet the spirit of adultery, and to tread upon the spirit of anger, and the demon of greed, etc².

❖ Like the Father “*who alone has immortality*” (1 Timothy 6: 16); the Lord Jesus, loving us, has taken upon Himself, the verdict of death on our behalf.

On the same level, this also applies to God the Father; who alone has “no darkness in Him”. Christ, for the benefit of man, has taken upon Himself our darkness, So that, by His authority, He can bring our mortality to “naught”; and scatter our inner darkness³.

❖ Before the coming of our Lord and Savior, all the devils reigned on the peoples’ minds and bodies, and settled down in their spirits. Then the grace and mercy of the Lord Savior appeared on earth, to teach us how every man’s soul should restore freedom, and the image of God, according to which it was created.

Who is that, if not Jesus Christ, with whose scourges we, who believed in Him, are healed, when “*having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*” “on the cross” (Colossians 2: 15)⁴.

❖ + We have fallen under the authority of our enemy; namely, “the prince of this age” and his followers the hosts of evil. From this came our need of redemption by Him who purchases us, to come back from our state of sojourn from Him; Hence our Savior gave His blood to redeem us.

And as the “forgiveness of sins” that follows the redemption, is impossible before man is liberated, We had first to set ourselves free from the authority of him who captivated us; to get away from his hands, to be worthy of the forgiveness of our sins, and the healing from their wounds, in order to carry out the works of piety and virtues⁵.

The scholar Origen

“You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, And you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes” (Job 5: 21).

The way God protects His children from the swords in battle, He likewise protects them against the scourge of the evil tongue, which is sharper than the sword; and protects them against the vain accusations. Thus, in time of peace and in time of war as well, the believer lives in peace under the tabernacle of God, so as **not to be afraid of destruction** when it comes.

Here Eliphaz presents an accusation against ‘Job’, in the form of an advice; As though he says to him: You have been defeated in the temptation; As having been afflicted, you should have refrained from sinning with your lips. Your tongue testifies

¹ *Comm. On John 1:20.*

² *In Josh. Homily 12:3.*

³ *Comm. On John 2:26 (21).*

⁴ *Contra Celsus 2:77.*

⁵ *De Principiis 4:1:2, Contra Celsus 2:52;3:7.*

to your wickedness; for you have fallen in its snare, and bowed under its fatal scourges. Eliphaz was not aware that what he says does not apply to 'Job', to whom God Himself testifies that *"In all this 'Job' did not sin with his lips, nor charge God with wrong"* (Job 1: 22). The one who has actually fallen in the snare of the tongue, and under its scourges, is Eliphaz himself; with the intention to bring the righteous 'Job' down. As for 'Job', the words of the Psalmist apply, saying: *"He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence"* (Psalm 91: 3).

❖ The holy man of God¹ loved the virtue of silence; when he realized that man's voice is the beginning of sin. He said to himself: *"Let me keep myself from sinning with my lips"*; having read that, of the signs of the divine protection of man, is hiding him from the scourges of his tongue, and from the testimony of his conscience.

We are chastened by the rebukes of our thoughts, and the verdict of our conscience.

We are also chastened by the scourges of our voice, when we utter something that hits our souls and minds with deadly wounds.

Yet, where is that man, whose heart is purified from the uncleanness of sin, who does not transgress with his tongue?

Having realized that it is difficult to find such a man, who can keep his mouth free from erroneous talk, the holy man set for himself the statute of righteousness, by committing himself to the law of silence; in order to avoid, by it, such a fall, from which it may be difficult for him to escape by talk².

St. Ambrose

❖ *"You shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes"* (22). Seeing themselves preoccupied with their confrontation against the adversary in various ways, the holy men provided themselves in their battle with the following tools:

They have the help of God's word to confront famine.

They have the shield of self-control to confront the sword of war.

They have the stronghold of patience to confront the scourge of the tongue.

They have the help of the inner love to confront the harm of outer tribulations.

By such amazing tools they pass through the various temptations, brought over them by their crafty enemy; to gain greater riches in virtues as God's warriors.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ *"You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction"* (Jeremiah 5; 3). God, in His care and mercy, goes all the way with His purification task for the sake of the salvation of the soul. If all what dwell on us from God are intended for our perfection and correction, and we still refuse to receive them; He who has the reason would say to the Lord: *"O Lord, You have consumed them, but they refused to receive correction"*³.

The scholar Origen

"You shall laugh at destruction and famine, And you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth" (Job 5: 22).

The believer in his peace of heart, disregards the plots of the wicked, and the rage of the beasts of the earth, because he feels that he is kept in God. That is how the

¹ ربما يقصد داود النبي (مز 39: 7).

² Duties of the Clergy, 1:2:6.

³ Homilies on Jer., 6.

apostle Paul did not fear the last enemy; namely, death, and completed his praise, saying: “*O death, where is your sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15: 55); “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Romans 8: 35).

❖ **“You shall laugh at destruction and famine”**... It is well said by the Psalmist: “*The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, ‘Here is the man who did not make God his strength’*” (Psalm 52: 6, 7). Now, the righteous may become afraid when they look at the wicked; for fear that they may follow their lead; But later on; finding out that they are unable to correct those who fell under the eternal verdict, and feeling no compassion toward them, they look at them and laugh.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ In the Holy Book, you often see God portrayed as having certain human emotions. If you read the words: “**God’s wrath and anger**”, Do not assume that these emotions are attributed to God; But it is actually a way by which God talks to chasten and correct His children.

When we intend to instruct our children and correct their behavior, we try to appear before them in a fearsome way, and with a firm and solemn face that may contradict our real feelings; Yet, that suits the way of chastisement. Because, if we persist on showing on our faces features that conform to our real inner feelings toward them, we shall definitely spoil them, and make them turn to the worst.

When we talk about God’s anger, It will be for the sake of our repentance and correction; As God, actually, never gets angry nor agitated; But it is you, who would bear the consequences, when you fell into horrible sufferings because of your sins and transgressions, in case God chooses to chasten you, by what we call ‘**His anger**’¹.

The scholar Origen

“For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you” (Job 5: 23).

When the believer is at peace with God, he will be at peace with all creation, and will have a covenant even with the stones of the field, “*In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely*” (Hosea 2: 18). Whoever is in a covenant with the Creator of the heaven and earth; Heaven and earth would have pleasure in serving him.

❖ Therefore, we are committed to strive faithfully, to correct our path, and reform our behavior; in order to become in a better relationship even with the beasts of the field, not to mention a better one with humans.

This conforms with what came in the book of the righteous ‘Job’ “*The beasts of the field shall be at peace with you*” (5: 23 LXX). No offense from outside shall affect us, as long as it is not allowed to take root in us; As according to the words: “*Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble*” (Psalm 119: 165)².

St. John Cassian

❖ **“The beasts of the field shall be at peace with you” (23).** It is obvious that the demons have submitted to 'Job', not willingly, but under compulsion; He

¹ *Homilies on Jer.*, 18.

² *The Institutes*, 9:8.

understands that in courage and patience... and knowing how to guard the peace of his house; namely his body, the temple of God, against any struggle against the Spirit of God dwelling in him (1 Corinthians 3: 16); the emotions of his body had no controversy against the law of the Spirit.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Our deceitful enemy is called “**the beast of the earth**”; as, by his beastly nature he seizes the souls of the wicked in the moment of their death.... Whereas the righteous, submitting by their hearts to the fear of God, all fear from the adversary shall instantly disappear from them.
- ❖ The “Truth” gave His disciples peace from the beginning when He said to them: “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you*” (John 14: 27). And Simeon the elder desired the perfect peace, when he prayed to God, saying: “*Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, For my eyes have seen Your salvation*” (Luke 2: 29, 30). Our peace starts by our longing for the Creator, and is consummated by the clear vision. It will be perfect when our minds are not blinded by ignorance, and not influenced by carnal attacks. Getting in touch with Him; the soul either submits to God, Or the body submits to the soul; Then the tent of the righteous would be said to be secure; namely, in his body dwelt by his reason; the rebellious emotions of lusts would thus be under the guidance of the hand of righteousness.

Pope Gregory the Great

“You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing (Job 5: 24).

With the reconciliation with God, peace is realized at home in the family. He, who dwells in the house of the shelter of the Most High (Psalm 91: 1), the Most High will dwell in his house, and will take on Himself the salvation of his household.

What is the 'tent', but the body that is sanctified by the Lord Christ, to become glorified, and eternally secure?

- ❖ We do not intend to get rid of the body, but of the corruption in it. Our body may be a burden on us, not because it is a body, but because it is corrupt, and prone to suffering. But once the new life dwells in it, the corruption (not the body itself) is taken away¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The prophet Moses is an example: By the glory of the Spirit that once shone on his face that no one could look at it. So you can imagine how, in the resurrection of the righteous, the bodies of the worthy would be - through a glory, that the holy and faithful souls are getting even now - counted as worthy of acquiring this glory inside it; namely in the inner man².

St. Maccar the Great

- ❖ The righteous are justly getting the reward of their sufferings in their bodies; And in the same body in which they were killed for the sake of their love of God, they will live; And in that same body, in which they endured the servitude, they will reign³.

St. Erinaos

¹ In 2 Cor. hom 10:3.

² Sermon 5:10.

³ Adv. Haer. 5:37:1.

“You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth” (Job 5: 25).

Here, Eliphaz tells 'Job' who lost all his children, that, if he returns to God, his plantation will increase, and his descendants will flourish.

The descendants of the righteous are as many as the grass of the earth; For God gives him a word and grace, to gain a multitude of souls, as children for the Lord..

- ❖ When the believers are completely submitted to the Lord, they become equipped with the holy word of preaching, by which they produce a multitude of descendants,... While the corruption of the present time is taken away, the descendants produced by the righteous, likened to the grass of the earth, become green through the hope in eternities.

Pope Gregory the Great

“You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season” (Job 5: 26).

Returning to God grants him long days, to consummate his mission, and come to the grave in good old age, in a proper time, like sheaves of wheat gathered in season.

- ❖ What is meant by the grave, but the life of contemplation, by which we, dead to the world, are buried, and be hidden in the inner world, away from the earthly lusts. As those who are dead to the outer life, are also buried by contemplation; about whom the apostle Paul says: *“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”*

Whoever submit the arrogance of his body, would have his mind opened to the holy words, and would exalt and extend, enjoying the inner contemplation. He would not be a perfect preacher, who is dedicated to contemplation, disregarding the commitment to the work he is supposed to do; Or who, because of his commitment to his work, he forsakes the dedication to contemplate.

By contemplation, they stand in the love of God; And by preaching, they go back to serve their brethren.

Work should come first, then the contemplation follows. That is why, a perfect man is committed to start by training his mind on good habits, then he can afford to relax on the heaps of the wheat of comfort. *“Return home and tell how much God has done for you”* (Luke 8: 39)... After being healed, the Lord sends us home, and commands us to tell the things He has done for us; Namely, the soul should be preoccupied with work, before enjoying contemplation.

This way, Jacob served for the sake of Rachel, having acquired Leah before her; having been informed that *“It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one”* (Genesis 29: 26)... What is meant by Rachel, but the life of contemplation?

Pope Gregory the Great

“We have examined this, and it is true, So hear it and apply it to yourself” (Job 5: 27).

Having shown God’s goodness, who receives the repentant to give them back their peace, happiness, and goods, Eliphaz ends his first talk, by giving Job a sure guarantee for his wise counsel.

We have received faith in God through the holy tradition; But that does not mean we can afford to be slothful; We are committed to search for Him; to seek His transfiguration in our life; to recognize him on a daily basis; to love and to acquire

Him; to listen to His voice; and to learn from Him; in order to have a personal experience in dealing with Him.

Eliphaz requests from 'Job', concerning what he heard about the beasts of the field and the heaps of wheat, not to take the meanings of the words literally; but to realize their deep spiritual secrets, to enjoy the contemplation in God.

- ❖ Namely, [You could be a judge to yourself, and could let your conscience decide]; Yet, as proved through the battle that the enemy aroused against him, Job's actions are illuminating, and his hidden thoughts are more shining than his seen actions.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 5
\YOU ARE THE SECRET OF BLESSING

- ❖ I coveted to abide in You forever.
You are the resurrection, and the eternal life.
If I acquire You, I shall enjoy the secret of blessed eternal life.
- ❖ My heart lifts up to enjoy the fellowship of saints.
In their love, they pray for me, and for the salvation of my soul.
Yet, what would be the benefit of their prayers, if I do not return to you through repentance?
How can I Partake of their portion, if I do not respond to the riches of Your grace?
- ❖ Sin has deprived me of enjoying You, O the everlasting Love
Taking the love away from me, Anger and envy reigned on me.
Since sin has uprooted me;
That I no more dwell in You;
I became deprived of my inner peace and of my true security.
Foolishly offending You, O the divine Gate;
The enemy scattered my talents, and destroyed my energies.
I became food for him, and drink for his evil hosts.
My life turned into a wilderness filled with thorns and thistles.
I confess that all the bitterness that dwelt on me,
Are the fruit of my slothfulness and ignorance.
Who can save me from my enemy, and carry me to You, but Your rich grace?
- ❖ Now, I return to You, seeking Your presence inside me.
Being the miracle Maker;
By Your Holy Spirit, You renew my nature.
And turn my dry wilderness into a spiritual paradise.
You turn my earth into a heaven.
And my weak humanity into a heavenly life.
You fill me by Your Holy Spirit, O the heavenly Rain.
You will carry me with Your wings, to the divine bosoms.
You will lift me up to the heights, where my soul will settle down.
You will make me a wonder, O the amazing One!
- ❖ Chasten me, I am Your son, the object of Your exalted care.
Let Your hand crush me, For it will again heal me!
Allow me six calamities, For in the seventh You will rescue me.
Allow hunger to come over me, to give me Yourself as a heavenly bread.
Let the enemy strike me with the sword, As it will surely strike him back.
For I am in Your bosom.
Let my tongue keep silent, while my heart praise You.
I wish the wicked world would collapse.
Because I am anticipating Your coming on the clouds.
To lean on Your chest.
Then I would not fear the wild beasts.
Dwell in me, and let me dwell in You.
Then my body would be sanctified, together with my mind and soul.
The tent of my body would become secure.
And its sanctified fruits would be blessed by Your Holy Spirit.

I would live all the days of my sojourn in Your riches.
And joyfully, I would set forth, to depart in full vigor with the days You have
blessed.

CHAPTER 6

THE NEED OF THE AFFLICTED FOR THE SYMPATHY OF HIS FRIENDS

JOB'S DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE ATTITUDE OF HIS FRIENDS:

Although Eliphaz did not accuse 'Job' in a direct way, of being a great sinner, but gently began his talk with him, yet his talk bore, in an indirect way several serious charges: that he is a hypocrite, who hides his sin, because of which all those calamities have come upon him; and that he is ignorantly accusing God of injustice. 'Job' understood all what Eliphaz meant by his talk.

Although 'Job' agreed with his friends, that what dwelt upon him are all from God; But the difference was in the interpretation of what lies behind those sufferings; and whether they are a divine punishment because of hidden sins.

To justify his attitude, 'Job' says that the beasts, if satisfied and are not hungry, would never scream, but would keep their peace. Therefore his screams are not coming from void.

'Job' in his red hot condition, expected from his friends to be like cold water, to quench the heat inside him; He expected from them some compassion; based upon general human principles: that whoever does not show compassion in such a condition, has forsaken the fear of God!; that deprivation of human emotions is like atheism; and that tribulations are a test for true friendship. He drew their attention to the fact that he did not ask them to give him back his lost possessions; but asked them, to tell him what his faults are, to treat him with justice, and to talk to him with fairness.

They took against him a very dry attitude, like a stream whose water dried up when there is a great need for it. He likened himself to a traveler in the desert, who knows where water sources are located, then finds out that their waters have been swallowed up by the sand, leaving them completely dry.

'Job' was very much grieved and disappointed by the attitude of his friends, who tried to hint to him that God has become his enemy. What most hurt and confused him; was to be told that God whom he loved and worshipped, has brought on him all those calamities, and has put him under all those signs of His wrath; which led him to long for death to relieve him of his troubles.

Eliphaz' talk, intending to tell 'Job' that he should confess his hidden sins, and seek forgiveness for them, brought resentment in 'Job', which he expressed by the following words: "*A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty*" (Job 6: 14). These words have one of two interpretations: The first, is that the word 'forsake' refers to his friends who, through not partaking of his feelings, have forsaken the Almighty. The second, which would be the most logic of the two interpretations, is that, Although he also feels that he has lost the way of God; Yet, showing some gentle emotions toward him would strengthen his trust in God.

This teaches us, as ministers, to refrain from demonstrating hard criticism, even against those who are clearly on the wrong side; lest we may drive them to a loose faith.

It may so look, as though 'Job' is addressing God in an unbecoming way that lacks reverence; accusing Him of being the cause of all his troubles; asking God to

leave him alone, or to put an end to his life. Then he mockingly wonder, why would the Almighty pay attention to such a little creature like himself?!

Then his soul begs God for some mercy and compassion, based on the fact that he is nothing but a very weak creature, with a short life span, a swift departure, and an impossible and most improbable return. That does not mean that 'Job' erred; and even if he did, he would like to know what harm has he done to God! And why wouldn't God forgive his sin, and forget his transgression?! Although 'Job' talked in a seemingly acceptable logic, albeit with human weakness; Yet Eliphaz thought that what he told him was reasonably wise!

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- It is the right of the afflicted to complain | 1 – 7 |
| 2- Death is the end for all troubles | 8 – 13 |
| 3- Job criticizes the cruelty of his friends | 14 – 30 |

1- IT IS THE RIGHT OF THE AFFLICTED TO COMPAIN:

“Then Job replied...” (Job 6: 1).

Although the one who started debating against 'Job' was Eliphaz, Yet, because 'Job' assumed that Eliphaz was talking on behalf of all of them; he addressed his response to all of them (5: 15).

'Job' was very decent and respectable; He did not interrupt Eliphaz who started his talk aggressively. He patiently listened to him until he finished all what he wanted to say:

“If only my anguish would be weighed, and all my misery be placed on the scales!” (Job 6: 2).

'Job' revealed that his anguish cannot be adequately described or realized; and that there is no way in the whole world to weigh his misery.

❖ **What 'Job' said refer to the words of Eliphaz, “... how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands...; But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; It strikes you, and you are dismayed” (4: 3-5).** By that 'Job' intended to say that the extent of his anguish, which no one has ever gone through, may give him some excuse for his reaction.

Eliphaz, on the other hand, claimed that this situation is undoubtedly caused by Job's wickedness, presenting as a proof of his claim: *“Consider now: Who being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?” (4: 7)* What he says is exactly like what the Barbarians said about Paul after he was bitten by a viper: *“This man must be a murderer, for though he escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live” (Acts 28: 4).*

Men – especially the commons –are used to judge man, not by his actions, as much as by what comes over him of punishments and chastisements. That is why Eliphaz says: *“Can a mortal be more righteous than God?” (4: 17);* to which Job's response, was that he is not able to answer, and cannot claim that he has not committed so many sins to warrant such horrible calamities, which would surely testify against him!

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Who would be given the title “Scales”, other than the 'Intercessor' between God and men, who came to weigh the worthiness of our life; bringing with Him both justice and compassion together?

Pope Gregory the Great

“It would surely outweigh the sand of the sea – no wonder my words have been impetuous” (Job 6: 3).

Because his calamities were so numerous and heavy, and impossible to count or to weigh; ***“outweighing the sand of the sea”***; he is begging to be excused, in case his words are impetuous; namely, if they sound vain or bitter; **As in such situations it is difficult to control or adorn the words!**

By that ‘Job’ apologizes for cursing the day he was conceived or born; which, although he does not justify, Yet he expects from his friends to take his situation into consideration before criticizing him; He expects from them more compassion, and less bitter criticism!

❖ What grieved ‘Job’ most, was not the loss of his possessions, his wealth, his children, nor the ugly scene and smell of his boils, as much as the painful situation of his spirit... All the sand of the sea could not outweigh the bitterness he feels when he listen to the words coming on the lips and tongues of his friends!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God’s terrors are marshaled against me” (Job 6: 4).

What are the arrows of the Almighty but God’s arrows aimed at His saints to wound them with His divine love, that let them long for death to encounter Him, and to experience His love in the most perfect way?!

Many fathers believe that God the Father, in His love for mankind, has aimed His most precious arrow – His Word – at the hearts of men, to wound them with the wounds of love, that their souls would cry out, saying: *“I am wounded with love”* (Sing 2: 5).

And while God aims the arrows of His love at our hearts to grant them the wounds of love, together with the healing and happiness on an eternal level; At the same time, the evil one likewise, aims his flaming arrows at the hearts of men to kill them, and to qualify them for the eternal hell (Ephesians 6: 16).

This portrait is certainly taken from a common custom that was prevailing among the Barbarian nations, of dipping the heads of the arrows in poison, to make them more deadly¹.

If it was impossible to weigh the calamities that came over him, What was more serious, were the inner arrows; those of the Almighty that were aimed at him; when he sees that God, whom he always loved and worshipped, has brought on him all those troubles. He felt that the poison, with which those arrows were covered, have got into his spirit that his balance is lost, and his depths collapsed.

He stands in amazement; feeling that he is in a battle before the huge army of God, who fights him with those calamities! Where could he find comfort?! He could not raise his eyes to heaven, for no comfort is coming from it; but only horror!

❖ The bride praised the Thrower of the arrows, for aiming them so accurately; saying: ***“I am wounded (faint) with love” (Song 2: 5)***; namely, **that the arrows of the Groom have penetrated her heart**. The Thrower of these arrows is “Love” (1 John 4: 8); who aims His polished arrow (Isaiah 49: 2). The Only-begotten Son, at those to be saved; dipping the tip of His triple arrow in the Spirit of life. The tip of this arrow is the faith, by which it aims God, the thrower of the arrow, together with the arrow himself, at the heart, according to the words of the Lord Christ: *“If*

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N.J., 1972, p. 208.

anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14: 23) ¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The soul, raised up to high divine levels, would see inside her the sweet arrow of love that wounded her; and would boast that wound, saying: “*I am wounded with love*”. O, you beautiful wound, and sweet arrow, that brought life into my heart! That opened a door and entrance for love! Such a fantastic transformation from throwing the arrows to the joy of the wedding! The righteous ‘Job’ refers to these arrows; And suffering from his intensive pains, he proclaims that “*The arrows of the Almighty (have stabbed him)*” (6: 4). We indeed look at these arrows as being the words of God. But I wonder if ‘Job’ has felt so much pain when he was stabbed with them!

The words of God, even if they are arrows, they cause love and not pain; although there is no love without pain! When we love something without possessing it, we cannot help but feel sad; Man loves without pain if he possesses the object of his love. That is why the bride of Christ – the church – utters these words in the Song of songs, saying: “***I am wounded with love***” (Songs 2: 5; 5: 8) She loves what she has not yet possessed; She is sad because she has not acquired it yet. And being sad, she is wounded; although this wound would bring her soon to the perfect health².

- ❖ “*Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me*” (Psalm 38: 2)... the same punishment that came upon Adam; namely, the suffering of both the body and mind; which we have to endure here; that were also referred by ‘Job’, saying: “*The arrows of the Almighty are in me*” (6: 4), while he was suffering under their pain.

As we are also used to call the words of God as arrows that give love and not pain; we should then understand: “***Your arrows have pierced me***”, as “***Your words have pierced my heart***”.

By these same words, the ‘Sabbath’ comes to my mind; namely (the eternity). And by remembering that I have not yet got it, I have no more joy in the present time. I would remember that I have no health in my body; And it would not be fitting for me to consider it health, compared to that I will have in eternity; “*when the perishable will be clothed with the imperishable; and the mortal with immortality*” (1 Corinthians 15: 53). Comparing it to how I would be, I consider my present health, as nothing but sickness³.

St. Augustine

- ❖ They have not just pierced me; they have actually deprived me of sound judgment.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The way ‘Job’ expressed it, saying: “***The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison, God’s arrows are marshaled against me***” (6: 4), conforms with that of the Psalmist, saying: “*Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me*” (Psalm 38: 2). Both of them talk about grieves aimed at them by enemies through God’s allowance; That is why ‘Job’ says: “***My spirit drinks in their poison***”; I cannot any more endure them; as once I

¹ عظة 4 على نشيد الأناشيد ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار .

² On Ps. 37, Discourse, 5.

³ On Ps. 38 (37).

start talking, and the longer I talk, the more I feel the pain. That is why he tries to keep silent, lest his words would not please God.!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, or an ox bellow when it has fodder?” (Job 6: 5).

It was befitting for them, instead of criticizing him, to partake of his suffering; as his complaint and the bitterness of his soul, are not coming from void; Even the irrational animals do not scream without cause!

‘Job’ has become like stone, not able to express his inner feelings; he cannot bray like the wild donkey, that has no grass; nor bellow like an ox that has no fodder; He has to eat some kind of food not fit for humans, without complaining

Pope Gregory believes that 'Job' has become, as though has fallen under the curse of the law, that exposes sin, with no grace stretching to bring him up. There is no fault in the law, Yet, there is need for the grace that forgives the sins revealed by the law. It was befitting for Job’s friends to support him, by looking at God’s grace; and not to rebuke him bitterly and destroy his soul.

❖ **Can anyone taste something that may cause death?** Tasting the law in a carnal way would bring about death; as its statutes reveal the sin, and do not take it away.... According to the apostle Paul: *“The law made nothing perfect”* (Hebrew 7: 19); And also: *“The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful”* (Romans 7: 12-13).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The commandments of Moses are **‘The ministry of Judgment’**; whereas the grace by the Savior, He calls it **‘The ministry of righteousness’**, which exalts in glory.

The law which judges, was given by Moses; Whereas the grace which justifies, was through the Only-begotten Son. So, how could Christ not be incomparably, exalted in glory?¹.

St. Cyril the Great

❖ The law condemns the sinners; Whereas the grace accepts, and justifies them by faith. It leads them to the holy baptism, and grants them the forgiveness of sin².

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

❖ The Jews are still dwelling by the bitter waters; Because God has not yet shown them the tree, by which the water becomes sweet³.

❖ God cast a tree in the water that made it sweet. But when the tree of the cross of Jesus comes; and when, in me, dwells the teaching of my savior, then the Law of Moses becomes indeed sweet for those who read and understand it⁴.

The scholar Origen

“Is tasteless food eaten without salt, Or is there flavor in the (stew of beans)? (Job 6: 6).

¹ *Comm on John, book 1, ch. 10:17.*

² *PG 82:394.*

³ *In Exodus hom. 7:3.*

⁴ *In Jer. hom. 10:2.*

'Job' has been like salt that, by the grace of God, and through his exalted love, took away corruption from many, presenting to them true heavenly comforts. Now, having entered the crucible of temptations, no one gave him even salt; And having become in great material poverty, he finds no salt to add to the tasteless food given to him by some.

- ❖ **According to the law, the hidden meaning is the salt of the letter;** whoever depends on the carnal meaning, and rejects the spiritual, eats nothing but tasteless food? But this salt; namely, the Truth, is put in the food, for you to realize the fragrance of the hidden meaning in the depths of the law. The Lord Jesus said: *"If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about me"* (John 5: 46); and: *"Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace to each other"* (Mark 9: 50).

Pope Gregory the Great

***"I refuse to touch it: Such food makes me ill"* (Job 6: 7).**

The food he used to refuse, and would not touch in the days of his prosperity, became his tasteless food. The Psalmist says: *"My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me, 'Where is your God'"* (Psalm 42: 3). *"You have fed them with the bread of tears, You have made them drink tears by bowlful"* (Psalm 80: 5). *"For I eat ashes as my food, and mingle my drink with tears"* (Psalm 102: 9). *"The Lord said: In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them"* (Ezekiel 4: 13); And, *"Say to the people of the land; 'This is what the sovereign Lord say about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: they will eat food in anxiety and drink their water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there'"* (Ezekiel 12: 19). And: *"The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the lord"* (Amos 8:11)

- ❖ ***"I refuse to touch it: Such food makes me ill"* (6: 7).** The soul before, used to care only for her own benefit, refusing to bear the burden of others; her compassion toward others was very little, that rendered her unable to confront the adversaries. Now, she is committed to bear the weakness of her neighbor. She needs strength and great courage to overcome the adversary. By bowing to help others, she is edified; by drawing toward others, she extends forward; by partaking of feelings of others, she is strengthened; and by opening to the love of her neighbor, she, by her resilience, rises up toward her Creator.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The same way, a wild donkey does not bray when it has grass; or an ox bellow when it has fodder; No one chooses to eat food without salt, or to listen to vain talk. He means to say: I would not choose to grieve, unless I have reasons for grieving.

My soul finds no comfort; for I know that my food is tasteless, with an awful smell like that of a lion.

As though the boils and their pus were not enough, He added an extra suffering!

The illness impaired his senses; that eating food became suffering for him!

The awful smell of gangrene has taken away his power of discernment what could be worst? No comfort and no enjoyment of food?!

St. John Chrysostom

2- DEATH IS THE END OF ALL TROUBLES:

“Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for” (Job 6: 8).

Although Eliphaz strongly rebuked ‘Job’ for seeking death, Instead of retracting what he said, he persists on saying it more than before. The book told us his words, not to follow his lead, but as a warning to us.

Job’s request from God was to grant him what he hoped for, not to let him pass through his temptation, but to grant him death.

“That God would be willing to crush me, to let loose His hand and cut me off” (Job 6: 9).

What ‘Job’, in the midst of his affliction, is asking for, is that God who stretched his hand, to bring on him poverty, loss of children, and illness, would stretch it more, to cushy him and to cut him off. Yet despite that, it never crossed his mind to commit suicide; contrary to the philosopher Since, who encouraged people to resort to suicide, as a reasonable way to put an end to un-endurable sufferings; something against the law of God and that of nature.

‘Job’ wished for his soon death; and turned this wish into a supplication to God; although it is not according to the will of God

“Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain – that I had not denied the words of the Holy One” (Job 6: 10)

Despite his strong wish for getting rid of his sufferings through death, yet Job’s heart bore spiritual touches, anticipating in faith, the enjoyment of comfort and joy, after his departure from this world. It is obvious that ‘Job’ had a good conscience and hope for eternity; although he expected to have painful suffering before his death: **“My joy in unrelenting pain”.**

Saying **“unrelenting”**, or **“Let it become unrelenting”**; as though he is saying: [I do not wish for God’s compassion on me; But let Him allow for the pains of death, that would put an end to my present pains, and bring me forth to rest.

In an unfitting daring, ‘Job’ challenges the Lord God, saying: **“Let it be unrelenting pain”!**

‘Job’ mixed his admonition – although exceeding the limits – with his faith, holding fast to the words of God, saying: **“I have not denied the words of the Holy One”**. Counting himself entrusted with the words of the Holy One; He probably enjoyed a divine vision. As though he is saying together with the apostle Paul, that *“he has not received God’s grace in vain”* (2 Corinthians 6: 1). He was ready to enjoy the divine word, and to testify to it, to let the others enjoy it together with him.

The law of his life is the word of the Holy One; He was never ashamed of it; and was never slothful to testify to it.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi believes that even death could not mute his mouth to testify and to praise.

- ❖ O Lord, I will never stop praising you, even after my death
Whoever lives and dies for, and by you, would never die.
Even the silence of death could not shut him up.
Therefore, let my mouth talk, now, and after my death.
- ❖ You are the Word who gives a word to those who talk.
By you, all who talk would talk for your sake.
A ray, and a great light, shone in me, to look at you.
By looking at you, my soul is illuminated, to acquire goodness.

When the soul gets far from You, It would be filled with darkness.
But looking at you, it is clothed with light, to utter the words of your news.
Silence and talk are set on me.
O Lord, Ordain my life according to your will.
I keep silent, as I feel inadequate to talk!
I keep silent, but not in vain pretence!

And when I talk, my words would be according to your glory, and for your sake.

When the soul is filled with silence, in awe of You, This silence would be, as though a talk filled with benefit. And if the soul moves on to glorify You in love... In love I will move; I will move to glorify You; In awe, I will keep silent; But I will never stop glorifying You. O Lord, Grant me the awe (by the silence), and enrich me with the word; every day, I would be in awe; and every day, I would move to talk.

St. Mar Jacob El-Serougi

- ❖ He says: Surely, I do not present to You anything contradictory. I simply say, that I am enduring chastisements that surpass the limits of nature. The tribulations that dwelt upon me, surpass the endurance of the human body... He did not say: [I went through sufferings, although I am righteous!]; But he says that he is unable to endure them; the way David said: “*Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am weak*” (Psalm 6: 2).

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ “*I have not denied the words of the Holy One*”. The words of God to us, may probably be, not voices, but may be, in silence, works entrusted to us. Therefore, the righteous ‘Job’ would be denying the words of God, if he protests against the strikes on him. Yet, his feeling toward the One who strikes him is apparent in calling Him “*the Holy One*”, and submitting to Him.

- ❖ “*I did not deny the words of the Holy One*”. He never protested against the oppression of Him who struck him; In the midst of his strikes, he calls Him “*The Holy One*”.

But we should realize that sometimes we are stricken by grief by the adversary; and some other times by God Himself.

Yet, while through the strikes of the adversary, we acquire virtue; when our wicked habits are broken by the strokes of the Lord, we would be stronger in virtue.

The prophet saw such a strike, when he said: “*You will rule them with an iron scepter; You will dash them to pieces like pottery*” (Psalm 2: 9). The Lord shepherds us with an iron scepter, by the strong rod of righteousness according to His will; While giving us life from within, He grieves us from without. While He brings down the strength of the body, He exalts that of the Spirit.

Having in mind the jars of the pottery; the apostle Paul says: “*We have this treasure in jars of clay*” (2 Corinthians 4: 7); And speaking about breaking together with shepherding, he says: “*Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day*” (2 Corinthians 4: 16). I wish the holy man who longs to approach God, strongly proclaims, yet with the spirit of humility, even through the strikes coming over him.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ I openly proclaim: ***“I will never deny the words of the Holy One”***: namely, I do not care for this life; I do not fear to depart from this body: And I would not wish to appear a liar in my relationships to the testimonies presented on me by the Holy God (1: 1; 2; 3). God would never testify to the holiness of anyone, except those whom He finds, practicing the works of the saints; like when He said: *“There is no one on earth like my servant Job”* (Job 1: 8; 2: 3). That is why we should be alert through this corrupt life; as it is not possible for any human to get such an important testimony from the Almighty.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient?” (Job 6: 11).

With such a deteriorating health, and deplorable, and hopeless condition, ‘Job’ did not expect to see any more good days. However, it was befitting for him to have hope in Him, who bears our weakness, instead of wishing for death with such despair!

- ❖ ***“What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects that I should be patient?”***. ***“Man’s days are determined (short)” (14: 5)***. How many months and years will be in it? How could I not be disturbed with such a life that will soon come to an end?!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The lord Christ had compassion on his weakness (Adam’s), and came down to receive disgrace in his place!
- ❖ O Light of Christ, that illuminates the darkened eyes; Shine on my weakness, to be illuminated by you.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

- ❖ Let us put on our head the helmet of salvation, so as not to be wounded and die in the battle.

Let us girdle ourselves with Truth, so as not to be weak in battle!

Let us stand and wake Christ up, to calm the sea for our sake.

Let us carry the shield of faith against the evil one, in preparation for the gospel of our Savior (Ephes 6: 15-16).

Let us receive from our Lord the authority on the serpents and the scorpions (Luke 10: 19).

Let us be joyful in hope all the time (Romans 12: 12); that He, who is our hope and Savior would rejoice in us.

Let us equip ourselves with a weapon for the battle (Ephesians 6: 16); namely, the preparation for the gospel.

Let us knock on the door of heaven (Matthew 7: 7), to have it opened, and to enter through it.

Let us diligently seek the mercy from God; to gain what is necessary for us; Let us seek His Kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6: 33).

Let us contemplate what is above; in the heavenly places, where Christ is ascending and glorified.

But let us forget the world that is not for us, in order to reach what we are called for.

Let us raise our eyes up high, to see the transfigured Light.

Let us spread our wings like eagles, to see where the carcass is (Matthew 24: 28).

Our enemy is clever, O dear brother; he, who fights against us, is crafty; Getting ready to attack the courageous and the victorious, to make them weak; Whereas the feeble, who belong to him, he does not bother to fight; being already captivated by, and delivered to him.

Whoever has wings; let him fly away from him, to where the arrows he aims cannot reach him; He will be seen fighting by the spiritual; Yet the children of light would never fear him; because the darkness flee before the light. The children of the good One would never fear the evil one, as they are given the authority to tread over him with their feet (Genesis 3: 15)¹.

St. Aphrahat

“Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze?” (Job 6: 12).

- ❖ **Even if my strength is like that of stone or bronze**, It would retreat before those sufferings that came from my enemy, about whom God says: he “ *treats iron like straw, and bronze like rotten wood*” (Job 41: 27, 28).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ It is necessary for us to put in mind that the “**strength**” of the righteous is of one kind, while that of the corrupt are of another.

The strength of the righteous is to submit the flesh, to resist our own will, to abolish the pleasure of the present life, to love the toughness of this world, for the sake of the eternal reward, to despise the seductions of prosperity, and to overcome the terror of tribulations in our hearts. Whereas the strength of the corrupt, on the other hand, is the persistent fondness of the temporary things, always seeking more of the vain glory, searching for larger measures of evil, opposing the life of the good men, not just by words, or by behavior, but also by weapon, boasting their own selves, and committing evil, day after day, with no diminishing of lust.

That is why it is said to the elect by the Psalmist: “*Be strong and take heart, all you hope in the Lord*” (Psalm 31: 24); And it is proclaimed to the corrupt by the prophet: “*Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and champions at mixing drinks*” (Isaiah 5: 22).

How well, did Isaiah realize the extent of strength in every kind, saying: “*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength*” (Isaiah 40: 31)? Saying “renew” the strength, and not saying “get” it, means that he clearly realizes that the strength that enters into them is of a unique kind.

- ❖ What is referred here as stone and bronze, are not the unrelenting strikes of chastisement by the Most High. On the contrary, it was said to the elect by the prophet, as a promise from the Lord: “*I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh*” (Ezekiel 11: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

It was not possible for ‘Job’ to lean upon his own strength, but to put his hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Grantor of strength.

- ❖ Among all those who are born, who are clothed by a body, He is the Righteous – Jesus Christ – as is testified by Him, saying: “*I have overcome the world*” (John 16: 33); by the prophet Isaiah, saying: “*He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth*” (Isaiah 53: 9); and by the blessed apostle, saying: “*God made Him who*

¹ *Demonstrations, 6.*

knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5: 21). How did God make Him a sin? He bore the sin without committing it, and nailed it on the cross (Colossians 2: 14). The apostle also says: “In a race, all the runners run, but only one gets the prize” (1 Corinthians 9: 24).

Besides, no human entered into the battle, and was not wounded or stricken; As, since “*Sin got the authority since Adam broke the command*” (Romans 5: 14); it has stricken many, wounded many, and killed many; and no one among the many killed it, until our Savior came on his cross. It had a thorn that pricked many, until the end came, and its thorn was broken, when it was nailed on the cross¹.

St. Aphrahat

“Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?” (Job 6: 13).

❖ **“Do I have any power to help myself?” (13).** although the righteous man has been rich in virtue, yet, he became no more sure of himself, talking as though, he is without any more power or hope! Proclaiming that he is weak in himself, he adds that his relatives and friends have forsaken him. But you should notice that this man who seems as despised from outside, is sitting in the seat of judgment!. At the same instant he says about himself that he is forsaken, he issues the verdict, that “Whoever keeps his compassion away from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty”.

Pope Gregory the Great

While ‘Job’ was moaning because he was forsaken by his friends in his tribulation; The Lord of glory Jesus Christ did not forsake man, His beloved creature; But crossed over, even to hell, to set him free from it.

❖ Jesus, the Killer of death came, clothed in a body of a descendant of Adam; was crucified in flesh, and tasted death. When death realized who the One who came to him was, he got confused and terrified, shut himself in, and refused to encounter him. But Jesus blew his gates down, forced his way to him, and deprived him of his spoil.

Once the dead saw the light shine in the darkness, they raised their heads up from the bondage of death, to see the exaltation of the king Messiah. Then, the forces of darkness sat in grief, as their authority of death was taken away from them.

Tasting the deadly medicine, once Jesus deprived him of his possessions, death realized that the dead will rise, and will get away from his authority; his hands fell in despair, wailed, and cried out in bitterness, saying: Get away from my domain; do not enter into it; ... Who is this living, who enters into my world?

And while screaming in terror, death, seeing the darkness disappear, and some of the dead righteous joining their rising Lord, he realized that when the Lord Christ comes at the consummation of time, all those closed in under his authority will come out, and will go to behold the light.

That is why, when Jesus consummated his ministry among the dead, death brought Him out of his kingdom, and did not allow him to stay in it. He realized that keeping the holy One like the rest of the dead, would get him no pleasure, because he has no authority on Him, nor would be able to bring corruption to him²!

St. Aphrahat

¹ *Demonstrations, 7: 1.*

² *Demonstrations, 22:4.*

JOB CRITICIZES THE CRUELTY OF HIS FRIENDS:

“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6: 14).

‘Job’ rebuked his friends for their violent and cruel attitude. Indeed, it was only Eliphaz who spoke, but the signs of consent and approval have been apparent on the faces of the other two friends. For ‘Job,’ their cruelty became a new cause to hope for death; As what would be his pleasure in a world, in which his close friends who came to comfort him, turned into torturers?

It is the right of the one grieved to get from those at peace, as members in the same body, some compassion, pure love, listening to his complaint, and mixing their tears with his. He, who does not present kindness to the afflicted, would be as though he has forsaken the fear of the Almighty For *“Who sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”* (1 John 3: 17).

Adversities are a test for friendship, They separate between the true friends and those who pretend to be *“A brother is born for adversity”* (Proverb 17: 17).

- ❖ There are two commandments for love: Love of God, and love of our neighbor. By the love of God, the love of the neighbor will have its existence; and the love of the neighbor strengthen the love of God. Whoever does not care to love God, knows nothing about how to love his neighbor; And when we progress more perfectly in the love God, we suckle the milk of love toward our neighbor.

Because the love of God gives birth to the love of neighbor, When God spoke in the voice of the law, and uttered the words: *“You shall love your neighbor”*, He preceded it with saying: *“You shall love the Lord your God”* (Matthew 22: 37; Deuteronomy 6: 5, 10, 22)... Again, we should again confirm that the love of God is strengthened by the love of the neighbor, as testified by St. John who says: *“He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* (1 John 4: 20); and: *“A friend is not known in prosperity, nor is an enemy hidden in adversity”* (Sirach 12: 8).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ It is not enough to reveal mercy, but it is befitting to give it with abundance, with a loving, joyful, and rejoicing spirit.

On this same point, the apostle concentrated more strongly in his epistle to the Corinthians, saying: *“He who sows sparingly, will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”* (2 Corinthians 9: 6). And to correct their mood, he adds: *“not grudgingly or of necessity”* (2 Corinthians 9: 7)... Because, if you grudgingly work mercy, you would be violent and cruel.

If you are sad, how can you support those who are sad? That is why he confirms that he who gives mercy, **should do so cheerfully; As, how would he, who receives the kingdom have sad countenance?!...** Who would stay sad when his sins are forgiven?!... You should not think about spending the money (working mercy), as much as about the abundance you will get through that spending.... If he who gives cheerfully, although he is not sure about reaping, how would be the one who works on the heavenliest?! ... You are giving the few to get the plenty... The poor widow was counted as having surpassed those who gave much more, because of her bountiful spirit¹.

- ❖ The strong supports the weak, and would never let him perish.

¹ In Rom. hom. 21.

Connected to a slothful person, the strong would motivate him to work hard. It is so said, that “A brother supported by a brother, is like a strong city”. It could be stronger, and of more activity, than long distance, heaven, earth, or even death; Even if it produced by one soul, it could embrace many together.

Hear what St. Paul say: “*There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours*” (2 Corinthians 6: 12)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ “*Faithful friends are life-saving medicine*” (Sirach 6: 16).

There is nothing more effective in healing pains like a faithful friend, who comforts you in your afflictions, helps you in solving your problems, rejoices for your successes, and grieves for your tribulations; finding such a friend, is like finding a treasure. “*Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount (of gold or silver) can balance their worth*” (Sirach 6: 14, 15).

❖ It is truly nice to have a friend you can call: ‘half my soul’!

❖ A true friendship binds souls together with the love that pours in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

St. Augustine

“*My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook; like the streams of the brooks that pass away*” (Job 6: 15).

They came to comfort him, and remained silent for a whole week. He expected to hear from them a word of comfort that would quench his inner fire; but they came violently upon him, charging him with vain accusations, and pouring on his wounds what made them more inflamed, instead of applying a soothing ointment to cool them down!

❖ “*My closest friends did not support my needs*”. Once they heard that God disregarded him, they despised him! It is always that way: Whenever God alienates Himself from man, Man would be deprived of his refuge, and everyone would become his enemy, even those who used to honor him. It is so terrible for man to crush under his feet someone cast to the ground!

❖ Unless he is evil, he would not become your enemy. Now, by wishing him good, his evil may come to an end, and he would not be your enemy any more. He is your enemy, not because of his human nature, but because of his sin!

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that ‘Job’ sees his friends, seeking the glory of this world; tread on him, who is cast down by temporal earthly tribulations; Not realizing that they would face heavenly punishment, as snow falling on their heads from heaven, from which they cannot escape!

❖ Let us then follow Him, when He is persecuted and escaping from his adversaries. **Ascending to the top of the mountain, and sitting together with Him**; we shall rise up to a glorified grace, more exalted than anything else! We shall reign together with Him, who said: “*Assuredly I say to you that, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me (and continued with me in My trials), will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19: 28; Luke 22: 28).

St. Cyril the Great

¹ In Ephes., hom. 9.

**“Which are dark because of the ice, and into which the snow vanishes”
(Job 6: 16).**

They came to him, appearing like a brook that offers water to the thirsty; but gave him instead, undrinkable water laden with mud and snow.

Out of their dusty hearts, they offered him mud; and out of the coolness of their love, they offered him snow! **This is the way with every soul that puts its hope in the comfort of men; it would get only mud and snow! Instead of healing the wounded soul, they corrupt it with hidden temporal earthly thoughts, and spiritual coolness!**

Whereas he, who receives the comforts of the Holy Spirit, that lifts the soul up to heaven, sets it free from the mud of this world, and grants it the warmth of the Spirit; ... **His earthly heart would turn by the Spirit, into a heavenly paradise.** The Spirit would take away from within him every love for the earthliest; to make him sing, saying: “He let us sit together with Him in the heavenliest”. He would scatter every coolness of the soul, and would grant the exalted flame of love; that all the water in the world would not be able to quench.

❖ The Holy Spirit is called the ‘Comforter’; as He comforts and brings joy to those afflicted¹.

Father Maccari the Great

❖ The Holy Spirit whom He promised to send, is called the ‘Comforter’ because of His work. He gives, not only comfort to those He finds worthy, and saves them of every grief and disturbance; But, at the same time, He grants them sure and inexhaustible joy. In their hearts, an eternal joy would abide, where the Holy Spirit dwells.

❖ No one can gain God’s grace unless he has the Holy Spirit in him, in whom all God’s gifts are².

St. Dedymus the blind

❖ When the soul is filled with the fruits of the Spirit, It would be completely bared of gloom, affliction, and disturbance; would be clothed instead, with peace and joy in God; and, in its heart, would open up, the door of love for other people.

St. (Mar) Ephram, the Syrian

❖ The kingdom of the pure in soul, is within his heart; The sun shining in it is the light of the Holy Trinity; **and Its fresh air is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter;** Those who dwell together with Him are the pure spiritual creatures; And their life, joy, and rejoice is Christ, the Light of the Father.

❖ Whoever looks deep within himself to our Lord, and his soul mixes with His light, his heart will be filled with joy.

The spiritual Elder

“When it is warm, they cease to flow; When it is hot, they vanish from their place” (Job 6: 17).

‘Job’ likens his friends to a brook of water that dried up because of heat. When travelers approach it hoping to quench their thirst, and that of their beasts of burden; turn aside from their paths from far away, risking losing their way; They become shocked and dismayed to see it, not only muddy, but completely dry.

² De Spir. Sanc. 9.

¹ عظة 1:17.

What does he mean by saying “**When it is warm**”? **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that those, on whom chastisements dwell, would have their minds flare with the fruitless fire of regret; as they do not think about eternities, but are preoccupied with the temporal glory; and their regret would destroy them further more.

❖ **Those who used to be terrified by my presence, have cast me down, like ice or dense snow, that melts with heat, to become almost indiscernible. ... Grief has pressed on me from all sides; ...** Those under me and my friends have all turned against me. ... The law of love has not only come to naught, but even the awe that leads to obedience has gone away. ... I – a king – now sits on a heap of trash, wrestling with tribulations and violent emotions; ... I became like frozen snow, that on the approach of heat, would melt, and become no more, without any trace; ... The one who used to be clothed in purple, is now completely naked, and cast outside the camp to spend the night in the open air; ... He, whose palaces were covered with an abundance of gold and silver; Who used to be surrounded with a host of slaves, became deserted!... He, who had several children, suddenly became alone!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ That garment, of light, Spirit, and fire; which you put on, O man, in the font of baptism; is prepared for you by the Father, weaved by the Son, and sewn by the Holy Spirit; In its water you went down and put it divinely on. By baptism, the Holy Trinity presented the fire to consume iniquity, and let the souls live with God¹.

Mar. Jacob El-Serougi

“The paths of their way turn aside, they go nowhere and perish” (Job 6: 18).

Like a brook that denied its water to those who are in need to quench their thirst, Job’s friends denied 'Job' their comfort. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, fulfils and satisfies the soul, and never let it need anything.

❖ It is a well known fact, O brethren, that all of us seek what is for his comfort and joy, albeit not seeking them as we should, nor where we would find them. It would all depend on the discernment between the true joy and the false one. On the contrary, we are often deceived by the shadows of vain joy and the false goodness.

The mean, the arrogant, and the lustful, all seek joy; Yet the first concentrate on collecting a plenty of wealth; the second on getting great titles and honors; and the third on having delicious food and drinks, and on satisfying their unclean lusts. But because none of them seek his joy as they should, nor where they should; no one will ever find it.

The whole world will never be enough to fulfill the soul, nor provide it with true joy; So why do you, O foolish man, wander around in vain, expecting to find what would fulfill your soul and to satisfy your body?! You should covet only one goodness who includes all these; In whom alone, you will find fulfillment.

Find comfort in the general single great Goodness; in whom you will find enough of everything.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits;... who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies...” (Psalm 103: 2-5).

St. Augustine

¹ ميمر عن المعمودية المقدسة.

“The caravans of Tema look, The travelers of Sheba hope for them” (Job 6: 19).

The caravans of Tema and Sheba, in the deserts of Arabia, all looked forward to reach and drink from those waters, but were all disappointed to find them dry! **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that ‘Tema’ is translated as (the southern wind), While ‘sheba’ is translated as (a net). And that he, who is not preoccupied with eternities, is like someone on whom the hot southern wind blows, to make his life rot, and his feet would be as though entangled in a net of temporal shackles!

“They are disappointed because they were confident; They come there and are confused” (Job 6: 20).

That is the how ‘Job feels’ about his friends, in whom he thought he would find comfort, then was disappointed to find them presenting to him dry words, and hearts with no love. He was so confident that he would quench his thirst from that brook in the midst of the wilderness; but his confidence was in vain!

The friends came to ‘Job’ and were likewise, according to **Pope Gregory the Great**, both confused and disappointed, when they failed to shake Job’s faith with their foolish, violent and bitter criticism; and to bring him over to despair.

❖ **“They were disappointed because they were confident”** When the wicked aim their evil toward the good, They would rejoice to see their inner hope shaken; because they consider that their deceit has given fruit; Counting it as their greatest success to expose their faults; and rejoicing for their perdition. But when they see the inner hope of the good standing fast, is not shaken, and did not bow to the ground, they become disappointed to see that their violent attempt was in vain!

Pope Gregory the Great

“For now you are nothing, You see terror and are afraid” (Job 6: 21).

‘Job confirms to his friends that they have become like that deceitful brook that failed to quench the thirst of anyone, or to give comfort, but is rather like a mirage.... Such are the vain comforts of men;

“You see terror and are afraid”. As though he says: ‘When I was in prosperity, you were kind to me, when I was not in need of your kindness.

❖ **But when I was stricken, you became afraid;** and offered me bitterness instead of sweet words; and violent criticism, instead of comfort!’ As though he also says: Because I used to fear God when I was prosperous, I did not mind the wounds of the strike! But, as far as you are concerned, you did not fear God with love; and became terrified of what came upon me!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Did I ever say, ‘Bring something to me’? Or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your wealth’? “Or, ‘Deliver me from the enemy’s hand’? Or redeem me from the hand of oppressors’?” (Job 6: 22, 23).

Although he became extremely poor, yet he never asked them for help, nor burdened them with expenses. So why should they take that painful stand toward him?!

“Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6: 24).

Although he saw things differently, yet he was not arrogant, but was ready to accept the truth if he was wrong. Amid our affliction, if someone unjustly rebuked us, we would not readily listen to him, or receive his counsel; but would only concentrate on his evil position, and his abuse of our affliction to destroy us. But here, ‘Job’, in his

bitter circumstances, proclaims to his friends his readiness to listen and to understand wherein he might have erred in his life, in order to correct his path!

What an amazing portrait of a soul, that, despite being disturbed because of successive calamities, Yet it embraces an admirable inner tranquility, and readiness to accept the counsel of his friends, whatever their real intents are.

❖ **“Teach me! And I will hold my tongue!”** Despite my grief, am I rebellious? Am I rejecting counsel? If you prove to me I am wrong, I will hasten to correct my path!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ I never asked you for anything in the past, nor am asking now! You have come to me on your own initiative to comfort me. So why would you deal with me as an enemy?! **“Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred”**.

Anyway, and under any circumstances, I do not refuse to be taught, if you utter what is of benefit; And will hold my tongue, if you say something acceptable!

Surely, they would not be able to present any reasonable accusations!

St. John Chrysostom

While it is only God who is absolutely perfect, teaches the whole world, and needs no teaching. We, as shepherds, ministering to God who dwells in us, are committed always to have a spacious heart, to take from God, and to have more of His fragrance in us. As however spacious our hearts may be, they would be just a small droplet, compared to the great abundance and limitless flood of His love.

A shepherd – even if he is a Pope – If he does not always keep learning, his growth would come to an end, and the spiritual growth of his congregation would be compromised. The more he prostrates himself under the feet of God, and opens his heart before him in prayers, in studying the Holy Book, in listening to learn God’s ordinances; the more he grows in His fellowship, and his flock would also grow together with him.

❖ I wish to keep on learning, to become capable of teaching.

Because there is only one Master (God), who does not need to learn what He is teaching all.

Whereas humans should learn before they teach; and to receive from God, their supreme Teacher, what they would teach the others.

St. Ambrose

❖ Be consistent on reading the Holy Books. Never leave the Holy Book from your hand. Learn what to teach others. Abide to the true word, to have your children in submission with all reverence (1 Timothy 3: 4). *“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in your”* (1 Peter 3: 15).

St. Jerome

“How forceful are honest words! But your reproof, what does it prove?”
(Job 6: 25).

‘Job’ did not feel comfortable with their way of dealing with the situation; they, instead, should have debated him with a spirit of love and uprightness. But to criticize and rebuke on baseless assumptions; is not the proper way to edify!

❖ **‘Well! Words of the true man are of no value’**. If truth is said and openly proclaimed, no one would listen to it; Words of the righteous man seem to be of value to no one.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ **‘Words of the true man seem to be vain’**. Yet, they are vain for those who are not true! When I look at you, I wonder, to whom you minister?!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Do you think you can reprove my words, as if the speech of the desperate were wind?” (Job 6: 26).

Rebuking with violence and cruelty will never give fruit.

- ❖ **‘I will not seek of you a word, or strength; and your rebuke will not make me stop talking’**. I do not care much for your talk, beside the fact that you are attacking an orphan, and doing wrong to a friend! *Neither animosity nor friendship has an effect on you!* Anyway, let me go back to what I have already said: *‘I seek nothing from you’*. If you persist on your opposing position, I repeat: *‘My conscience is not troubling me’*.

St. John Chrysostom

“You would even cast lots over the orphan, and bargain over your friend” (Job 6: 27).

He likens them, rebuking him, while in such a bitter calamity, to someone humiliating a helpless orphan.

‘Job’ counted himself, having lost his children, like an orphan who lost his parents; He needs them to be as compassionate as God, *“A Father of the fatherless, a defender of widows”* (Psalm 68: 5).

What grieves him is that his friends are setting a trap to catch him, instead of helping him out of the trap of his successive temptations.

- ❖ **‘Yes, you are doing your best to destroy me’**. He shows how much he is weak; and calls himself an orphan! Even if love is wounded it would not go away! Although complaining that they are destroying him, He still calls them his friends!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Every monk (Every man) who seeks perfection, and wishes to strive canonically in his spiritual fight, should utterly free himself of the sin of anger; and should listen to the warning words of that *“Chosen vessel”* (Acts 9: 15): *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4: 31)*. When he says ‘Let all anger be put away from you’, he exempts no one, nor any circumstances, whether necessity or benefit. And if necessary, dealing with any brother at fault of this sin (of anger), should be in such a way, that the one who attempts to heal him, should be free of this particular sin; lest he would be addressed by the words of the gospel: “Physician, heal yourself!”; or, *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank (of anger) from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7: 3-5)*¹.

St. John Cassian

“Now, be pleased to look at me, For I will never lie to your face” (Job 6: 28).

It is as if ‘Job’, who was true with himself, as well as with others, is saying to them: ‘Do not fish for words out of me; Look at my face; although I have cursed the day I was conceived, and that of my birth; which you count against me, Yet, I have not

¹ Cassian: *De institutis caenoboum*, 8:5.

blasphemed against my God. Look at my unbearable boils, to appreciate that, even if what I uttered was not without reason. Yet, I will never oppose my God!

“Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done. Turn now, my vindication is at stake”
(Job 6: 29).

“Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?” (Job 6: 30)

He asks them, has he uttered by his tongue a word of blasphemy against God? With what iniquity are they charging him? Is what he uttered, not warranted by the bitterness he suffers?!

❖ When we expose the sin of our brother, God will expose our sin; and when we tell people about his crime, God will do the same to us!

A father of the wilderness

❖ Keep your tongues from uttering evil against your brethren; because whoever does that would arouse the anger of God who dwells in him. Whatever you do to your neighbor, you are doing to God.

St. Maccari the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB6

AIM THE ARROWS OF YOUR LOVE AT MY HEART

- ❖ Amid the affliction of this world, my soul moans within me!
I wonder if anyone realizes how heavy my cross is.
Is there anyone who partakes of the bitterness of my soul?
My afflictions covered my head.
And my heart became very narrow.
- ❖ O Lord, Expose my sin before my eye.
O You, who forgives sins, and saves my soul of corruption;
Instead of crying out, because of my many afflictions;
Let me become overwhelmed by the wave of Your love.
I do not see the fiery arrows of the enemy.
But amid the affliction; when I see the arrows of your love piercing my depths;
My whole being turns into a joyful wedding;
I will praise and sing, saying: I am wounded by love!
- ❖ I will no longer expect comfort from man.
And will no more feel the cheapness of my life!
If my life has turned like a repulsive tasteless food;
In Your love, I see you as the true salt that gives sweetness to my depths.
By You I become salt to the earth, and light to the world.
I will no longer lament my weakness; because You are my strength and help.
- ❖ Amid my weakness, the comforts of men became a burden on my soul.
They offer me from their brooks, muddy water hiding ice in it.
Whereas You, O the heavenly Comforter;
Your Spirit brings forth within me a spring of living water.
That refreshes my soul, and renews my life.
That takes away all the dust in me.
You turn my wilderness into a heavenly paradise.
With no place for ice inside me.
For Your Spirit is like a kindling flame of fire; who can quench it?!
- ❖ My friends criticize me to justify themselves;
They show off their human wisdom, without true love.
But you, are the amazing Teacher!
You teach by the commandment full of love.
You talk to me, and let me talk to you.
You instruct me, and bear me in you.
And lift me up to the bosom of Your Father, justified in you.
- ❖ The rebukes of men, often push me to despair;
They destroy my depths, and lead me to desire death;
But your rebukes bear compassionate fatherhood.
They wound, yet they heal;
They uproot the tares from your field.
To plant your paradise in my depths.
Your firmness bears an exalted sweetness.
Your looks, together with admonishment, bear exalted compassion.

❖ I want you to be my unique Friend.
Although your words are serious, yet, they are full of sweetness.
Your looks grant hope, and crush my soul with love.
My encounter with you turns my heart into a temple for you.
Your touches flare my whole being, to set forth to you.
Come and dwell in me; and let me dwell forever in you.

CHAPTER 7

A DESIRE FOR DEATH

In this chapter, 'Job' presents to us a live portrait for what is befitting for the believer to do amid his troubles, especially, as far as his relationship with his opponents is concerned. He did not disregard them, but talked to them wisely, peacefully, and truly. Yet, every now and then, he turned his face aside, and raised it up to God, to enter with Him into a frank talk. So this chapter came as a prayer from a heart tasting the bitterness from his friends, resorting to God, his unique heavenly Friend, Grantor of comfort and the savior of his soul.

'Job' again tries to justify his extremism in desiring death for himself.

Almost this whole chapter is directed to God. Amid his sufferings, Job', pessimistically saw all mankind more like slaves or laborers who desire the swift passing of time, to reach the end of the day, to get rest, and the wages for their labor. With his consistent sufferings, 'Job' always desired the dwelling of the night to get relieved of the hard time of the day. He, however, cries out that the persistent sufferings of the night and its horrible nightmares, made him long for death, instead of life!

He wonders: Is man, the tiny creature, of such importance to God, to set His heart on him, and to use every chance to punish him?! (17-18; 1-3).

Although he admits that he has erred; yet he wonders how his sin could make God cast him to the ground, as though he is a heavy burden! He **asks God to hasten to proclaim His forgiveness**, lest he would die before he enjoys remission.

1- His days are like the days of a hired man, full of hardship

1 – 6

2- Death can put an end to his present hardships 7 – 10

3- A description of his miserable conditions 11 – 16

4- A cry out to God to save him 17 – 21

1- HIS DAYS ARE LIKE THE DAYS OF A LABORER, FULL OF HARDSHIP:

“Do not human beings have a hard service on earth? Are not their days like the days of a laborer?” (Job 7: 1).

'Job' tries to justify his extremism in desiring death for himself, on account of that life of man *“is of few days and full of trouble”* (Job 14: 1). As it is a fact that justifies any man who has this desire, he wonders why should he be considered as though he has committed a crime, when he does just that?!

By saying *“on earth”* (1); which was given by God to mankind (Psalm 115: 16); he is hinting to the lowly nature of man; whose place of dwelling is still down on earth, and not up among the heavenly hosts. We live on it on a temporary basis, not governed by destiny, as believed by some; nor by blind luck, as believed by others; but governed by God's counsel, and His high heavenly plan.

Man's life on earth is *'hard service'*, like the day of a hired hand, at the end of which he has to give an account; or like that of soldiers in an incessant battle, during which his enemies keep on fighting day and night. It is only death that decides the outcome of the battle; either to be eternally crowned, or to be in shame and disgrace!

A **watchman rejoices** for the coming of the light of dawn (Psalm 130: 6). And a laborer rejoices in the passing of day, and the dwelling of the night, to have rest from

his incessant labor, and to get some sleep; as “*The sleep of a laboring man is sweet*” (Ecclesiastes 5: 12).

- ❖ Man’s life on earth is a continuous strife, like the days of a laborer anticipating his wage. That is the way ‘Job’ feels toward the futile months and the long wearisome nights allotted to him; [If I lie down, I say: ‘When shall I arise?’ And when I wake up, I say ‘When will the night dwell?’... I suffer from sunset to sunrise.... My flesh is corrupted by worms... I spoil the ground by the pus secreted by my boils!... My days are of no value like vain talk, and spent without hope.... I say: “*My bed will comfort me; Then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions*” (Job 7: 1-6; 13, 14 LXX)¹].
- ❖ How miserable man is! He is like a hired hand, he labors and strives for others; while he, himself is in need, and cannot support himself, except through the compassion of others! Every day he suffers bitter servitude, and fear that his master would catch him while hiding in the shade of this world. If you think of what ‘Sirach’ says in the Book of wisdom (Ecclesiasticus): “*The one who sins against his marriage bed, says to himself, ‘Who can see me? Darkness surrounds me, the walls hide me, and no one see me, Why should I worry?’*” (Sirach 23: 18). Do not you think that this man is like a stupid laborer?!...Or like the young man, on whom it is written in the gospel, that he got his portion in inheritance; wasted his possessions with prodigal living; and ended up shepherding the flocks of others, to satisfy his needs with his wages (Luke 15: 11-16). Yet that young man, at least, eventually repented, and went back to his father; he did not hide his sins, but revealed them.

He, who assumes that God does not see him; and thinks that his iniquities could be hidden in the darkness; This man who lives in the shadow, would never escape from the eye of God, that reveals all secrets, sheds light on every darkness, enters into the depths of the hearts; and goes through all depths and the heights (John 3: 19-20; Sirach 23: 19 (28)).

He, who assumes that he is protected by darkness, is mistaken; For he cannot escape from the light that illuminates the darkness; and could not be overcome by it (John 1: 5). Everything is known to the lord; not only concerning the events of the past, but those of the future as well².

- ❖ Whoever assumes that he can hide his iniquity, is lost in vain hope “*The talk of the fools is offensive*” (Sirach 27: 13 (14)); produce no fruits; and “*A fool’s chatter is like a burden in a journey*” (Sirach 21: 16 (19)). Sin is nothing but a burden on the shoulder of the passersby in this world. In case he wishes to relieve himself of such a burden, he should heed the words of the Lord, who says: “*Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11: 28)³.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ God is in His saints, when they are tempted; **but sanctification follows temptation. It is not possible for anyone, even a saint, to go through this world**

¹ De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:2:5. ترجمة جرجس كامل

² De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:3:6. ترجمة جرجس كامل

³ De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:3:7. ترجمة جرجس كامل

without temptation; As, according to ‘Job’: **“Human beings have a hard service on earth” (Job 7: 1)**; Namely, the life of man on earth is nothing but a strife¹.

- ❖ In the Book of ‘Job’, we read that, while a messenger was telling him the bad news, another one came with more bad news (1: 16). According to the Hebrew version, it is also written: “There is war against man on earth”. **In this life, we strive in order to be crowned in the coming life; we risk our life in the battle of this world.** The Holy Book testifies that God tempted Abraham (Genesis 22: 1); And for this same reason, the apostle says: *“We glory in our suffering; knowing that suffering produces endurance; and endurance produces character; and character produces hope; Now hope does not disappoint us”* (Romans 5: 3-5); And somewhere else, he says: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are being killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered’”* (Romans 8: 25, 36). Those are comforted by the prophet Isaiah by the following word: *“Whom will he teach knowledge? Those just weaned from milk?, those just drawn from the breasts? For percept must be upon percept; line upon line...”* (Isaiah 28; 9, 10 LXX). ; and as also expressed by the apostle, saying: *“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8: 18)².

St. Jerome

- ❖ When you flee from Egypt, you will come over to extremely high ascents of work and faith. You will face towers, seas, and waves. You would not go through the way of life, without the waves of temptations. The apostle says: **“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3: 12)**. ‘Job’, with no less eloquence, say: *“Our life on earth is time of hard service”* (Job 7: 1)³.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ ‘Job’ in his turn quoting the words of Eliphaz: **“Man is born to trouble” (Job 5: 7)**; by them he reached the ultimate result; that, beside God’s decree that man’s life has to be tough; it is actually man’s nature that produces such temptations; Yet ‘Job’ added the words: *“on earth”*; as it would not be so “in heaven”.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ This life is nothing but a multitude of “snares”.

“We are stepping among snares” (Sirach 9: 13); we are living among a multitude of temptations; **Man’s life on earth is nothing but a state of temptation (Job 7: 1 LXX).**

He did well by adding: **“on earth”**; as there are those whose life is in heaven.

His life **“on earth”** is like that of a hired hand, all trouble and labor; or a kind of vain story; that swims in words, and pours out words!

Its dwelling place is of clay; and life itself is mire; No abidance of thought; “At daytime, man longs for the night; And at night, he searches for the day” (See Job 7: 4)⁴.

St. Ambrose

¹ On Ps., homily 7.

² Letter 130 to Demetrias, 7.

³ Homilies on Exodus, homily 5: 3.

⁴ Death is Good, 3: 12.

- ❖ All these evils dwelling on you will eventually pass by; And He, whose coming you patiently anticipate, will come, will wipe out the sweat of labor; will dry up tears; and there will be no more crying. Here below, we have to moan among temptations; as according to ‘Job’: “**Man’s life on earth is nothing but a tribulation**” (Job 7: 1) ¹.
- ❖ My evil grieves are struggling against my good rejoices. On which side will victory be? I do not know!
 - Woe to me! Have compassion on me, O Lord!
 - Woe to me! Behold, I did not hide my wounds!
 - You are the Physician, and I am the sick man!
 - You are Merciful, and I am miserable. **Is life of man on earth, not a temptation?**
 - Who may love the sources of troubles? You command us to endure troubles; not to love them!
 - No man loves what he endures; and yet, he has to keep on enduring²!
- ❖ You should never assume that you could be without sin, as long as you are in this life. We read in the Holy Book: “**Is life of man on earth, not a temptation?**” Therefore, as long as we are in this body, we should keep saying in our prayers, as the Lord has taught us: “*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*” (Matthew 6: 13). Remember to hasten to forgive him, who trespasses against you, if he asks for forgiveness; so that you can faithfully pray, and gain the forgiveness of your sins³.
- ❖ “**Life of man on earth is a temptation**” (Job 7: 1). Nobody is completely secure; and is not supposed to be, until he comes to that city, from which a friend would be driven out; nor into which an enemy would come in. While being here in the glory of the church, we recognize the echoes of our temptations; And as members in Christ, we submit to our Head in a bond of love; support one another in a mutual spirit; and recite what we find in the Psalms about the martyrs who preceded us, saying, that temptations are common on all humans, from the beginning to the end⁴.
- ❖ As much as one loves his heavenly home; his journey on earth, in itself, becomes a great temptation... In this temptation; namely, in this life, he, who abides, would seek God⁵.
- ❖ Although you indeed live in chastity, purity, and virginity; Yet, what is your life here? Do not you feel humble when you hear the words saying: “*Life of man on earth is nothing but a temptation!*”?
 - Does it not draw you away of your self-boasting, when you hear the words, saying: “*Woe to the world because of offenses*” (Matthew 18: 7)?
 - Are you not terrified, lest you may be counted among those whose love will grow cold because of iniquity (Matthew 24: 12)?
 - Do you not strike your chests when you hear the warning: “*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10: 12).?

¹ On Ps. 29, Discourse, 2: 8.

² Confessions 10:28:39.

³ Letter 189 to Boniface, 8.

⁴ On Ps. 69 (68).

⁵ On Ps. 77 (76).

Amid these divine warnings, and human risks, Is it not befitting to exhort the saintly virgins to be humble?¹.

- ❖ It is not befitting for man to feel secure in this life, which is altogether a temptation (Job 7: 1). He who became in a better condition, I wish he would not again become worse. Our only hope, our only trust, and our only sure promise, is in your mercies, O Lord².
- ❖ I say: “I wish I have two wings like a dove, to fly away and find rest, somewhere in the wilderness!
Yet even there, I probably would practice the same experience! Because, life of man on earth is indeed, a temptation³!
- ❖ No one should become sure of where he stands, before he consummates his life on earth, which is nothing but a temptation! God exhorts us to have perseverance in it up to the end; and to pray: “*Lead us not into temptation*” (Matthew 6: 13)⁴.
- ❖ We cannot say with absolute certainty, that somebody is righteous, until he depart from this world; For, in his life on earth, which is nothing but a temptation, “*Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10: 12)⁵.
- ❖ “*There, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3: 2). But here, As long as “*the perishable body weighs down the soul*” (Wisdom 9: 15); And as long as the life on earth is a temptation (Job 7: 1), “*In His sight, no one living is righteous*” (Psalm 143: 2)⁶.
- ❖ It is now obvious enough that, in this life, which is wholly a temptation, no one should boast that he has become free of all sins⁷.
- ❖ A haughty man, who thinks of himself, as in no need to say: “*Forgive us our trespasses*” (Matthew 6: 13), is not a great man, but rather an adversary to God, who “*gives grace to the humble*” (James 4: 6; 1 Peter 5: 5) ⁸.

St. Augustine

- ❖ “***Are his days not like those of a laborer?***”... The days of man, with some knowledge of the truth and the eternities, are like the days of a laborer; When he counts the present life as ‘his way’, and not ‘his city’; as ‘a strife’, and not ‘a victory’. Believing that he is far from his reward, he slowly retreats more, to approach his goal...

Now, It is said with the voice of the Savior: “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18: 36). Therefore, We all, who are granted hope in heaven, are clothed with the troubles of the present life; and are preoccupied with caring for others. Yet, even in serving the sons of perdition, we are committed to give back to the world, what actually belong to it; **By caring for what is for others, we get the reward that is ours; Namely, to be faithfully preoccupied with the affairs of others, in order to reach our reward;** Lest we hear what the ‘Truth’ says to some: “*If you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?*” (Luke 16: 12)

¹ *Of Holy Virginity, 40.*

² *Confession, 10:32 (48).*

³ *Letters, 95:3.*

⁴ *On the Gift of Perseverance, 62.*

⁵ *On the Gift of Perseverance, 33.*

⁶ *On the Trinity 4:3:5.*

⁷ *On Virginity, 48.*

⁸ *City of God, 19:27.*

The citizens of the higher land say to their Creator, the words of the Psalmist: “*For Your sake we are killed all day long*” (Psalm 44: 22); And those of the apostle Paul: “*By the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*” (1 Corinthians 15: 31); And: “*For this reason I also suffer these things; Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day*” (2 Corinthians 1: 12).

- ❖ It is befitting for us to notice that he did not say that man’s life would be followed by a temptation, but **he described it as being itself a temptation!** As, having the freedom of will, man diverted from the upright state according to which he was created, and became submitted to a lowly corrupt state. Delivering harm to itself, man’s life, became what it came down to: became nothing but a ‘temptation’. As, even if we keep ourselves from committing sin, while we practice good works, the cloud of memory of the evil ones would dwell upon our souls.

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us several examples of how the life of man, even in his spiritual strife, became a

‘**temptation**’, from which he suffers:

As an example, he says that man, while he strives, should abstain from the exaggerated luxurious way of living. That abstention, itself, could be a source of temptation to him. When people notice that his face has become pale, they count him worthy of commendation, which may cause vain glory to infiltrate into his mind!

Another example: If man is granted some knowledge of the divine law, he may rejoice to have more understanding than others; And through haughtiness, he may corrupt the grace of understanding that he has got; And on the day of judgment, he would be in a condition worse than others; through the same thing in which he seemed to have more splendor in this life.

So he presents several examples of many virtues which may turn to destroy man, because of his corrupted nature; So that what is for his edification, would, itself, become for his perdition; on account of that his life is actually a ‘**temptation**’.

St. Augustine wonders why, If, in the Book of ‘Job’ it is said that the life of man on earth is nothing but a temptation

(Job 7: 1 LXX), Why then, should we pray, saying: “*Lead us not into temptation*”?

He answers, saying, that we should discern between two kinds of temptations: One in which there is a provocation to sin; about which it is said: “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’*” James 1: 13). And there is also a temptation for justification; about which it is said: “*For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deuteronomy 10: 3). Of course God already knows what is in the heart; But he means for us here to know what is in our own heart¹.

- ❖ “I know that the life of man on earth is a temptation” (Job 7: 1); and that “*A heavy yoke is laid on the children of Adam*” (Sirach 40: 1). But what gives me more pleasure is to take into consideration that we are travelers or sojourners on this earth; here we get the down payment, until we reach our high city; that, once we do, we shall never leave²!

St. Augustine

¹ Cf. *Sermons on N.T. Lessons 7:9*

² *On Ps. 119 (118)*.

“Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages” (Job 7: 2).

Like a servant who labors all the day long, and desires to rest in the shade, ‘Job’ desires, through death, to depart from the heat of this world, to the shade of the grave!

The length of the shadow refers to the end of the day and its labor, that a servant desires to reach. In India, time used to be measured by the length of a person’s shadow. If someone enquires, how long his day’s work was, he could be told by measuring the length of his shadow¹!

❖ *“Deliver me , O Lord, from my enemies, In You I take shelter” (Psalm 143: 9). I, who once escaped from You, Now, I escape to You. In the Book of ‘Job’, it is written about Adam, **who escaped from the face of God**, and hid himself between the trees of paradise. Woe to him if he remains in that shade about which it is also said: *“All those things have vanished like a shadow” (Wisdom 5: 9)*².*

St. Augustine

❖ ***“Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired hand who eagerly look for his wages, I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me” (Job 7: 2, 3)...*** Paul exhaustively hasten to grasp that shade, having the desire to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1: 23); A shade that is actually acquired by those who say by their whole hearts: *“We, who have borne the burden and the heat of the day” (Matthew 20: 12)*... That is the reason why Paul, persistently and daringly, exalts before all tribulations, *“Like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages”*... proclaiming, *“We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1: 8)*. Yet, wiping out the sweat of that exhausting labor, by the towel of his reward, he says: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8: 18)*.

Pope Gregory the Great

“So I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me” (Job 7: 3).

Amid his sufferings, ‘Job’ considers that all his days were futile; that all the months of his life were evil, and that all its nights were trouble. As, because of his deteriorated health, he could no longer do any work, he forgot all about what he has done in the days of his good health and prosperity; that God did not forget. He feels that his mere existence on earth has become a burden on the congregation, not knowing that he is treasured by God, and not aware that he is a blessing to others.

The believer longs for the eternal rest, being like a shade to which he resorts after suffering from the heat of the sun of temptations and afflictions in this world. In this, he realizes that his life is but a short journey, not measured by years, but by futile days and wearisome nights; yet a life passing to a glorified eternity. The more we realize how short the time is, the more we rejoice in our crossing over to eternity, disregarding the burden and labor of the present life.

He considers life as futile months and wearisome nights, counted and limited; *“appointed to me”*. Remembering the months, he does not forget the nights; the

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 208

² On Ps. 143 (142).

believer cares for his salvation as a whole; for his life as one unit; and for every single night of it; with every little and big detail in his behavior.

“When I lie down, I say, ‘When shall I arise, and the night be ended’? For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn” (Job 7: 4).

His nights became too long, with no sleep. Minutes are dragging along; Yet, at the same time, he does not expect to get a new day of rest.

It is neither the place nor time that give man a true rest, but it is the inner peace of heart. He, who hopes to escape from his suffering by going to sleep by night, may experience horrible anxiety, probably more than his sufferings by day.

In these phrases, **Pope Gregory the Great** hears the screams of the holy church, passing through this life, full of corruption. With her condition of unsettlement, she desires, through perpetual contemplation in God, to settle down in Him, to get a stronghold by Him, and to minister to Him as she should; away from the corruption that could never touch or approach her.

Sin has corrupted the life of man and deprived him of feeling settled; He became in perpetual struggle; Resting by night, he seeks to wake up to work; And working by day, he seeks to get rest. As sin deprives him of acquiring God, his mind finds no more comfort; his true comfort is in God, the source of comfort.

Pope Gregory the Great has another interpretation as well: that sleep here refers to falling into sin, that brings corruption to man.

❖ If sleep is not a symbol of sin, Paul would not say to his disciples: *“Awake to righteousness, and do not sin”* (1 Corinthians 15: 34); and, *“Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”* (Ephesians 5: 14); and, *“Now, it is high time to awake out of sleep”* (Romans 13: 11).

Through consenting to evil works, we would perish by corruption; And through allowing evil thought to settle in our heart, it would get defiled; That is why he says: *“My body is clothed with the defilement of dust”*

Pope Gregory the Great

“My flesh is caked with worms and dust, My skin hardens, then breaks out again” (Job 7: 5)

His boils produced worms that covered his body like a robe around him; and his skin cracked, broke, and became like dust. Who can describe how ‘Job’ looked, as a heap of dirt packed with worms, with an awful disgusting smell?

❖ The boils of his body were preparing for him a crown in heaven¹.

St. Jerome

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope” (Job 7: 6).

Job’s desire for a swift coming of death, is justified by the deteriorating condition of his body, which is no more capable of resistance; indicating that his days on earth are very few, and that his life on earth is coming to an end, with no hope of ever returning to his former prosperous self!

2- DEATH CAN PUT AN END TO HIS PRESENT HARDSHIPS:

“Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eyes will never again see good” (Job 7: 7).

‘Job’ probably noticed that his friends, although they did not interrupt him while he was talking, yet they could not bear to look at him in his horrible condition,

¹ *Homilies on Psalms, 6.*

nor to hear his voice speaking. That is why he turned from talking to them to speaking to God; who alone, with His longsuffering, would listen to the wounded hearts, and would never be disgusted to look at distorted bodies. He cried out to God, saying: ***“Oh, remember that my life is a breath”***, intending to draw God’s compassion on him; being a weak creature, whose life is swiftly expiring like a passing away breath; According to the words of the Psalmist: *“Remember that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away”* (Psalm 78: 39).

Like ‘job’ who put before his eyes the obvious fact that his life is short, and that his death is inevitable; We, likewise, should never set our hope on this world, connect ourselves to seen objects, nor be submitted by sensed things. Our happiness here, is only set on our realization that we are just sojourners, who should walk faithfully, and with a rejoicing spirit, until we cross over to our perpetual home.

❖ As the eyes of the dead would never again see good, and his soul would never again practice the good works; Realizing these facts, the rich man perishing in the fire of hell, said to his father Abraham: *“I beg you father, that you would send him (the beggar Lazarus) to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment”* (Luke 16: 27-28).

Pope Gregory the Great

“The eye of him who sees me will see me no more, While Your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be” (Job 7: 8).

‘Job’ noticed how his friends sat seven days around him not uttering a single word; Looking at him, like blind, they could not see his real person; Whereas God’s eyes were upon him; even though, in the midst of all those tribulations, he might seem as though he is no more there, or has already lost his life and being!

Man is in need of God’s eyes to be upon him, as He alone can look into the heart, comfort, and renew it. When our Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of his trial, looked at His disciple, Simon Peter; Not able to bear the Lord’s eyes, the later went outside and cried bitterly; until after the resurrection, when he encountered the Lord, who raised him up from the tomb of his denial, and brought him back to his shepherding task.

‘Job’, the tempted, realized that he had no other way to deal with what allowed by God to happen to him, but to raise it up to God Himself.

Time will swiftly pass on, and those who see us will see us no more; *“When we go away, and are no more”* (Psalm 39: 13); When we forsake what is seen, to enjoy the unseen!

By saying: ***“While Your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be”***, the righteous ‘Job’ reveals that he trusts in God’s care for him; and in that He will send him to enjoy eternity; Yet not for any good thing he has done. That is why he says: ***“I shall no longer be”***.; I shall die; But who will raise me up but You? And who will bring me to glory but you?

❖ ***“The eye of him who sees me, will see me no more” (8). “He, whose eye sees me”*** is the compassionate Savior, who, when He looks at us, softens the cruelty of our dryness. When the Lord looked at Simon Peter, he remembering the words of the Lord,...., went outside and bitterly cried (Luke 22: 61-62). But after death, nothing can save man, in case the grace of God did not grant him forgiveness before his death. That is why the apostle Paul says: *“Behold, now is the accepted time; Behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6: 2).; and the Psalmist says: *“For (the Lord) is good; because His mercy endures forever”* (Psalm 118: 1).

Whoever is not saved by God's mercy in the present time, Justice will bring him over to punishment. Solomon says: *"If a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall be"* (Ecclesiastes 11: 3). At the time a human being falls, It is either the Holy Spirit, or the evil spirit, who receives his departing soul from the chambers of his body, and keep it forever without change..

As after the present life, man could not be seen by "an eye of man"; He added directly: *"Your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be"*; As though he is saying: [When You come for judgment, You will not look to save, but to punish;... Because he, upon whom You do not look with Your compassionate care in the present time, You will look upon him later through the law of justice].

Pope Gregory the Great

***"As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the grave and does not come up"* (Job 7: 9).**

In his talk to God, 'Job' admits that he is heading to his final place with no return to this world; and that his life here on earth, is like a moving cloud that vanishes with no return.

- ❖ Saying: *"The dead do not praise the Lord"* (Psalm 115: 17); and, ***"he who goes down to the grave, does not come up"* (9)**; reveals that this life is the only time for remorse and forgiveness; And that only those who faithfully walk in this life, will praise God; Those who die in sins, would no longer be in a position to praise Him after death, like those who enjoyed blessings. **They will mourn themselves; as praise is for the faithful, and mourning is for those under punishment¹.**
- ❖ As to the phrase: ***"he who goes down to the grave and does not come up"* (Job 7: 9)**; We should notice that it is directly followed by the words: ***"He shall never return to his house"* (10)**; We should also listen to 'Job' saying: *"For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease, though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant. But man dies and is laid away; Indeed he breathes his last, and where is he?"* (Job 14: 7-10). Here 'Job' admonishes and blames! He says: [If a tree falls down, then lives again; Would man not live again, he, for whom all trees were created?!

Yet, he adds: *"If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my release should come"* (Job 14: 14); And somewhere else he says: *"And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God"* (Job 19: 26). And Isaiah says: *"Your dead shall live,... the earth shall cast out the dead"* (Isaiah 26: 19). And in Hezekiel the Lord says *"Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from graves"*(Hezekiel 37; 12); And in Daniel: *"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12: 2)².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ It is as though he clearly proclaims that whoever soars high (like a cloud), and feels proud of himself, would vanish and end up to naught.
- ❖ Hearts of the miserable are likened to clouds, becoming dark with the dense mist of the multitude of their sins; but when the heat of final judgment shines on them, they vanish altogether with the wind.

¹ Catechetical Lectures, 5:4.

² Catechetical Lectures, 18:14.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He shall never return to his house, nor shall his place know him anymore” (Job 7: 10).

‘Job’ clearly knows that by his death, he will never return to his house in this world; will never possess anything, enjoy the earthly things, or practice temporal activities. He would forsake everything to whoever comes after him and occupies his place.

“His place will know him no more”: ‘Job’ after his death would not only forsake his place, but his place and those living in it would never know where ‘Job’ is; Every connection between them would be severed.

❖ Once man is delivered to the eternal judgment, he would never return from there.

Pope Gregory the Great

When the Lord Christ healed the demon-possessed man, He said to him: *“Go home”* (Mark 5: 19); namely, instructed him to go back deep into his depths, and refrain from sinning any more. Whereas after death, no one can go back home to reform his depths and refrain from sinning.

❖ **Man** is created to contemplate in his Creator, perpetually to seek to be according to His image, and to dwell in the joy of His love. Whereas if he is driven out of his soul through rebellion, he would lose his mental foundation; and would be left outside in the dark alleys, wandering away from the dwelling place of the true Light.

❖ ***“His place will know him no more”***; Man’s place is not his material location; The Creator, Himself, has become man’s place; which he left it when he listened to the words of the deceitful, forsaking the love of His Creator. .. There are many who, after receiving help from the Savior, descended into the darkness of despair, and eternally perished again, as they despised the medications of mercy provided to them; About whom it is truly said: ***“Their place will know them no more”*** . It is to be noticed that He did not say: *“He will know his place no more”*, but ***“His place will know him no more”*** ; The word ***‘know’*** refers, not to the person but to the place, that would ultimately say firmly to those dwelling in evil: *“I do not know you, where you are from”* (Luke 13: 25).

Pope Gregory the Great

3- A DESCRIPTION OF JOB’S MISERABLE CONDITION:

“Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul” (Job 7: 11).

When David realized the vanity of temporal life, he said: *“I was mute with silence; I held my peace”* (Psalm 39: 2); Whereas ‘Job’, realizing the same fact, did not hold his peace, but bitterly complained, to present his final will to his friends and those around him.

In our last breath, it is befitting for us, instead of complaining and moaning, to confess our sins, beside praising and thanking God; in order to set forth in God’ peace.

❖ ***“I will not restrain my mouth”***. Because he, who feel ashamed to confess the evil he committed is *“restraining his mouth”* ;... The Psalmist says: *“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving (with confession)”* (Psalm 95; 2); And Solomon says: *“He who covers his sins will not prosper; But whoever confesses*

and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28: 13); And also says that “a righteous man is the first to accuse himself” (See Proverbs 18: 17).

- ❖ ***“I will speak in the anguish of my spirit”***; As ***“the anguish of the spirit”*** makes the tongue speak; and the voice of confession would be against the commitment of evil. We should take into consideration, that while the wicked confess their sins, they are extremely proud of them, and would never regret doing them. Whereas the elect, in their confession, bitterly and tearfully condemn themselves. That is why, after ‘Job’ pledged not to restrain his mouth, he did well by adding right away the words ***“in the anguish of my spirit”***.

“I will speak in the anguish of my spirit”... The anguish of spirit has its own tongue in the heart of the righteous, that utters more accurately, and is listened to, more attentively (than the physical tongue). That is why he did not say “I will talk” in the anguish of my spirit”, but said, ***“I will speak (debate)”***...; As the power of grief, deals with every sin, one by one, and provokes the mind to wail.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ **When you get preoccupied with a sin, you should go forward and accuse yourself** (see Proverbs 18: 17), **and not wait for others to do that on your behalf. By this you would become like a righteous man who hastens to be the first to plead guilty in court; Or would be like ‘Job’, who did not delay, to proclaim his sins before all the people in his city¹...**

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ God the Father will listen to you, while speaking within yourself, and will hasten to encounter you, as he sees you coming from afar.

Aware of what is in your heart, He hastens before anyone would delay you; and embraces you in His bosom.

‘Encountering you’ is based on His prior knowledge; And ‘embracing you’ is a proclamation of His mercy, and an expression of His fatherly love.

He falls on your neck, to haul you up; you fallen under the heavy burden of sins; and to bring you back to heaven, having prostrated yourself to the ground, to seek your Creator.

Christ falls on your neck, to set it free from the yoke of bondage, and to replace it by His easy yoke and His light burden (Matthew 11: 30).

He falls on your neck, saying: *“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11: 28).

That is how the Lord embraces you when you repent².

St. Ambrose

“Am I a sea, or a dragon, that you set a guard over me?” (Job 7: 12).

David the Psalmist, as he thought about his crossing over from this world, looked up to God, was mute with silence, and held his peace, to praise God with his heart, and to contemplate in the glories that God has prepared for him. ‘Job’, on the other hand, looking within himself, and thinking about his sufferings, became very furious; yet gave himself an excuse, saying: *“Am I a sea or a dragon?”* Am I an incessantly stormy sea that needs to be controlled? Or a dragon to be restrained, before it devours all the fish in the sea?

¹ On Humility.

² In Luc 15: 11-32.

❖ I am not as powerful as the sea, which you made great among the creations, and set sand all around it to guard and limit it, and to break down its authority.

And I am not as crafty as the dragon (the serpent), you put enmity between it and man; whom you commanded to keep away from him, saying: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel”* (Genesis 3: 15).

“You set a guard over me”; an envious traitor, to watch over all my deeds and words, and even to search all my thoughts.

He, who accused me of something that I never put into my consideration: that I, a faithful servant, in order to gain the vain temporal happiness, did not keep your commandment, for the sake of the coming life (Matthew 24: 25; 25: 21, 23). Under such a guard, who is also my enemy, I became miserably bound and shackled, and went through extremely fierce temptations; And You even stretched Your hand to help him against me!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint...’”
(Job 7: 13).

Being human, he hoped to find in sleep a relief from what he suffers, and a chance for a temporary comfort!

❖ In the Holy Book, the word ‘bed’ is often used to refer to the secrets of the depths of the heart. Every soul, whom the Groom stabs with the spears of holy love, says in the Song of songs: *“By night on my bed, I sought the one I love”* (Song 3: 1)

And the ‘Truth’ says to His beloved disciples: *“The kingdom of God is within you”* (Luke 17: 21); And *“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you”* (John 16: 7); As though He is telling them clearly: [If I do not take your attention away from concentrating on My seen body, I would not be able to guide you by the Helper Spirit, to realize the unseen. That is why the Psalmist says about the righteous: *“Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds”* (Psalm 149: 5); As, fleeing from the outside harm, they become glorified in peace within the depths of their hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ When you say the truth, you liken the angels who never sleep because they are always on guard, and would never escape from confronting the truth, through vain fantasies¹.

❖ Sleep here, is of an unfamiliar kind; and differs from the regular sleep, in which man is unaware of what goes on around him; A kind that makes the bride, contradictorily say: *“I sleep, but my heart is awake”* (Song 5: 2); A kind of sleep like death; in which all sensory functions: vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, almost stop; blood pressure is reduced, anxiety is forgotten, fear is slowed down, anger is reigned, and awareness of evil is gone! That makes the exalted bride of the Song of songs boast saying: *“I sleep, but my heart is awake”* (Song 5: 2)².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

❖ Cast away from yourself the sleep of ignorance, to knock on the door of Christ, sought by St. Paul to be open for him, to be able to talk about the secret of Christ

¹ عظة 5 على نشيد الأناشيد ترجمة الدكتور جورج نزار.

² عظة 10 على نشيد الأناشيد ترجمة الدكتور جورج نزار.

(Colossians 3: 4). And is probably the same door which St. John saw open in his revelation, and said: “*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying: ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this’*” (Revelation 4: 1). That door was opened to John and to Paul to gain for our sake, bread for our food; They persisted on knocking on it, whether the time is favorable or unfavorable (2 Timothy 4: 2), to restore, by the abundance of the heavenly food, life to the Gentiles, who labored and got exhausted by the ways of this world¹.

St. Ambrose

“Then you scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions” (Job 7: 14).

Because sleep could not relieve him of his affliction, but dreams scared him, and visions terrified him; Night became for him more disturbing than day.

We need the strong hand of God to keep us; Our divine Guard, who alone, would never sleep.

❖ Because dreams are usually deceiving visions by our hidden enemy, they are referred to as: “*Dreams have deceived many*” (Sirach 34: 7).

Pope Gregory the Great

“So that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than this body” (Job 7: 15).

He did not care for a particular kind of death; but was preoccupied with seeking it from God, not just to save him from affliction, but from his whole temporal life!

“I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, for my days are but a breath” (Job 7: 16).

Beside the calamities that dwelt over the righteous ‘Job’, including the loss of his possessions, the death of his children, and the oppression by his wife, **St. John Chrysostom** mentions the following issues that added to the bitterness of the temptation:

1- His lack of sure knowledge of the kingdom of heaven and of the resurrection; for which he sadly says: “*I would not live forever*” (16).

2- Feeling that he has done many good things.

3- Feeling that he has done no evil.

4- Assuming that what dwelt upon him was by God’s hand; because if it was by Satan’s hand, it would be easier on him to endure!

5- Hearing his friends accusing him, saying: “*God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves*” (Job 11: 6).

6- Seeing those who live in evil prospering and boasting on him.

7- He could not think of anyone who has equally suffered².

❖ **[Set me free of my life, set my soul free from my body, and my bones from death; I would not live forever, to be committed to endure with patience!].** When he says “*I would not live forever*”, he obviously refer to this material earthly life, as being weak, corrupt, unsettled, and will soon come to an end; namely, it does not bear the features of the eternal life.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ In Luc 11:15 -13.

² The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 33:7.

4- A CRY OUT TO GOD TO SAVE HIM:

“What is man, that You should make so much of him, that you set your mind on him” (Job 7: 17)

In his affliction, Job feels that man is not worth that God sets His mind on him, or tests him; As though he is saying to God: [I am not worthy of visiting me every morning, and of testing me every moment; I am not worthy of standing before you; completely helpless to enter such a crucible of temptations; “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him” (Psalm 8: 4)].

‘Job’ stands astonished before God’s exalted care for man; Despite man’s weakness and low status; yet God is preoccupied with testing him, in order to justify and glorify him.

‘Job’ marvels how God sets his heart on man; how he looks at him as an object of his love and compassion; and sets for him a place in His divine heart; how he visits him every morning with new mercies, as a loving friend; or as a physician enquires about the progress of his patient’s health!

In a talk by **St. Gregory of Nyssa** concerning the creation of man, he marvels how God has created the world a magnificent palace, and prepared it for Adam and Eve as a king and a queen; how He presented to man every possibility of happiness and authority over all the creation that he made for his sake.

And in a talk about the true greatness and the vain one, **St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy**¹ demonstrated with admiration God’s exalted love for man; how He adorned heaven with stars, provided earth with beautiful creatures, and offered them to become under the authority of man; how God intended for man to have greatness and glory; But, through the devil’s envy, man fell into vain greatness, and lost the true one. And yet God allowed Adam to return to what he used to be – to dust; Not to humiliate him, but not to keep him from living forever, after losing his greatness; So that that once he discovers his actual status, he would gain glory through the work of the Savior.

❖ God glorifies man, by enriching him with an abundance of the gift of mind, by visiting him with the inspiration of grace; and by glorifying him with the greatness of the gift of virtue. Although he is nothing in himself, Yet, through the compassionate generosity of God’s love, He grants him to partake of the knowledge of God Himself. Having set His heart on man, glorified him, and brought him over to judgment ,after granting him His gifts, God accurately and firmly weighs man’s worthiness, and presents a punishment that goes according to the multitude of privileges He has granted him.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Who, among the earthly beings, is created in the image of God, but man?

To whom has God given the authority over nature and all its creatures, to be his own?

It is a genuine honor that crowns his forehead, and exalts him to heaven, soaring above the stars, and haughtier than the sun ... Although he of a lower level than the angels, being bound by a physical body, Yet he is granted the power to know and understand his Lord and Creator².

St. Basil the Great

❖ He spread the sky and set in it all sources of light: the sun, the moon, and the stars.

¹ ميمر "على العظمة" يُقرأ يوم الأربعاء من الأسبوع الثاني من الصوم الكبير.

² Hom. In Ps 48, 8, PG 29:450 b.

Without asking for it, the sky was adorned with magnificent sceneries that impress the onlookers.

The sun has no tongue to seek from Him a great light to shine over the whole creation.

With fantastic colors, He adorned all races of birds and beasts since the beginning.

The creation was made perfect, and has never changed.

And once the house of creation is set as a wondrous building, adorned with unutterable things.

The Creator intended to set in it someone more beautiful.

He took dust and made Adam, and breathed in his face a living breath of life.

He made for him an equally wondrous soul.

He made him in His own image, and filled him with glory and splendor.

The light of the sun was eclipsed, before the glory and splendor of the radiant light granted to man by his Creator.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

- ❖ Adam was not created to die, but to strive for the sake of eternity; And to reveal his authenticity, and to prove it, God: “*granted him the zeal of the Spirit*”... And now, through Baptism, He works on giving him an unutterable down-payment -- the Holy Spirit¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“...*That You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?*”

(Job 7: 18).

- ❖ David said, what is almost identical to this phrase: “*Lord, what is man, that you take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that you are mindful of him*” (Psalm 144: 3). Why did David say this about man, and what was going on in his mind when he added: “*Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow*” (Psalm 144: 4). The righteous, in their ignorance, ask God: Lord, Why do You glorify this weak creature, and why are you so mindful of him?... Being the Beneficent, and the Philanthropic, God often visits the one He created, and gives him so much interest, that David adds: “*Bow down Your heaven, O Lord, and come down*” (Psalm 144: 5); That He actually did; He bowed down His heaven, and came down to us “*The Word became flesh* “ (John 1: 14). He came down to us to partake of our status, and to strengthen and to support our weakness. ‘Job’ is an example of the good that comes to a man of whom God is mindful.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ “***That You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment***” (18)... The darkness of our ignorance is illuminated by the light of knowing the Truth; The night turns into light, when the splendor of righteousness shines in our hearts, that were covered by a dense mist of sin. When Paul saw the dawn appear in the minds of his disciples, he said: “*The night is far gone, the day is near*” (Romans 13: 12).

But let us notice that God, after visiting man (at dawn), He would suddenly test him! By His approach, He lifts our hearts up to the heights of virtue; And by His retreat, He would allow for us to be attacked by temptation. Because after gaining

¹ 2 Cor. hom 10. PG 61: 507.

such divine gifts, If the soul is not moved by temptations, it would be puffed up, and would assume that what it gained is through her own power.

It happened to the prophet Elijah: When he was visited at dawn, he opened up the gates of heaven by one word; Yet he was soon tempted, and off he helplessly escaped to the wilderness, before a single woman (1 Kings 19: 3).

So did the apostle Paul; When he was caught up to the third heaven, into paradise, he was given a vision. And yet, as he got back to himself, he wrested against attacks of his flesh, and submitted to another law in his body members. Being sad because of his infirmity, he looked at the law of the Spirit in him as being threatened (2 Corinthians 12: 2).

Pope Gregory the Great

“How long? Will You not look away from me, And let me alone till I swallow my saliva?” (Job 7: 19).

St. John Chrysostom dealt in his essay ‘The Divine Care’ with the problem of those who get offended in God’s love because of the afflictions that dwell upon them.

❖ Let us hasten then to reform those who get offended because of some afflictions; to keep them from falling under punishment, by clarifying to them the cause of their problems; namely, their disregard of God’s care and love!

It is the foolishness and busyness of the mind. It is the shameful desire to understand the cause of all events that dwell upon us; and the desire to oppose the unutterable, unrealizable, and unsearchable care of God.

Tell me, who has ever surpassed Paul in his wisdom? Wasn’t he a chosen vessel?! Hasn’t he gained the exalted and unutterable grace of the Holy Spirit? Hasn’t Christ spoken through him? Hasn’t God revealed to him what man should not utter? Wasn’t he caught into paradise, and to the third heaven? Hasn’t he traveled by land and sea to draw heathens to Christianity? Hasn’t he gained a diversity of the fruits of the Holy Spirit?... And yet, despite all that; this man, with such greatness, wisdom, power, and fullness with the Spirit, when he considers God’s care, not in its wholeness, but at one of its sides, he hastens to withdraw in contrition, in submission to the unsearchable God.

He did not consider God’s care for the angels, the archangels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and all the unseen heavenly hosts; Nor His care for the sun, the moon, the heaven, and the earth; Nor His watching over the human race as a whole, the irrational creatures, the plants, the wind, the rivers, and the springs... But he concentrated on God’s special care for the Jews and the Greeks; , and profusely wrote about how God called the Gentiles and rejected the Jews; and clarified how He realized the salvation... At this point, the apostle discovered that he is before an extensive ocean; And the more he got into the depths of this unlimited, unsearchable, indescribable care, the more he trembled, realizing how impossible to interpret its cause; to retreat in reverence and admiration, saying: ***“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God...How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Romans 11: 33).***

Man is not only unable to understand His judgments, but he is in no position, **even to start finding out His ways, or to realize their goals and plans.**

Having said that, filled with awe and trembling, he ended his talk with a praise of thanksgiving, saying: ***“For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him, to receive a gift in return?”***

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things,... to Him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11: 34-36)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O Watcher of men? Why have You set me as your target, So that I am a burden to myself?” (Job 7: 20).

God testified to Job, that he is a blameless and upright man. But ‘Job’ confesses that he is a sinner. If, before his friends, he proclaims that he is innocent of the horrible sins they think he has secretly done; Yet, to God, he proclaims that he would not be justified before Him, the Watcher of men, who searches their hearts, and minds, and is preoccupied with their holiness and purity.

‘Job’ proclaims to God that he is helpless; He has actually sinned; Yet, as there is none who can fulfill the divine justice, We can only seek His mercies, hide under His wings, and prepare ourselves for the work of His grace, to become the subject of His pleasure.

❖ He says: [**If I have sinned, What can I do, O Watcher of men?**]. Because You know man in his wholeness, having created what is inside and outside him! You testify that I am blameless and upright man (Job 1: 8; 2: 3). So, If those who revile and despise me, disregard and deny the righteousness, that made me worthy of Your testimony; What can I do?!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, You will seek me, But I will no longer be” (Job 7: 21).

In a hot supplication, he cries out seeking forgiveness. Obviously, he does not seek mere temporal rest, and a relief of his temptation; but he seeks God’s pleasure, to regain his inner peace. He seeks forgiveness while he is still living; because once he is dead and lying down in the dust, there would be no place chance for repentance, and his relationship with God would be severed.

❖ By these words, he proclaims his hope for the anticipated Intercessor, about whom John the Baptist says: *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1: 29); and by whom, sin is utterly uprooted from humanity, when our corruption turns into the glory of non-corruption.

As we cannot be liberated from sin, as long as we are bound by our mortal body, man longs for the grace of the Savior, for the sake of the perfection of the resurrection, when he considers evil to be completely uprooted. That is why ‘Job’, thinking about the punishment he deserves (through his inheritance of Adam), and the judgment he is worthy of because of his own sins, he says: *“Now I will lie down in the earth; you will seek me (in the morning), But I will no longer be”* (Job 7: 21).

To the first man, when he sinned, it was said: *“You are dust, and to dust you will return”* (Genesis 3: 19). Now, in the morning; namely, with the proclamation of souls, when thoughts become naked with the coming of the Judge, Light will dwell instead of darkness; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“O Lord, in the morning You hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch”* (Psalm 5: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Being a sinner, I perpetually need a cure².

¹ *Divine Providence 1-2.*

² *The Sacraments 4:6:29.*

❖ Every time we receive Him (in communion), we proclaim the death of the Lord. By His death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If His blood was shed for the sake of the forgiveness of sins, It would be perpetually befitting for me to receive Him to have my sins forgiven.

St. Ambrose

❖ To be called man, this is the work of God; But to be called a sinner, it is the work of man himself.

It is befitting for you to hate your own work in yourself; and to love God's work in you.

Once you are not pleased with your own works, and you realize that there is something wrong with your evil deeds, It would be the start of God's good work.

Confessing evil deeds is the beginning of the good ones.

How to do the truth? When you stop spoiling and flattering yourself; If you stop saying: "I am righteous", when you are not!

You come to the light, when your works proclaim that they are done by God; because you cannot hate your sin, unless God shines in you, and the Truth reveals it to you.

Whoever loves his sins, hates the Light who advises him, and flees away from him; he cannot realize that the works he does are evil. Who knows the Truth, condemns his evil deeds, and would never justify himself; nor forgives himself until God forgives him.

Whoever wishes for God's forgiveness of his sins which he well knows, should come to the light and says to God: "*Hide Your face from my sins*" (Psalm 51: 9) Yet how can he say that without adding: "*For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me*" (Psalm 51: 3)?

Let your transgression be before you, If you do not want them to be before God.

Because if you put your sins behind you, God will bring them over before your eyes, on the day when there would be no fruit of repentance¹.

St. Augustine

¹ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 12:13.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 7

OUR DAYS ARE AN INCESSANT TEMPTATION

- ❖ How am I seeing my life on earth?
An incessant series of temptations.
I live like a laborer who looks forward for the day to come to an end.
To rest from his labor, and to collect his wages.
- ❖ The day with all its labor delivers me to the night.
And the night with its horror delivers me to the day.
When shall I find my comfort?
The months of my life are hastening toward departure.
The days of my sojourn are passing swiftly like vapor, with no return.
- ❖ If I go down to the abyss, I shall never return to life on earth.
And my home on earth will never again recognize me.
- ❖ In the midst of my afflictions, I cry out, saying:
Who am I – the dust – that you are aware of me, to chasten me?!
Who am I – the ashes – that you visit me?!
- ❖ You are my hope, my pleasure, and my treasure.
By You, I do not fear death.
By you, my troublesome journey would turn into joyful crossing!
Accompany me on my way of suffering.
That my grief turns into incessant songs and praises.

CHAPTER 8

WISDOM OF THE OLD

Eliphaz did not comment on what 'Job' said, but left it to 'Bildad' who shared his same views; The three friends strongly believed that the calamities which dwelt on 'Job' were a divine punishment on hidden sins known only to God.

Bildad, rebuking 'Job' for what he said, confirms that God acts with wisdom, rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked; and wonders how 'Job' dare to accuse God of injustice. Saying that, when men forget God, they would justly perish; he assumes that the sudden death of Job's children, was a divine punishment for their sins; that was undoubtedly like a sword he stabbed in Job's heart which was already bleeding with grief.

It is difficult to consider Bildad's talks as debates; because he was a man of tradition, fond of the wisdom of the old, without enjoying a personal experience of sufferings or temptations. He believed that Job's troubles are a natural fruit of his evil behavior, or of that of his children; and that if he was a righteous man, as he claimed to be, and sought from God to give him back his lost blessings, He would listen to him and would give him more abundantly than that what he used to have before (2-7).

He rebukes 'Job', because his experience could never be compared to the wisdom of the old; And as examples from nature: Like the Papyrus leaves which, without a plenty of water, would not grow but would dry up; A wicked man would lose the water of God's blessing (11-13); And assuming that his house and possessions are secure, they would be soon destroyed like a fragile spider's web; or would be like reeds that flourish, then disappear to be replaced by new reeds (16-19).

According to him, the calamities that 'Job' is experiencing are only befitting to his transgressions; and that he would be forgiven by God if he corrected his ways (20-21).

Such views by Bildad, we would not reject all together; But would compare with what came in Luke 13: 14; and John 9: 2-3.

1- Job's talks are against the truth of God	1 – 2
2- God is just in what would dwell upon believers	3 – 4
3- A destructive counsel	5 – 7
4- Accusing 'Job' of hypocrisy	8 – 19
5- A call for blamelessness	20– 22

1- JOB'S TALKS ARE AGAINST THE TRUTH OF GOD:

“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: ‘How long will you speak these things, And the words of your mouth be like a strong wind?’” (Job 8: 1, 2).

Aggressively, intending to mute Job's mouth, and trying to criticize his protesting attitude, Bildad rebukes him saying: *“How long will you speak these things?”*. It is as though saying, that what Eliphaz said should be enough, and that 'Job' should keep his mouth shut. He likened Job's attitude to a stormy wind, yet could never stand before the divine justice.

St. John Chrysostom believes that Bildad has been unjustly aggressive against the righteous 'Job'. If he used a little patience and understanding, he would realize that what Job said was no more than a natural reaction to the terrible sufferings and temptations he is passing through; And that 'Job', despite his admonition to God, did not deny that he is a sinner, and asked God to forgive him. Bildad's aggressiveness led him to fall into unjust condemnation of the righteous 'Job', and to an exaggerated

criticism of his good words, which he claimed to be evil. He did not realize that a suffering human being has got a natural right to express what he feels inside him.

❖ Did 'Job' ever say that he is suffering from oppression?

No, he never said that! But, talking about his natural weakness, he says: "*Am I a sea, or a sea serpent?*" (Job 7: 12); "*Is my strength, the strength of stones?*" (Job 6: 13); What is my life? If I live forever, I would patiently endure! Besides, confessing that he is a sinner, he says: "*Why do You not pardon my transgressions, and take away my iniquity?*" (Job 7: 12).

Bildad condemns himself when he fails to appreciate that those who actually suffer pain, would find comfort in expressing themselves; having heard 'Job' say: "*I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit*" (Job 7: 11); namely, [The words I utter come from necessity].

❖ As a golden vessel, because of its high value, should not be used to contain lowly things; The mouth, which is more valuable than gold, should never be defiled by uttering bad words, or reviling others.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ The words of the righteous are always offensive to the oppressors; And what they hear for edification, is like a heavy burden on their shoulders. This is clearly proven by the attitude of 'Bildad' when he says to 'Job': "***How long will you speak these things?***" (Job 8: 2).

The oppressors boast that what they utter is always the right thing; and find faults in what is said by others.

An exaggerated criticism would deprive one's words of their meaning.

The wicked would always oppose good issues; lest they may appear as ignorant of what is right!

Pope Gregory the Great

The Holy Book and the holy fathers warn us against the sin done by Bildad; namely, talking too much with haste; which always lead to condemnation, and exaggerated bitter criticism.

"When words are many, transgression is not lacking" (Proverbs 10: 19).

"Dreams come with many cares, and a fool's voice with many words" (Ecclesiastes 5: 3).

"With many dreams come vanities and a multitude of words; But fear God" (Ecclesiastes 5: 7).

❖ The apostle James says that nothing and no one can humiliate or rein the tongue; **it can only happen through God's compassionate grace and help**¹.

❖ Man can tame wild beasts; But he cannot rein his own tongue.

Man can control everything except himself; that is beyond his power!

Man can control everything he fears, or he should fear; whereas his own self, that he does not fear, he cannot control!

Therefore, let us resort to God who can control us, saying to Him: "*Lord, You are, and was always our refuge*".

Can man, the image of God, tame a lion; and God cannot tame His own image?!

¹ *De Nat et Grat.*

We should place our hope in that ‘Tamer’! Let us submit to Him, and seek His mercy... Let us ask Him to control us to become blameless...

If we sometimes use whips to tame wild beasts, Is it much for God to use this tool to turn us, His wild beasts, into His obedient children¹?!

St. Augustine

❖ A multitude of words is a throne of arrogance, from which selfishness, boasting, and pride, would emerge!

A multitude of words is a reference to ignorance; a door to gossip, vain and irresponsibly funny talk; and a servant to lies and hypocrisy.

❖ **A multitude of words scatters memory;** decrease alertness; cools down enthusiasm; and makes prayer lukewarm²!

St. John El-Dargy

❖ **Beware of the fast-talking tongue,** and the ears fond of hearing gossip; Do not belittle others; nor listen to those who do!

St. Jerome

❖ **Do not hasten to talk with your tongue; the mouth is a snare of death!**

Someone by the name Barnabas

❖ Who controls his tongue, would never lose his treasure. **The mouth of the silent interprets the secrets of God’** and he, who hastens to talk distances himself from his Creator³!

The spiritual elder

❖ We should rarely rebuke others; and if we have to do, we should care to serve God and not ourselves!

Let us have one goal; not do anything with double heart! Let us take out of our eyes the plank of envy, hate and hypocrisy; so as to be able to remove the speck out of our brother’s eye! Let us see the speck by the eyes of a dove; by the eyes of the bride of Christ (Song of songs 4: 1); a glorious church, chosen by God for himself , not having a spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5: 27)⁴.

St. Augustine

❖ **Do not judge your brother, to be yourself,** worthy of forgiveness; You may always see him at fault; Yet you would never know, how would be the way he will leave this world. The thief, who was crucified together with Jesus, has been a bloody murderer; whereas Judas has been one of the closest Disciples of Christ; yet within a very short time, that thief ended in paradise, whereas the disciple was found worthy of hanging and perdition!

St. Augustine

2- GOD IS JUST IN WHAT WOULD DWELL ON BELIEVERS:

“Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?” (Job 8: 3).

¹ عظات على فصول منتخبة من العهد الجديد.

² سلم السماء 11: 2.

³ أي القديس يوحنا سابا: عن بستان الرهبان.

⁴ Sermon on the Mount 2:66.

Bildad counted Job's agitation as against God; and as an accusation that God subverts judgment and perverts justice! Yet far from it, that anyone would think that way! Man, in his weakness, may pervert justice out of fear; But God the Almighty, would never be oppressive, nor do vanity.

- ❖ The righteous 'Job' did not deny that in his talk, nor was ignorant of it, when he restrained his tongue. But the arrogant utter the well known facts with big words, in order to look learned!

They do not keep their peace with a spirit of humility; **lest they may be thought, in their silence, as ignorant.** They would only commend God's straightness of justice, when they are secure of calamities; when they enjoy prosperity in their life; while others are suffering.

Walking in evil, they assume that they are righteous. Imagining that their prosperity is because of their own worthiness, they deduce that God would never do oppression... But once their life is ever touched by the rod of correction, even to the least degree, they would hasten to attack the divine policy; Whereas, a little while ago – when they were enjoying security – they were profusely commending God's ordainments.

They refuse any judgment that touches them as being unjust...; according to the words of the Psalmist: *"He will praise you when you do well to him"* (Psalm 49: 18). Therefore we should not marvel to hear Bildad commending God's justice, as long as it does not touch him!

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great sees in Job's friends a symbol of the heretics, who count the affliction that would dwell upon the church, for the sake of her edification, as a kind of divine justice; While considering the prosperity they enjoy as because of their own worthiness.

The devil often supports the heretics in all generations by temporal honors, to draw God's children away from the bosom of the holy church; either by deceitful shining philosophies; by material privileges; or through keeping them from the kind of affliction suffered by the bride of the Crucified.

That was the role of Bildad, who thought of his ignorance as wisdom; and counted 'Job' as a blasphemer against the Almighty God, and a rebel against the divine justice.

- ❖ The devil fabricates heresies and dissensions to corrupt faith, to distort the truth, and to destroy unity.

And being unable to keep us in the dark ways of his dogmas, he draws us into a new maze of deceit.

He draws people away from the church; And when they think that they have approached light, and escaped away from the darkness of the world, he lets them sink into a new darkness of which they are not aware.

While, not abiding to the Holy Book, to the system and law of Christ, they claim to be in the light, through the smooth deceptions of the enemy, about whom the apostle says, **he can appear as an angel of light; and can adorn his ministers as those of righteousness.**

They call night as day; death as salvation; despair as hope; betrayal as faithfulness; and the anti-Christ as Christ; They suppress the truth by deception, through demonstrating it in a false way.

This is what happens, brethren, when we do not return to the Fountain of Truth; when we do not look at the Head, and we do not keep the teachings coming from heaven¹.

St. Cyprian

- ❖ The devil is used to imitate the things concerning God; he sets false messengers to oppose the true ones; and he even takes the form of an angel to deceive men².

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

- ❖ Some philosophers have elaborate debates on virtues and iniquities; discerning between them, and defining them; They fill books with many words introducing their wisdom; daring to persuade people to follow them, if they wish to live happily. Yet they do not enter through the door; they intend to destroy, slay, and kill³!
- ❖ We should discern between these types of people: those whom it is befitting to love; those with whom we should bear, and those of whom we should be aware; the shepherd to be loved; the hired hand to bear with; and the thief to be aware of⁴.

St. Augustine

- ❖ *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition; knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self condemned”* (Titus 3: 10, 11). I wish we, like wise seamen, would, in our faith, sail prudently along the safe coasts of the holy books.

St. Ambrose

“If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression” (Job 8: 4).

Referring what dwelt upon Job’s children, as a fruit of their wickedness and transgressions, and a just punishment from God, inflamed the wounds of Job more and more! ‘Job’ used regularly to present to God burnt offerings on behalf of his children, for fear that they might have sinned and cursed God in their hearts (Job 1: 5); But no one could claim that what happened to them is a natural fruit of their transgressions!

3- A DESTRUCTIVE COUNSEL:

“If you would earnestly (‘early in the morning’ – in the Arabic version) seek God and make your supplication to the Almighty...” (Job 8: 5).

Amazingly, Bildad gives ‘Job’ a kind of counsel that reveals the darkness of his own heart. Although his advice to him to earnestly seek God (‘early in the morning’ in Arabic version), and to make supplication to Him, may sound reasonable and even splendid, Yet he portrays prayers as a way to acquire temporal gifts, and not to enjoy the Giver of gifts Himself; Counting the divine response to prayers, by giving temporal gifts, a sign of God’s pleasure, and of the holiness and worthiness of the one who prays. This is undoubtedly a wrong and dangerous reference that corrupts the faith in God, who wants us to seek His kingdom and righteousness, and then all the other things would be given to us in abundance.

There is nothing against asking God, being our godly Father, for anything we may need, even for little things, as a token of our living fellowship with Him; Yet His

¹ *The Unity of the Catholic Church*, 3.

² *PG 82:442*.

³ *St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 45: 3*.

⁴ *Sermon on N.T. Lessons*, 87:5.

response by giving us what we prayed for, would never be a sign of our worthiness, or of God's love for us.

Most probably, Bildad was sure that 'Job' would never get back what he has lost; and that would be another sign of his wickedness, just like that of his children. And on another aspect, Bildad's measure of righteousness and uprightness was man's enjoyment of temporal things. According to **Pope Gregory the Great**, the enjoyment of temporal pleasures is counted by wicked men as a blessing that refers to God's pleasure with them.

Prayer, according to **St. Augustine**, is a **language of the longing of the soul and the heart toward God:**

- ❖ Prayer is a way of a loving mind to reach God; It preoccupies the whole life of a good Christian; his mind, heart, knowledge, and love, in a holy desire¹.
- ❖ Unfortunately, it is much easier to seek material gifts from God, than to seek God Himself; As though the gift is better than its Giver²!
- ❖ Although God has nothing against our love for these things; Yet it is more befitting for us to make the love for our Creator the ultimate goal of our life... God gives you everything to love the One who makes them³.
- ❖ What valuable thing would be sought from God, by someone who disregards Him⁴?!
- ❖ Seek nothing from God other than the gift of giving Himself to you⁵.
- ❖ Seeking God from God, is by loving God the Giver of grace⁶.
- ❖ It is not right to love what God gives, if this would be a cause of forgetting Him⁷.
- ❖ You will never find anything better to seek from God, than Himself⁸.

St. Augustine

Father Aphrahat believes that prayer is an inner encounter of the pure heart with the Holy God; A talk of the heart, which would not please God, unless it is pure.

- ❖ Prayer is beautiful, upright, and gives man comfort, when it is pure and devoid of deceit.; **A prayer is strong when God's power works in it.**

Beloved brother, I wrote to you, that if man is committed to consummate God's will, and make it the center of his prayer, he would be exalted in his prayer.

I exhort you: Be alert all the time, day and night, and never lose heart; Do not be slothful in praying,.... Long to it, and never get tired of it; According to the words of the Lord Himself in the Scripture: "*Men always ought to pray and not lose heart*" (Luke 18: 1)⁹.

St. Aphrahat

- ❖ **Was 'Job' in need of this teaching of yours, O Bildad?!**

¹ Tr. on 1 John 4:6.

² On Ps. 76:2.

³ Tr. on 1 John 2:11.

⁴ Sermon 91:3.

⁵ Sermon 331:4.

⁶ Sermon 304:3.

⁷ Confession 4:12:18.

⁸ On Ps 72:32.

⁹ Demonstrations 4:16.

Wasn't he, all his life long, a persistent prayer? You tell him: "*Earnestly (early in the morning) seek God, and make supplication to the Almighty*). He always did that, early in the morning (see Job 1: 5), and all the day,... he used to praise God seven times, day and night; His strive in his temptations prove that he was a man of prayers.

You misjudged the great wrestler, O Bildad; 'Job' did not fail to behold God, of whom you speak; to criticize the righteous man, and not to glorify God.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

"If you were pure and upright, Surely now, He would rouse Himself for you, and restore you your rightful place" (Job 8: 6).

Bildad believes that if 'Job' is pure and upright, all those calamities would never dwell upon him; And that if he responded properly to the first temptation, he would have been spared the second one.

This is far from the truth; As a righteous man could be tempted more than once, and may even be tempted all his life long, which is counted as nothing, compared to the eternity he is going to enjoy.

Bildad pretended to exhort 'Job' to repent his evil ways, so that God would restore him what he used to have, and even more; though in his depths, his real intention was to confirm that he is evil and a hypocrite.

"Though your beginning was small; Yet your latter days would be very great" (Job 8: 7).

But to prove to Bildad that 'Job' is pure and upright, God actually made his latter days greater and more glorious than his beginnings. Yet that was only just a down payment of the glory set for him in the eternal life. He died old and full of days (42: 16), to arise and live eternally in the higher Jerusalem.

Many martyrs and saints suffered in their latter days; Yet those sufferings were spiritual jewels and pearls, to be recognized in the great day of the Lord, when they would treasure the love they have demonstrated by receiving the sufferings with joy.

4- ACCUSING JOB OF HYPOCRISY:

"For inquire of bygone generations, and consider what their ancestors have found" (Job 8: 8).

Bildad did not dare to proclaim that what dwelt upon 'Job' – according to his own experience – confirms that he is an evil man; but based his judgment on the experience of the bygone generations; not like Eliphaz who based it on his own experience.

In a commentary by **father Hesychius of Jerusalem** on these phrases (8 – 10), he believes that what happened to 'Job' is like what happened to 'Abel'. When 'Cain' looked at the corpse of his brother 'Abel' lying dead on the ground (Genesis 4), he assumed that it was the fruit of Abel's evil behavior; that, because he (Cain) is a righteous man, everything would settle down for his benefit, and that he would live, ever after, in peace and comfort,. He did not realize that the blood of his murdered brother was crying out from the ground to reach God in heaven.

Like Cain who intended to trample with his feet over his brother Abel, Job's friends intended to crush his soul under their feet. Looking at him lying on the trash heap, they also counted him as an evil man; Yet, the same way God testified to the righteousness of Abel, and proclaimed that the gates of heaven are open to hear the voice of his blood, He testifies to 'Job', and listens to the screams of his heart.

It was befitting for Job's friends themselves, to inquire of bygone generations, to see that the oppression that dwelt upon Abel was not because of his evil, but rather

because of his righteousness; And that although his life did not end with temporal earthly blessings, yet the gates of heaven were opened to receive the screams of his blood, shed on the ground.

While Eliphaz says that no innocent has ever perished, and no upright was ever cut off (Job 4: 7); Bildad says here that God will put the evil hypocrites into shame, disgrace, and destruction in this world. And while **Eliphaz** intended to confirm that, **if ‘Job’ was upright, nothing would have happened to him; Bildad, on the other hand, openly accuses ‘Job’ of evil and hypocrisy.**

“For we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing, for our days on earth are but a shadow” (Job 8: 9).

Here Bildad asks ‘Job’ not to depend on his own experience, even though he is old; but to inquire of bygone generations; because his whole age is like a single day; his knowledge is limited, and his experience is but a passerby like his life.

Bildad’s words, although they were like those uttered by King David in his farewell prayer, saying: *“For we are aliens and pilgrims before you as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope”* (1 Chronicles 29: 15); Yet his heart and mind were not like those of David. His words, would be prudent, and possibly holy, if his heart was pure, loving, and holy.

“Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding?” (Job 8: 10).

As the early fathers bear love toward their children and grandchildren; And, together with their experience, they offer us their loving hearts, their words have their great weight and value.

❖ Bildad’s words against the hypocrites were amazingly true; Yet they actually refer to his person; Because if he was not pretending to be righteous, he would not dare to teach a good man with such great arrogance... **Although his words were amazingly true, yet they were more befitting to be addressed to the fools and the wicked, and not to such a wise and good man like ‘Job’.** Whoever pours water into a river, while his own gardens are dry and thirsty, is nothing but a fool.

Pope Gregory the Great

I have already spoken about the **importance of the legacy of the early fathers** in my work: (The beginning of the Christian literature of the early fathers), in which I wrote¹:

[How far are we committed to what came in the legacy of the early fathers?

The saintly fathers represent the thoughts of the Catholic Church, delivered by the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, who incessantly works in the life of the church. According to **St. Augustine**: “They abided to what they found in the church; did what they were taught, and received from the fathers, and delivered it into the hands of the children²” Whoever despises the saintly fathers, should know that he is despising the whole church³!

Their authority is based upon two factors: A natural factor: Having had a holy life; been attributed with faithfulness in receiving the talent of living faith from the hands of the apostles; Having had in particular the one thought, despite the differences in cultures, talents, and circumstances; beside the great distances between the

¹ للمؤلف: بدء الأدب المسيحي الآبائي، 1995، ص 15-17.

² St. Augustine: Contra Julian, II 9.

³ Ibid 37.

apostolic chairs, and the difficulty in communication at that time; They are more qualified to testify to the Church life on all aspects.

The second is a divine factor; as the early fathers have lived under the authority of the Holy Spirit, the Leader of the Church, and her Guide to the whole Truth, Who keeps her within the circle of the cross of Christ.

That does not imply that the fathers were ‘faultless’ as individuals; But the catholic Church, as a whole, lives kept by The Spirit of the Lord.

Upon the legacy of the early fathers, which occupied a prominent position in the life and faith of the Church; **St. Athanasius** depended in his apology¹; As well as **St. Basil** who depended on several of the church traditions, left by his predecessors.

This tendency; namely, resorting to the sayings of the early fathers, increased in the fourth century AD, and grew stronger in the fifth². **St. Cyril of Alexandria**, as an example -- in his writings to the Egyptian monks³, defending the title ‘Theotokos’ of St. Mary; to confirm that the child delivered by her is the incarnate Word of God, with no separation of Deity from Humanity – instructed them to follow the lead of the saintly fathers, who faithfully abided to the faith they received from the apostles, and uprightly taught the Christians after them. Again, he confirmed to them that the correct teaching concerning the Holy Trinity was made clear by the saintly fathers⁴. In his talk **about Nestor**⁵, he resorted to the teaching of the holy Church that spread all over the world, and to that of the revered fathers themselves; proclaiming that the Holy Spirit spoke in it. And to support his talk, which he presented to the council of Ephesus about the Lord Christ, he quoted some of the writings of the early fathers⁶].

“Can papyrus grow up where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?” (Job 8: 11).

Accusing ‘Job’ of hypocrisy, Bildad presents a general painful portrait of the hypocrite, yet he means by it, ‘Job’ in particular; likening him:

1- **To the papyrus, that grow only in muddy waters**, and to the dry reeds with no water (11).

2- **To the spider, that thinks itself secure in its web house** that does not stand (14-15).

3- **To the weeds burned dry by the heat of the sun**, which is normally the secret of life and growth of plants (16).

4- **To him, who stumbles on the stones on his way**, to fall down and perish

5- **To the beautiful flourishing tree**, uprooted and cut off by the ax.

The experience of the early fathers in this concern says that the hypocrites, with their hopes and joy, are like the papyrus and the reeds that grow in marshes among the mud and mire. The hope of the hypocrite does not materialize except in rotten ground and mire; he leans upon deceptive outer appearances of religion and holiness, upon vain words of compliments directed to him, that are no more than mire, and upon hopes that are nothing but papyrus and reeds.

If the papyrus refers to the hypocrite, who needs the waters of the Holy Spirit; In this water, the believer is born, a son of God by the Holy Spirit; is fulfilled and

¹ Athanasius: *Ep. ad Afros* 6.

² Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 48–49.

³ *Ad Monach* PG 77:12,13.

⁴ *In Joan. evang.* 4 11: PG 74:216.

⁵ *Adv. Nest.* 4:2.

⁶ *De recta Fide ad regin; apol. contr. Orient* PG 76:1212 For; 316.

renewed, to bear the icon of the Lord Christ, and become qualified to gain the fellowship of eternal glory.

- ❖ The papyrus and the reeds refer to the life of the hypocrite, who, though he has the appearance of being green, of practical benefit to man.

Hypocrites are separated from the Grantor of blessings, because of the tendencies of the thoughts of their hearts. Although they have got His gifts, yet they seek their own glory, and not the glory of the Giver. And while glorifying and commending themselves for blessings that are given to them, they are opposing the Giver of goods by these same gifts.

The hypocrite who strongly criticizes the life of the person who reproves him; longing to prove him wrong; to justify himself; not by his own works, but by showing the faults of the others; is referred to by Solomon, saying: “*Do not reprove a scoffer ; lest he hate you*” (Proverb 9: 8).

Here we need to know that the exaltation of the good, starts with the heart, and grows up to the end of the present life. Whereas the practices of the hypocrites, having no roots, almost always end up to naught before the end of the present life. Even if they dedicate their life to the study of holy things, they do that, not for the sake of setting up a store of virtues, but to get compliments and commendations from others, rejoicing in temporal success. They completely lack the holy culture; They are fond of temporal things, whereas the eternal things, are only on their lips, and not deep in their hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ For this goal, the Savior, who needs no baptism, was baptized, to sanctify the water, for those who will be born anew¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Baptism is called “The cleansing of renewal”; being accompanied by the renewal of the Spirit, who hovers above the water of baptism.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit creates for Himself a new people, and renews the face of the earth, when through Him, people “*put off themselves the old man with his deeds*” (Colossians 3; 9), and “*walk in the newness of life*” (Romans 6; 4).
- ❖ Everyone, counted worthy of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by knowing His unutterable secrets, will certainly get comfort and rejoice of the heart. For getting, by the guidance of the Spirit, to recognize all what the things that occur, how, and why they occur, his soul would never be disturbed or get to regret.
- ❖ Human nature is weak. And in order to be strong, it needs the help of the Holy Spirit.

Namely, he, who seeks the true strength, will surely be strong by the Spirit.

People could be stronger in body, and according to the body, But the “*soldiers of Christ*” (2 Timothy 2: 3), will be strong by the Spirit; and consequently brave in confronting “*the carnal mind that cares for things pertaining to the flesh*” (Romans 8:7). The Spirit of man wrestling against his body, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, will surely overcome.

The scholar Origen

¹ *Les Eclgae*, 7.

- ❖ The Lord was baptized, not to be purified, but to purify the water; which is, once cleansed by His body that knew no sin, it may be used in baptism¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Christ was baptized; namely, He purified the water by His baptism².

St. Tertullian

“While it is yet green and not cut down, it withers before any other plant” (Job 8: 12).

The papyrus that looks beautiful with its green leaves, would soon wither and get dry in no time, *“before it is cut down”* (Psalm 129: 6).

“So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish” (Job 8: 13).

The secret of hypocrisy is forgetting God who searches the heart, and knows the hidden secrets of the mind.

- ❖ **The hope of the hypocrite cannot abide**; because, not making eternity his goal, he loses everything he holds in his hand. Because the tendency of his mind is not concentrated on the glory that would never come to an end; while panting and chasing vain commendation, he would lose what he labored hard to get. This is testified by the Truth, who says: *“Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward”* (Matthew 6: 2).

- ❖ No one who gets connected to mortal things, could remain himself immortal; so would be the hypocrite, **whose hope shall perish.**

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Submitting again to temptation, ‘Job’ praised and blessed God, and never forgot Him. That is why the end of the righteous could not be compared to a plant that withers under heat (12); He is rather like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season (Psalm 1: 3). And keeping the fruits of virtues, he will be the cause for many plants in the world to flourish.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ If it would be a source of joy and glory for men to have children who follow their lead; How much more would be God’s pleasure when a spiritual man confirms and proclaim by his works and praises, the divine exaltation in his life³?

St. Cyprian

“Whose confidence shall be cut off, and whose trust is a spider’s web” (Job 8: 14).

Not leaning on God, anything that a hypocrite may hope for, or that he may even get, become like the fragile web built by a spider.

- ❖ *“His foolishness would never fulfill him”*. (According to a text in the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**).

It is an obvious foolishness for man to labor hard, and elaborately practice the heavenly commandments; Then run exhaustively after a moment of commendation; seeking an earthly reward!

¹ *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucan, 2:38.*

² *Adv. Judaeos, 8.*

³ *Treatise 10:15.*

“Whose trust is a spider’s web”... The words of the hypocrites may last up to the end of their life; Yet, because they do not seek the commendation of their Creator, their works would never be counted good in His sight.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **‘As the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, his house shall be without a tenant and his tent like a spider’s web’** (LXX). Why should you, O Bildad, say such thing to ‘Job’? Do you actually know the end of that wrestler?! Is it your point of view concerning the tenant of his house, and the material out of which his tent is built?!

Because you may think that Job’s tent is built out of this earth, you assume that it will perish like a spider’s web. But his dwelling place is actually in heaven, according to the words of Paul: *“We know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heaven. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling”* (2 Corinthians 5: 1,2).

That is why ‘Job’ also groans, and yet you, Bildad, consider his groaning and lamentations as cowardice and blasphemy; While he is **‘supporting his tent’**, not with seen objects, but with ones that cannot be seen!

And that is why the Holy Book utters the magnificent words: *“Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars”* (Proverb 9: 1).

‘Job’ took all what came upon him with perseverance; never denying his trust in his relationship with God; On the contrary he encountered the vain attacks of his enemy with courage and a resilient countenance.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Hypocrisy is hated by both God and man; it brings forth no reward or benefit, for the salvation of the soul; But would rather be the cause of its perdition.

If hypocrisy is not sometimes exposed; yet that would only be temporary, and would soon bring forth woe on man; just like when an ugly woman takes off her outer make-up, to reveal her real countenance.

❖ Hypocrisy is alien to the attributes of saints; Nothing of what we may do or say, would ever be hidden from the sight of God; and everything will be proclaimed on the day of judgment. Being actually much trouble, with no benefit whatsoever, It is befitting for us as true subjects of God, to be justified, to minister to Him with open and straightforward countenance¹.

St. Cyril the Great

❖ Hypocrisy is alien to the attributes of saints; Nothing of what we may do or say, would ever be hidden from the sight of God; and everything will be proclaimed on the day of judgment. Being actually much trouble, with no benefit whatsoever, It is befitting for us as true subjects of God, to be justified, to minister to Him with open and straightforward countenance².

St. Cyril the Great

“He leans on his house, but it does not stand. He holds it fast, but it does not endure” (Job 8: 15).

The hypocrite, boasts and leans on his works; Like a spider that thinks itself secure in its fragile web, by which it catches its prey; not aware of how it could be

¹ In Luc Ser 86.

² In Acts, hom., 5.

easily swept away. So is a hypocrite, who leans on his superficial appearances of piety; to eventually lose everything.

❖ ***“He leans on his house, but it does not stand; He holds it fast, but it does not endure” (15).*** The outer building of our outer life; namely, our body; and that of our thoughts; namely, our mind... As anything we love could be to us, as though a dwelling place to give us comfort; That is why, concentrating his heart on the exalted things, Paul, while still on earth, feels as though he is an alien on it; and says: *“Our citizenship is in heaven”* (Philippians 3: 20). A hypocrite, on the other hand, in everything he does, he thinks of nothing but his reputation and fame.

A void soul, with nothing inside it, despite all its labor, seeks a testimony from outside! But in vain, a hypocrite would lean on that house of commendation; as on the day of judgment, no human testimony will abide; and the commendation he has got, would be his only wage.

Pope Gregory the Great

A Christian walking on earth with a spirit of responsibility and commitment in everything he is entrusted to do, bear a heavenly touch in his thoughts, as well as in his feelings and emotions, demonstrated in his words and behavior. Our life is a divine school, in which we, in all the aspects of our life, are taught and practice for the heavenly life to come.

❖ I wish you would always *“seek those things which are above”* (Colossians 3: 1); As that would set us free of the earth, **and bring us forth to heaven**¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ We would be worth of being there in the presence of God in heaven; We, who learned the lesson while being on earth, then went up to heaven to enjoy the love of God the Father, whom we got to know on earth; And because God the Holy Word has done everything, taught us, and is teaching us everything, and training us on every good thing².

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ When the will of God is realized through us on earth, as well as in those who are in heaven, **we would be like the heavenlies, bearing like them the image of the heavenly man** (1 Corinthians 15: 49); and would inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25: 34). Then, when we go up to heaven (paradise)³, those who will come after us, while they are on earth, will pray to be like us.

The scholar Origen

“The wicked thrive before the sun, and their shoots spread over the garden” (Job 8: 16).

The incarnate Word of God *“the Sun of righteousness”* came to shine over those sitting in the darkness, to enjoy the light of righteousness, to become the children of light, and the children of the day. Whereas those who persist on not believing in Him, would dry up by this same Sun, and would become worthy of the eternal fire. That is the work of the Lord Christ, who came to raise mankind from the death of sin, and to bring them forth to the bosom of God the Father; who came to bring us forth from the darkness of the grave to the light of heaven.

¹ *Baptismal Instructions, 7:14.*

² *Paedagogus 3:12.*

³ *On Prayer 26:1.*

- ❖ *‘Before the sun rises, the papyrus looks green’*. The Lord, in the Holy Book, is often called *‘The Sun’*; As is said by the prophet: *“But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall rise”* (Malachi 4: 2); While the wicked who are driven out on the day of judgment, say in the book of wisdom: *“We who strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us”* (Wisdom 5: 6).

Pope Gregory the Great

“His roots wrap around the stoneheap, and live among the rocks” (Job 8: 17).

By the Lord Christ, the Cornerstone, we would be set up as living stones built in the house of God, in the heavenly temple; whereas in that Cornerstone, the wicked would trample, to fall and perish.

While **father Hesychius of Jerusalem** uses the Septuagint version; **Pope Gregory the Great** uses that of the **Volgata**.

- ❖ *‘He falls on a heap of stones, and lives among rocks’*... In the Holy Book, men are often referred to as ‘stones’; As is said by Isaiah to the holy church: *“I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones”* (Isaiah 54: 12). and as Peter expressed by saying: *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house”* (1 Peter 2: 5).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *‘He lies on a heap of stones, and lives among pebbles’*. Referring to those about whom Isaiah said: *“Prepare the way for the people... take out the stones”* (Isaiah 62: 10); And: *“Prepare the way, take the stumbling block out of the way of my people”* (Isaiah 57: 14; Maccabees 5: 4; Psalm 140: 6). The enemy would bleed to death, and would be seriously wounded, when we clear our ways of the stumbling snares and stones.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“If he is destroyed from his place, then it will deny him, saying, ‘I have not seen him’” (Job 8: 18).

Here, he presents another analogy for the hypocrite; That he is like a flourishing green tree, that keeps its freshness despite the heat of the sun; its roots hold fast in the rocky soil, and not disturbed by the wind. Yet, if that tree is struck by the ax, it would be completely cut off; leaving no sign that it ever existed in the place it was planted.

The hypocrite is like that tree, at which everyone desires to look; but once hypocrisy, like an ax, strikes its roots, it would lose its vitality, fruits, and beauty. It would become like the foolish virgins who, having all the appearances of the wise virgins, accept that they had no oil in their lamps; They remained in darkness, not able to enter into the secret place of the heavenly Groom, where there is no place for the darkness.

- ❖ *“His place would deny him”* The hypocrite would be destroyed from his place by death; after being denied by God – the Truth –who justly judges his life of pretence; does not recognize even the good deed he might have done, that he did not practice with a sound goal in thought. On the day of judgment, he will hear, together with the foolish virgins, the voice of God saying: *“Assuredly, I say to you, ‘I do not know you’”* (Matthew 25: 12). As God sees the corruption of his thoughts, He will condemn even the non-corruption in the body.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ *“If he is (swallowed), he would be denied by his place”*. By being swallowed, is meant what Isaiah said: *“He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces”* (Isaiah 25: 8). *“He would be denied by his place”*, What place is that? It may be death, which is the place for a traitor.

“He will wipe away tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25: 8). By the cross, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Christ, Adam was made glorious; whereas the curse was swallowed up by Him, to whom everything existing belongs.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Behold, this is the joy of His way, and out of the earth others will grow”
(Job 8: 19).

That is the destiny of the wicked hypocrite; If he thinks that his hope would turn into joy, he will be uprooted like a tree, and replaced by another in the same place.

5- A CALL TO BLAMELESSNESS:

After presenting an awful portrait of the hypocrite – meaning ‘Job’ – ‘Bildad’ presents another joyful portrait of a blameless man; asking ‘Job’ to forsake his hypocrisy to walk along the way to blamelessness. Describing how a blameless man enjoys God’s pleasure with his person, his sacrifices, and his offerings; how God would fill his mouth and lips with joyful shouts; and how he would enjoy the conquest over his enemies, whom the Lord would cause to grieve; He probably had in mind, himself, together with his two friends: Eliphaz and Zophar. As though, he calls on ‘Job’ to forsake his hidden evil, and follow the role model of his three friends, considered by him as blameless. Bildad believes that Job’s tent exists no more; whereas they still have theirs, held strong by God. Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that what Bildad mentions concerning those blameless in the Lord, actually applies to ‘Job’. While accusing him of being evil, and calling on him to try to become blameless, he is actually, commending him.

“Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, Nor will He uphold the evildoers” (Job 8: 20).

At the end of his talk, Bildad putting his theological thought in a nutshell; says that God will not cast away the blameless, but will respond to him, even if He seems to do otherwise. He will turn his mourning into joy and dancing; and will fill his inner mouth with spiritual laughs. Then, those who have previously rebuked him, when they see him get back to his past prosperity and joy, and crowned with glory, will be put to shame and clothed in disgrace.

On the other hand, God will not uphold the evildoers, but will destroy their tents. Here, he is probably hinting to the fact that ‘Job’, being evil, when he cried out to God, He did not listen to him, and utterly destroyed his tent and his household.

That was Bildad’s verdict on ‘Job’, whom he advises to forsake his evil, and to repent; and whom he accuses of hypocrisy; when he has no knowledge of what is in his heart and mind; nor of the conversation that took place between God and Satan in heaven.

❖ Anyway, ‘Job’ was neither a wicked man, nor an evil soldier of God. On the contrary, one can apply on him all what Bildad added, unaware that his accusations have actually turned to his defense.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ When the Lord appears on the day of judgment, He will certainly uphold and glorify the pure in heart; and will bring down to naught the boasting and haughtiness of those with evil thoughts, and will judge them.... He will not grant the exalted joys, to those who seek the earthly glory; even if they have done good things, whatever they are.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing”
(Job 8: 21).

Bildad calls on ‘Job’ to forsake evil, and to walk along the way of blamelessness, to enjoy the spiritual laughing, and the rejoicing in the Lord, which are only enjoyed by the true believer, who carries within him the Lord Jesus, who brings joy to the hearts.

Christianity is a call to enjoy the joy of heaven. Our Christ came down incarnate to bring us over to His heavens, as a bride rejoicing in her Groom. That is why the apostle Paul, while in prison, calls us, saying: *“Rejoice always; I say to you brethren, Rejoice”*.

St. Anthony believes that joy is the food of the soul, without which it would starve and die. The heavenly inner joy supports the soul during her sojourn on earth, away from her heavenly home; and prepares the body to bear an almost spiritual feature, to become a spiritual body in the great day of the Lord.

- ❖ Like a tree without water, cannot grow, the soul with no heavenly joy, cannot grow nor ascend up high; Whereas, to the souls that received the Spirit and the heavenly joy, while still in the body, the secrets of the kingdom of heaven are revealed, and will find favor with God, who grants her everything she seeks.
- ❖ The soul always thrives by this joy; with it, it becomes happy; and by it, it ascends to heaven. Like the body, it has its spiritual food.

St. Anthony the Great

- ❖ Whoever looks deep within himself to behold the Lord, and his soul is saturated by His light, his heart will be filled with joy.

The spiritual elder

- ❖ It is not befitting for man to laugh all the time, and be like a laughing animal... *“A fool raises his voice when he laughs”* (Sirach 21: 23); whereas the prudent discreetly smiles.

On the other hand, it is befitting for man not to look grumpy, but just serious. I would rather prefer for someone with natural hard features, to smile¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ The true joy is that of the other life, where the soul is not tortured, or torn apart by lust².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Saying: *“the kingdom of God is within you”*, refers to the joy planted by the Holy Spirit in your hearts, being an icon, and an advance payment of the eternal joy, enjoyed by the souls of the saints³.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa

¹ *Paedagogus 2:5.*

² *In 1 Tim. hom 2.* (ترجمة سعاد سوريل المحامية)

³ *De Prop. Sec. Deum.*

- ❖ **The mouths of the faithful are filled with laughs, and their lips with rejoicing.** Now, O Bildad, Beware, and weigh your words... ‘Job’s mouth, being a faithful man, is going to be truly “filled” with laughs and rejoicing, in the coming age, where grace awaits him. There, he will also enjoy having his lips filled with the work of grace; namely, filled with thanks to God.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ **“He will yet fill your mouth with laughing” (21).** That is why, one of the fathers Patriarchs, was probably called ‘Isaac’, meaning (laughter), as the name indicates the divine rejoicing¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ **“He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing” (21).** The mouths of the righteous will be filled with laughing, and their hearts will be filled with eternal joy, when the tears of their journey are consummated. The Lord says to His disciples: *“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice, and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy”* (John 16: 20). And again: *“You will have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you”* (John 16: 22). Concerning this rejoicing for the holy church, Solomon says: *“she shall rejoice in time to come”* (Proverb 31: 25). It is also said that it will be well with him, who fears God, until the end, when there will be no laughing of the body, but that of the heart.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the dwelling place of the wicked will come to nothing” (Job 8: 22).

- ❖ **“Those who hate you will be clothed with shame”;** both the seen and the unseen... Isabel was clothed with shame when she saw Elijah, whom she violently persecuted, taking his place among the saints (1 Kings 19: 2). So did the opponents of ‘Job’, when they saw him rejoicing among the angels.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Seeing their past evil doings parading before the eyes of their minds, they will be clothed with shame; they will go down under the heavy burden of the memory of their wickedness, while they are punished.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ *Fragments, 110 on Luke 6: 21.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 8

LET ME ACQUIRE YOU, O WISDOM OF GOD

- ❖ Your love made you descend to us, O Wisdom of God.
You are my light, my treasure, the secret of my joy, and of my peace.
You approached me, and longed to dwell within me
Enter and dwell in me, that I acquire you forever.
- ❖ Without You, Who would control my tongue?
I can control even the wild beasts;
But , Who can control my tongue , but You?
With Your riches, You satisfy my depths, that I feel no void.
By You, I am satisfied; that I would never hunger for vain talk.
Fill me with the advance payment of Your glory; that I would judge no one.
When I acquire You, I Acquire the divine love.
I would rather keep silent, to talk to You, than to talk to any human.
- ❖ Let me acquire You, O Crucified.
Let me behave like a member in the Church, Your suffering bride.
Let me find my pleasure, riches, and joy, in being crucified together with You.
No false philosophies will ever seduce me.
Nor the devil will ever make me deny the Church – Your bride.
I would never seek a temporal comfort, or a temporary happiness, at the expense of the eternal glory.
Your suffering Church will keep bearing the spirit of victory.
As long as You are in its midst, She would never be shaken.
- ❖ Let me acquire You, to introduce You to every wounded sinner.
To introduce You with the language of love and compassion, and not with that of bitter criticism.
The way You covered over me, Let me cover over my brethren.
The way You brought me up from hell to paradise, Grant me to embrace with love, those fallen together with me.
How amazing is Your salvation; and Your wisdom!
Make me by You, amazingly wise in my love for my brethren.
- ❖ Teach me, O divine Wisdom, how to pray to You.
Flare my heart with your love, to seek, together with all mankind, nothing but to acquire you.
What should I wish, more than to have You dwell in me, and to unite with You?
What would be a greater reward for me, than to enjoy You.
Grant me your wisdom, to acquire You, and to acquire everything by having you dwell in me.
- ❖ When will You come, O divine Wisdom?
For me to enjoy a glorious end; To enjoy the fellowship of heavenly glories.
When Will You carry me over, to settle down forever in Your Father's bosom?
To turn my labors into heavenly comfort; my sufferings into perpetual sweetness;
And my daily mortality into the joy of resurrection?
- ❖ Grant me, O Lord, to shine with Your Light on me.
To get to know Your exalted secrets.

To experience them by the riches of Your grace.
 To taste them in my life, beside through the experience of my fathers.
 Let Your wisdom work in me, as it did in my fathers.
 Let me not abide just to the words, and not to the life, of my fathers.
 Grant me a holy heart, to be worthy of receiving the holy talent.
 And to deliver it, not in letters and formalities.
 But with the spirit of truth and holiness.

❖ Quench my thirst by the water of Your Holy Spirit.
 To become like an olive tree planted in your house.
 Toward which no enemy can approach.
 Nor temptations can make it lose its vitality and growth.
 Fulfill me with Your perpetual memory; that Your name would never leave my lips.
 Nor Your image be uprooted from my heart.
 When I perpetually remember You, I would be filled with hope.
 When I hide in You, I would find security and peace.
 Instead of the spider-web -house that I made for myself.
 Let me settle down in your bosom, O the stronghold of my life.

❖ By You, O Wisdom of God, all hypocrisy in me would be taken away.
 I would not be like the papyrus that grows in muddy waters.
 But like a tree planted on the river banks of Your Holy Spirit.
 I would not be like a spider protected by a fragile house.
 But dwell in You, O the source of every security.
 I would not be like weeds burnt by the heat of the sun.
 But enjoy Your light shining on my depths.
 I would not stumble by the stones on the way.
 But would become a living stone in the heavenly temple.
 I would not be like a tree full of leaves, whose root is struck by an ax.
 But become an olive tree planted in Your holy house.

❖ By you, my soul would rejoice.
 By You, I enjoy the advance payment of the joy of heaven.
 By You, I become the wise holy bride.

CHAPTER 9

A NEED FOR A MEDIATOR ARBITRATOR

In chapters 9 and 10, 'Job' responds to Bildad.

These debates are not presented without reason. **As each of his friends had his own touch of the problem; 'Job', the one with the problem, was seriously seeking a solution for it.** He talks about God with reverence; about himself with humility, and about his troubles with agitation; yet, he did not utter a single word to rebuke his friends, or to accuse them of being too cruel against him. He, as well, did not respond directly to Bildad.

'Job' goes along with Bildad, as far as the broad lines of God's ordinances are concerned; Yet, how would it be possible for us to confront God face to face, to discuss His exalted works? He perpetually overwhelms us with His wisdom and might (3 – 4). But, amid his sufferings, 'Job' only sees God as too hard on him. He indeed controls nature and cares for it; but this gives him no clue to interpret the reasons behind the problems that dwelt upon him.

For now, 'Job' starts by **consenting with his friends' views, that no man can be righteous before God**, and with Bildad's, saying, that God does not pervert justice (8: 3).

Then he talks about **God's wisdom and might**, drawing proofs from the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature works with an irresistible might; does what pleases Him; and all the systems and powers of nature are derived from Him, and depend on Him. He moves mountains; shakes the earth from its place, makes its pillars tremble, and controls the sun and the stars.

He confirms his **own righteousness** by saying: *"Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself, I despise my own life"* (9: 21); namely, that he holds fast to his righteousness, even at the expense of his own life. He blames Bildad for saying that God discerns in His dealing with people, between the blameless and the evildoers (8: 20); Then he goes on to meditate in his own case (25 – 31); He could not forget his suffering, nor resort to hope; as he feels that God is still dealing with him as an unclean man.

'Job' believes that God, as though in great anger, has thrown him away; And that his only hope lies in confronting him face to face to seek justice. But could he reach Him?!... Even in trial, as God is dealing with him as though He is an unjust Judge! **He feels the need for an arbitrator between the unseen God and him...** He longs to find such an arbitrator to introduce him to the Almighty God;... Or else, to see God forsakes, the rod of His authority, and becomes human, just for once!

As it was impossible for 'Job' to forget his sufferings (25 – 28); nor that God persist on considering him as unclean and guilty, he tries to wash himself with snow, and his hands with hyssop.

He presents to us a true evangelic concept of the purification from sins.

He seeks from God to look at his humiliation with the eye of compassion, and to grant him a little bit of comfort. Then he contemplates in the **possibility of reconciliation** (32 – 39); although he finds it difficult, as he is dealing, not with a man like him, but with God. And, feeling that any attempt to prove his innocence is futile, he longs for a wise arbitrator to **intervene between God and him to reconcile them.**

Complaining against God, ‘Job’ speaks about Him in the absent tense! How could he debate with Him, when He does not hear nor debate? When he equally sentences both the righteous and the evildoer; when He brings forth calamities and kills the innocent, and does not care for their anguish (22–23)?! He is greatly confused between feeling God’s injustice against him, and remembering his blessed fellowship with Him in the past! It is obvious that Job’s **feelings embrace two contradictory issues**: He believes that he is on the right side, though he does not know how to prove it. So far, no concrete charge has been set against him; and he has great doubt, that in case he confronts God, he could manage to defend himself successfully.

1- No mortal could be righteous before God.	1 – 2
2- A proof of that	3 – 13
3- He could not dispute with God	14 – 21
4- We should not base our judgment on appearances	22 – 24
5- The horror of his troubles and his confusion	25 - 31
6- The need for an arbitrator	32 - 35

1- NO MORTAL COULD BE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD:

“Then Job replied: ‘Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?’” (Job 9: 1, 2).

‘Job’ does not only refrain from defending himself against Bildad’s accusation that he talks too much (Job 8: 2); He even agrees with his statement that *“God does not pervert justice, nor perverts what is right”* (Job 9: 3); that the righteous are under His care, and the wicked would perish by their evil.

Yet he wonders, saying: *“How can a mortal be righteous before God?”* (2). This does not imply any spirit of protest against the God’s firmness; But is rather an admission of the fact, that if God deals with us according to what we deserve, all mankind would perish; as no one is righteous in His eyes; not even a single one.

In comparison with those around him, ‘Job’ finds himself righteous; But with the Righteous Holy God, he finds himself unclean, and can never be righteous before Him. Not even His saintly angels could be; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before You”* (Psalm 143: 2)

No one can be righteous before God, except His eternal Word, who, alone, became Man with no sin. Whoever hides in Him, would bear His righteousness, and would be justified before the Lord.

The apostle says: *“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1: 30); *“and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”* (Ephesians 4: 24).

Look now, how ‘Job’ confesses his sins (9: 2-3; 19-20, 30; 13: 26; 14: 5; 14: 16, 17). Besides being sure that there is no one righteous before the Lord, he is also positive that, if we say that we are without sin, there would be no truth in us. Although God provides an exalted testimony about Job’s righteousness, according to the level of human behavior, Yet ‘Job’, knowing the truth about himself, proclaims, *“How can a mortal be*

righteous before God; Though one wished to dispute with Him, he would not answer Him” (2-3)¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ We see him, through his words, expressing himself wonderfully; as being pious and virtuous; Yet, he presents his behavior as an offering to God, and his words to the account of God’s glory. When he talks about himself, when his wife or his friends offend him, or when Satan tries to make him blaspheme against God, the righteous ‘Job’ keeps on glorifying god, quoting the psalm: *“I will extol the Lord at all times”* (Psalm 34: 1).

He turns the words of his friends who viciously insult that righteous wrestler, into a blessing for God’s sake. If you ask how would this be; When Bildad, with an evil intention start his attack against him with the phrase *“Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?”* (8: 3), ‘Job’ amazingly responds to his hidden accusation that he is not righteous, by answering: *“Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God”* (9: 2).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ *“ Then Job replied: ‘Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? Though one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, His power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it, and overturns them in His anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; He seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs² wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be numbered. When He passes me, I cannot see Him; when He goes by, I cannot perceive Him”* (Job 9: 2 – 11)..

How strong was his horn, shouting and proclaiming the might of the Lord; by which the righteous gets help and not perdition. In that indescribable might of the lord the secrets of our redemption are proclaimed³.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ It is the treasure given to them to possess in their souls in this life, *“who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1: 30).. Whoever finds and possesses the treasure of heavenly Spirit, would consummate by it all the righteousness of the commandment, and all virtues, with purity and blamelessly, but easily and with no anger.

That is why I beseech God with a sense of need, to grant us the treasure of His spirit; to be able to walk according to all His commandments, and to consummate all the righteousness of the Spirit with purity and blamelessness, through the heavenly treasure; namely, the Lord Christ⁴.

¹ *On Forgiveness of sins and Baptism, 14.*

² مجموعات نجمية (الوب).

³ *De interpellatione Job et David, Book 1:4:11.* ترجمة جرجس كامل

⁴ *Sermon 18:1,2.*

St. Maccari the Great

- ❖ Submitting to God, man receives righteousness; whereas standing against Him, he would lose it. Whoever compares himself to the Source of all goods would deprive himself of the goods he has got. And whoever refers to himself the blessing granted to him by God, would be fighting God by His own gifts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The Righteousness of God is Christ; according to the words of the apostle: “who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord’” (1 Corinthians 1: 30).

The righteousness of God; namely, the gift of grace without worthiness, would not be not known to those who intend to set their own righteousness; and would not submit to the righteousness of God; namely to Christ.

In this righteousness we will find the riches of the sweetness of God, about which the Psalm says: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34: 8)¹.

St. Augustine

2- THE PROOF OF THAT:

“Though one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand” (Job 9: 3).

No one can match his Creator in debate or dispute; No one can answer a single question out of every thousand that God may ask him. When God talked to ‘Job’, and asked him several questions, he could answer none of them (Job 38 and 39). Man’s wisdom stands helplessly mute before the exalted wisdom of God.

God addresses a thousand of charges against man, for which man finds no answer to justify his doings. For, as God does not err in His judgment; and knows our depths more than we know ourselves; We have nothing to do but to put our hand over our mouth, the way ‘Job’ did (Job 40: 4-5).

- ❖ Haven’t I confessed to You, O my Lord, my transgressions, and you took away the iniquity of my heart? I shall never deceive myself and dispute your judgment, as you are the Truth; “If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand” (Psalm 130: 3)².

- ❖ God alone is the Righteous, who justifies, and grants man righteousness³.

They intended to prove their own righteousness; namely, they assumed that goodness is their own, and not a divine gift; And by that *“they did not submit to God’s righteousness”* (Romans 10: 3); because they arrogantly count themselves as able to please God by themselves, and not by what is God’s⁴.

St. Augustine

- ❖ In the Holy Book, the figure 1000 usually refers to the ‘total sum’ According to the Psalmist: *“...the word He commanded, for a thousand generations”* (Psalm 105: 8);

¹ City of God 21:24.

² Confessions, N& PN Frs, vol. 1, p 47.

³ Confession, 1:5 (5).

⁴ City of God 17: 4.

And to St. John, in his revelations: "... will reign with him for a thousand years" (Revelations 20: 6); Because the reign of the holy church would be consummated with a perfect total.

Now, whoever disputes with God, would not be referred to Him, but would refer to himself the glory of his goodness. I wish the saintly man considers what he actually gets, even the most important of it, is a gift from Him..., and let him say: "*Though one wish to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand*"; As he, who sets himself in the situation of being perfect, proves that he lacks, even the basics of the good life itself.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ "*If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins,... Who could stand?*" (Psalm 130: 3); namely, one should say:

[Because I am a sinner, full of sins; I cannot approach God to pray and call]... As it is not possible for anyone to give an accurate account of his life, let him seek God's mercy and compassion. We say this, not to draw souls to slothfulness, but to present comfort to those fallen in despair. "*Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin'*" (Proverb 20: 9); Let him remember that no one can ever be sure that he is free of sins¹.

St. John Chrysostom

"His wisdom is profound, His power is vast. Who has resisted Him and come out unscathed?" (Job 9: 4).

If one daringly and arrogantly persist on rebelling against God, he will definitely reap the fruit of his foolishness. All those who have challenged Him and not repented, have not come out unscathed, nor found peace in their depths, comfort on their ways, or success in their works. Every opposition against God, is like briars and thorns that challenge fire, ultimately to burn and perish (Isaiah 27: 4; Hezekiel 28: 24).

The angels who challenged God were not spared (2 Peter 2: 4); Fighting against God, the dragon was hurled to the earth (Revelation 12: 7-9); So are the rebellious sinners who, "*because of their stubbornness and their unrepentant heart, are storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God's wrath*" (Romans 4: 5).

It is utter foolishness for man to stand against God, or struggle against the One with all wisdom and might, who knows all, and is capable of everything.

Whoever wishes for the true peace for himself, would never dispute with God, but would receive the Lord Christ who is our peace, who grants us reconciliation with God His Father, with our souls, with our brethren, and even with nature itself.

❖ "***His wisdom is profound, His power is vast***" (4). There is no wonder to call the Creator of the wise as 'Wise',

He, whom we know to be wisdom itself,! And no wonder, to describe Him as '**Mighty**', being might itself? But the saint, praising the Creator by these two words, conveys to us their sense, and calls on us to become apprehensive through recognizing ourselves!. God is called 'Wise', having complete knowledge of the secrets of our hearts; and is called "**Mighty**", having such vast power to strike hard. Being '**Wise**', He would never be deceived by us; and being '**Mighty**', we cannot escape from Him.

¹ On Ps. 130.

“Who has resisted Him and come out unscathed?” (4) The Creator of everything with such amazing way, He, Himself controls them to work together in harmony. That is why, any opposition against God, would break this harmony, and would disturb their peace, having lost the power from above.. If these things submit to God, they would work in peace, and if left to themselves, they would work in chaos... Adam, the first father of mankind, having disobeyed the commandment of his Creator, has subjected himself to the arrogance of flesh, and has consequently lost his peace.

Now, it may be said, that we challenge God when we oppose His authority; although what our weakness does, have no power to consummate; and yet persists on opposition as far as it could.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Whoever seeks peace, seeks Christ, being Himself Peace¹.

St. Basil the Great

❖ “Christ Himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2: 14). The apostle also calls Him an ‘Arbitrator’; as He, by His own will, chooses to arbitrate between two divided parties.

Souls that are born from the fountain of God’s goodness have been separated from Him by a middle wall, built by the deceptions and lusts of the flesh. Then came the Lord Christ, by His cross, passions, and way of life, to break down that wall. He defeated the sin, and taught us that it should be destroyed.

He removed that wall from the middle. He conquered the animosity in His body. It is not our own work; as it is not our call to liberate ourselves. Faith in Christ is our salvation².

Father Marius Victorinus

“He moves mountains without their knowing it, and overturns them in His anger” (Job 9: 5).

We often look at the mountains in nature as well established, and that nothing in the whole world could ever move them from their place; to be rightly called “*The ancient mountains*” (Habakkuk 3: 6); And look the same way at the sun and the stars with their steady laws; But yet, by a word of the Lord, heaven and earth would disappear, and the mountains would move. Our God “*moves mountains without their knowing it*”; namely, whether they wish or not. He is the God of the impossible; before whom Mount Sinai trembled; the mountains skipped like rams (Psalm 114: 4); and the ancient mountains crumbled (Habakkuk 3: 6).

“For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters; Before Your glance the rocks shall melt like wax” (Judith 16: 18)

“The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because He was angry” (Psalm 18: 7).

“The mountains melt like wax before the Lord; before the Lord of all the earth” (Psalm 97: 5).

“He touches the mountains, and they smoke” (Psalm 104: 32).

“The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs” (Psalm 114: 4).

¹ Hom on Ps.,33.

² Marius Victorinus: Epistle to the Ephesians 1:2:14-15.

“Part Your heaven, O Lord, and come down, touch the mountains, so they smoke” (Psalm 144: 5).

❖ What are the mountains that the Lord turned old? They are Moses, Aaron, Joshua the son of Nun, Gideon, the prophets, and all the men of the Old Testament.... Then the Lord Jesus came, and brought with Him the New Testament; And what He has done before, turned old.... The Christian was renewed, and the Jew turned old.... The grace was renewed, and the letter turned old.... **The mountains moved**; Yes,... He moved and destroyed the concept according to the letter, and set the one according to the Spirit.... The concept of the law according to the flesh has passed away, and it turned spiritual. That is why the apostle Paul says: *“We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal”* (Romans 7: 14). But he, himself who has been carnal, has turned spiritual, as he confirms: *“I think that I too have the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 7: 40).... Jesus made those mountains grow old, and the Jews did not know it; Because if they did, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and would not have followed the Jewish fantasies¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ We say that the Jews, despite their past enjoyment of God’s affection; having been beloved by Him more than anyone else, Yet, by the divine ordainment and grace, His affection became ours, when Jesus transferred the authority working among the Jews to the believers of the Gentiles².
- ❖ When Jesus said to the Jews: *“The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit”* (Matthew 21: 43), He moved the whole Jewish book – that used to include the secrets of the kingdom of God – to the circle of light³.
- ❖ We, who were moved from the law and prophets to the gospel, have been re-circumcised (Joshua 5: 7) by the (Rock) which is Christ (1 Corinthians 10: 40); and in us, the word of the Lord to Joshua was realized: *“Today, I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you”* (Joshua 5: 9)⁴.

The scholar Origen

❖ He says that the mountains do not know this; and as said by David: *“He touches the mountains and they smoke”* (Psalm 104: 32). In this phrase, talking about God’s might, saying that He is capable of doing everything in His anger, ‘Job’ testifies to His justice, as well as to His might.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ *“He (uses) the mountains without their knowing it, and overturns them in His anger”*. He truly (*uses*) the seen mountains, when He intends to change the face of the seen creation. No wonder that these (mountains) do not know that they are being (*used*), as they are not given minds like the living human beings and the angels. That is why ‘Job’ calls the powers of the arrogant devils, mountains; and the prophet Jeremiah

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 5:12.*

² *Contra Cels. 5:50.*

³ *Contra Celsus 4:42.*

⁴ *In Jos. hom 5:5.*

calls the devil “*The destroying mountain who destroys all the earth*” (Jeremiah 51: 25). Although demons are full of deceit, Yet they cannot reach the thoughts of God, whose intention is to hide His thoughts from them; that they do not even realize the extent of their fall. What the apostle Paul says is an example of this: “*We do however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Corinthians 2: 6-8).

He, who uses these (powers) in the struggles of the secret of the crucifixion, is the One who created them (Colossians 1: 16), destroyed them (Amos 3: 14); and even --in His anger – destroyed their altars, corrupted their idols, and scattered their temples; In His conquest, He took away their glory (Colossians 2: 15); The devils have not only taken the glory by force (Revelation 13: 4-8); that they should not have done; but they also corrupted all the inhabitants of the earth together with them. But the true, just, and utter destruction, will dwell upon them, when this seen world will come to an end. Anyway, if you wonder how that could be done? It would be by Him, who “*Shakes the earth from its place*” (6).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

God, in His love for mankind, sets out of His true believers, steadfast holy mountains, like Mount Sinai, on which the Lord appeared and provided Moses with the law; or like Mount Tabor, where He transfigured in the midst of His church, that embraces men from the Old Testament, represented by Moses and Elijah; and men from the New Testament, represented by Peter, James, and John. On the other side, the wicked people, who oppose the Lord, and do not submit to Him; although they think of themselves as steadfast mountains, their foundations are shaken before the Lord; and He will touch them with His anger, to smoke; They will skip like rams before His face, and will melt like wax before the fire.

- ❖ “*The earth trembled and quaked*” (psalm 18: 7). When the Son of Man was glorified, the sinners trembled and quaked. “*The foundation of the mountains shook*” (Psalm 18: 7). The hope of the proud in this life trembled “*For He was angry*”. The hope in temporal blessings is no better established in the hearts of people¹.
- ❖ “*The mountains (the hills) melt like wax before the Lord*” (Psalm 97: 5). Who are those hills? They are the haughty! Anything that stands high against God, through Christ and the Christians, would tremble and would submit.... Where is the haughtiness of the powers? Where is the cruelty of the non-believers? The Lord to them was like Fire; and they melted in His presence like wax. They were cruel until they faced the fire!

St. Augustine

- ❖ “*The mountains (the hills) melt like wax*” (Psalm 97: 5). As far as I am concerned, the hills seem to be the hosts of demons; they are certainly the haughty people.

¹ On Ps. 18.

The fire does not destroy those down below (the humble); but only the haughty. It is a fact that lightening rarely strikes those in the valley; but would not spare high up on the mountains.

St. Jerome

St. Ambrose presents to us a wonderful concept for *“Moving of the mountains without their knowing it”*. Coming to the world, the Lord Christ moved the holy mountains; when He moved our concepts about the prophet Moses who received the law, and about the prophets and men of the Old Testament. He moved them from the literal Jewish thought, for us to receive them in the Spirit through the gospel. Despite holding fast to the law, the fathers and the prophets, the Jews know nothing about the secret of God and His hidden wisdom; because they still see them through the veil that covered Moses face. All this has been moved to become our portion; for us to realize the eternal plan of God, His exalted wisdom, and His ordainment for our salvation. That was what made the apostle Paul proud, once he encountered the Lord Christ. For him the mountains were moved, and he acquired a knowledge of the divine secret, after which he could not afford to keep silent any more.

“You will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3: 4).

“May God open a door for us, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ” (Colossians. 4: 3)

“... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Colossians 2: 2).

“... and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3: 9).

“He shakes the earth from its place, and makes its pillars tremble” (Job 9: 6).

If the earth seems to us, as being set on pillars that no one can shake; Yet, by the command of their Creator, they do, and nothing would ever support them.

Symbolically, we saw that the mountains move; namely, the haughty that dwell on the summits of the mountains are prone to destruction by the divine lightening.

On another aspect, the law, the fathers, and the prophets, as high holy mountains, moved from the hands of the Jews, with their literal understanding, to the children of the New Testament, to whom the divine wisdom is revealed; and who recognized the hidden secret of Christ.

By the same logic, the earth refers to the wicked who became dust like their father, the first Adam, to whom is said: *“You are dust, and to dust you will return”*. Now, as the Heavenly One descended to our earth, dwelt among us, and became as one of us; we came to enjoy the heavenly life, to hear the divine voice, saying: *“You are heaven, and to heaven you will return”*.

❖ The stranger Centurion knew, whereas the Levi of His own did not. The Gentile prostrated before Him, whereas the Hebrew denied Him. That is why no wonder that the pillars of the world moved (Job 9: 6), when the high priests of the Jews did not believe.

The pillars moved to be replaced by new pillars; As though God Himself found it befitting to say: “*It is I who hold its pillars firm*” (Psalm 75: 3). Do you know what pillars He set and held firm? They are ‘James, Peter, and John’; said by the apostle Paul to be, “*those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*”(Galatians 2: 9)¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ By vessels and buckets, water from the natural resources is measured; whereas water from the spiritual fountains, is measured, and could be approached by our understanding, reverence, and flaring desire. Whoever walks according to this order, would instantly get uncountable blessings; would have God’s grace work in him in an unseen way; bring him over to multiple security, and prepare him later on to withdraw from the coast of the earth, and to carry on the anchor of heaven. It is possible for man, while still embraced in the body, to have nothing concerning the earth, and to put before his eyes, and incessantly meditate in all the pleasures of heaven².
- ❖ I wish you always set your hearts on these things (Colossians 3: 1); as caring for them would liberate us from the earth and move us over to heaven³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ We have the right to be there in the presence of God in heaven, we, who have kept the lesson while being on earth; then went up to heaven to be in the love of God the Father, whom we knew while on earth; And because God, the holy Word has done everything, taught, and still teaches us everything, and training us on all good things⁴.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Abraham forsook his city and relatives by a divine command; Yet his immigration was befitting for him, being a prophet, with the goal of knowing God.

It was not as I see it, a carnal immigration, but it was to prepare him to know those things revealed by the Spirit.

By forsaking his home; namely, by departing from his ‘self’, out of the range of the lowly and earthly thoughts, Abraham lifted his mind up, as much as possible, above the general boundaries of human nature; and forsook the bondage of the soul to the senses.

And once those bonds stopped to hinder him, his mind became pure enough to realize the unseen; And hearing and seeing no more caused his mind to err, because of appearances⁵.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa

- ❖ When the will of God is realized through us, who are on earth, like it is in those who are in heaven, we would become like them, “*bearing the likeness of the man from heaven*” 1 Corinthians 15: 49); and would inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25:

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 5:13.*

² *Baptismal Instructions, 7:11.*

³ *Baptismal Instructions, 7:14.*

⁴ *Paedagogus 3:12.*

⁵ *Against Eunomius, lib. 12. PG 45:940 A – 941 D.*

34). Then those who will come after us, while they are still on earth, would pray to liken us, who are then in heaven (in paradise) ¹.

The scholar Origen

❖ You should long, even before we go to heaven, long for things that are in heaven; being commanded, **while still on earth, to turn earth into heaven**, and to behave and talk things, as though we are there, this should also be the goal of our prayers that we present to the Lord. Nothing on earth should hinder our reaching the perfection of higher powers, but, even while still on earth; it is possible **for us to do everything as though we are dwelling up there in heaven**².

❖ Indeed, the Lord has come to cancel the old things, and to call us on to a greater home.

He does everything to save us from unnecessary things, and from our feelings toward the earth. That is why He referred to the pagans, saying: “*For after all these things the Gentiles seek*” (Matthew 6: 32); those who dedicate their whole labor for the sake of the present life, not caring for the coming one, or for any heavenly thought³.

St. John Chrysostom

“He commands the sun, and it does not rise; He seals off the stars” (Job 9: 7).

No one expects to see the sun not rise at its designated time, according to the steady laws set for it by the Lord; Yet, it would do just that, if He so chooses. What happened in the days of Joshua the son of Nun, when He commanded “*the sun to stand still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day*” to serve His people (Joshua 10: 12), proclaims the amazing work of God through His ministers. And as **St. Athanasius** the apostolic says:

[If the sun stood still in Gibeon, and the moon stopped in the valley of Aijalon, Yet that was not the work of the son of Nun, but that of the Lord who listened to his prayer; He who rebuked the sea; commanded the shadow of the sun to go back (2 kings 20: 9); And on the cross, He brought darkness from the sixth hour until the ninth hour over all the land (Matthew 27: 45) ⁴. can also seal off the stars and hide them from our eyes

“He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea” (Job 9: 8).

By His own will, God can keep the system of nature intact, as an extension of the process of creation; Without His divine care, it would collapse. He set a boundary for the water of the sea, that they may not surpass to cover the earth again (Psalm 104: 9). He treads on the raging waves of the sea; proclaiming that He alone can calm down all the waves of temptations raging against us.

St. John Chrysostom believes that there is no comparison between what the prophet Moses did when the children of Israel crossed over the Red Sea under his leadership on dry ground Exodus 14: 21); and what the Lord Jesus did when he treaded on the waves of the sea. Moses practiced what he did as a minister through prayer;

¹ On Prayer 26:1.

² In Matt. hom., 19:7.

³ In Matt. hom., 22:4.

⁴ Paschal Ep. 29.

whereas the Lord Christ did it by His own absolute authority; to testify to what came in the Holy Scripture: (Job 9: 8) ¹.

❖ **“He alone spreads out the heaven” (8).** Heavens here, refer to the heavenly life of the preachers, about which the Psalmist says: *“The heavens declare the glory of God”* (Psalm 19: 1).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ It is the Lord who seals and counts the multitude of stars (9). It is Him alone who spreads out the heavens, and who treaded on the waves of the sea (Job 9: 8; Matthew 14: 25) ².

❖ The gospel of the Lord teaches us that it was not the Father who treaded on the sea, but the Son.

Whom Peter asked, saying: *“Lord, Command me to come to you on the water”* (Matthew 14: 28). The Lord did command him but he hesitated and could have drowned and perished, if the Lord did not stretch out His hand, caught him, and said to him: *“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”* (Matthew 14: 29-31). It was faith and not the body that walked on the waves in the person of the apostle ³.

St. Ambrose

❖ Who could tread on the waves of the sea, other than the Creator of the whole world?

He, about whom the Holy Spirit uttered through the righteous ‘Job’: *“He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea”*.

And in the person of wisdom, He says: *“I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud”* (Sirach 24: 4).

And about whom David proclaims: *“Your way was in the sea, your path in the great waters”* (Psalm 77: 19); and Habakkuk says: *“The overflowing of the water passed by; the deep uttered its voice”* (Habakkuk 3: 10) ⁴.

Father Chromatius

“He made the bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south” (Job 9: 9).

He is the Creator of the stars, of which he mentions three groups as representatives of all, that He keeps and controls their movements for the benefit of mankind.

St. Gregory the Nezenzian believes that by mentioning these three groups, the Holy Book means all the stars; The same way it does when it refers to God’s care for *“the young ravens that cry”* (Psalm 147: 8), meaning all birds in general ⁵.

By the chambers of the south he means the stars that could be seen from the direction of the South Pole, and not from that of the North Pole.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that these stars, symbolize the seven churches; namely the catholic church, seen by St. John the beloved, in his revelations, as seven lamp stands; That enjoy the seven gifts of the divine grace; and their rays shine with the light of virtue springing up from the truth.

¹ *Homilies on St. John, homily 43:2.*

² *Of the Christian Faith, 5:2:30.*

³ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 5:15.*

⁴ *Chromatius: Tractate on Matthew, 52:2.*

⁵ *Letters, 101, to Cledonius the Priest against Appolinarius.*

- ❖ When ‘Job’ talks about the three groups of the stars and the chambers of the south, he refers to all the whole system of stars in heaven, and to every kind of supernatural miracles and imperceptible exalted divine ordainments realized for our sake; Those, as proclaimed by St. John: *“There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written”* (John 21: 25). Not only as far as their number are concerned, but because of their exalted nature, which makes the ears of this world unable to perceive!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“He does great things past finding out, Yes, wonders without number” (Job 9: 10).

Here, ‘Job’ repeats what Eliphaz said. Please refer to the interpretation of (Job 5: 9).

“If He goes by me, I do not see Him; If He moves past, I do not perceive Him” (Job 9: 11).

God’s works with, around, and in us, are so exalted that we are unable to see by our limited perception; It is difficult, and impossible to evaluate even His obvious actions, because we do not realize what is behind them. We have no right to comment on, or to interpret them.

- ❖ Having been deprived of the inner joy, because of sin, the human race lost the insight, and became unable to tell where things are going!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ When God rises above me, I can not see Him; He rises above each of us, when He postpones the verdict on us On another aspect, When He goes by us; namely, in our midst, we do not perceive Him by our physical eyes, nor reach Him by our Spirits; As He does that in such a way, too delicate for the eyes, and even for the Spirit as well.

- ❖ He goes by through our minds; And He already did through our life, by His incarnation, passion on the cross, and His glorious resurrection.... Above all, Who can perceive how He, became man and God at the same time; How He suffered, and destroyed suffering; How He tasted death as man; And abolished the abyss and destroyed death as God (1 Corinthians 15: 54; 1 Timothy 1; 10; 1 Peter 3: 22).

He has made humanity free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8; 2); the burdens of which no one else could make lighter for us.

No one, therefore, can say to Him: “What are you doing?”, or “Why do you justify the sinners, or bring under blessing, those who was before threatened by curse (Galatians 3: 13-14; Deuteronomy 21: 23). He did that primarily by being God, and by the power and authority thereof; He has buried our sins under ground, and *“wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us”* (Colossians 2: 14); that is why He adds: *“which was contrary to us, and has taken (His anger) out of the way”*

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Pope Gregory the Great believes that this is way with man who feels separated from God. He went by him, and granted him the experience of purity; Yet he fell under the bitterness of the temptation of the flesh, that surrounds the mind, to make the inner

eye impure, and subsequently unable to see God. That is allowed by God, to make the mind humble, and let it seek the divine help.

- ❖ Finding itself weak under temptation, the human mind seeks the help of God; utterly stops depending on itself; and attaches itself more deeply to God; by the same way it became in grief for falling and separation from God. That is why, it is impossible to perceive the entering in and getting out of God by our abilities, as long as the variations of our own condition is hidden from our eyes. As an example there is no assurance, whether a certain temptation is meant to be a test of our virtue, or a tool to destroy us. As far as the gifts are concerned, we also have no idea if they are rewards for works we have done, or a support on man's way to his heavenly home.

Pope Gregory the great

- ❖ When the apostle Paul dealt with the knowledge of divine things – in his epistle to the Corinthians – he confirmed that his knowledge – despite his large portion of it – is still very limited and minimal; saying: ***“If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know”*** (1 Corinthians 8: 2).

He confirms to us that now we have some knowledge; whereas the greater part of it, we shall have in the coming age: ***“For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away”*** (1 Corinthians 13: 9-10).

And when he intended to clarify the difference between our knowledge here and our knowledge in the other life, he says: ***“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now, I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known”*** (1 Corinthians 13: 9-10).

Now, do you perceive the difference between them? It is the difference between the knowledge of a little child, and that of an adult; And as the difference between looking in a mirror and looking face to face. Looking in a mirror, although it refers to depth in expression, yet it implies vagueness! Why then do you not believe Paul when he says: ***“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’”*** (Romans 9; 20).

Now, just think of how it is befitting for us to submit in silence to the will of God!

He undoubtedly does not mean to deprive us of our will. No way! But to confirm that a scholar should keep silent, like the clay in the hand of its maker, that neither resist nor argue. He mentions the clay and its maker to remind us of our nature; as they are both made of the same material. Although the maker is likewise, created of dust, Yet the clay submits to him! How then can man hope for forgiveness, when he arrogantly dares to question the will of God, his Creator?! Although the difference between them is without limit.

Man, Remember who you are!

Aren't you mud, dust, and ashes?!

Aren't you vapor?!

Aren't you a weed, or a flower of a weed?!

The prophets tried hard to portray before our eyes, what would tell us about the real value of our being. God, whom you intend to submit to your foolish curiosity, does

not submit to death or change. He is eternal, with no beginning or end; imperceptible, exalted above any understanding or logic; indescribable, and unseen! These attributes that could never be perceived by you and I, by the apostles, the prophets, and even by the heavenly hosts, despite their unseen purity, their spirituality, and their perpetual dwelling in heaven¹!

St. John Chrysostom

“If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘what are you doing?’” (Job 9: 12).

God is the only One with authority; No creature has the right to question His acts. In Him we should trust, and His will we should accept, even if it may seem bitter to us. If He takes away even our souls, who can hinder him? Or argue with Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing? Or why are you doing it?!

❖ ***“If He takes away, who can hinder him? Who can say to Him, What are You doing?”***

Who can dare? No one will even be there; as the results bear self testimony.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ We should always honor the works of our Creator without question; because they would never be unjust.

Searching for a cause for His secret counsel, would be counted as an arrogant opposition against it. As long as we are not able to find a motive for God’s acts, we should humbly keep silent, and submit to them. Our physical senses are not on a level that can penetrate the secrets of His majesty. Paul goes on saying: *“Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’”* (Romans 9: 20).

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great commenting on the saying of ‘Job’: ***“Who can say to Him, ‘What are you doing?’”***, says: [No one can oppose the wrath of God. Yet the Holy Book presents to us several examples for certain men of God who dared to stand before His wrath: The prophet Moses did, when he stood to intercede for the sake of his fallen people, saying: *“If You will only forgive their sin – but if not, blot me out of the book that You have written”* Exodus 32: 32).

Moses also instructed Aaron to take his censer, put fire in it from the altar and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, For wrath has come out from the Lord (Numbers 16: 46-48).

Also **Phinehas** quenched the wrath of God, when the people committed adultery with foreign women. He showed his zeal when he pierced with his spear the Israelite and the Medianite woman through the belly; And the plague was stopped among the people of Israel (Numbers 25: 8).

So also David stood interceding for his people before the Lord to lift His wrath off them (2 Samuel 24).

And the **Truth** instructed us to pray for the sake of our enemies and those who persecute us (Matthew 5: 33).

So God reveals the greatness of His love for man; For although no one can dare stand before God’s wrath, Yet, even in His anger, He proclaims His love, by giving the

¹ *The Divine Providence, 2.*

chance for man to force himself on God's love by his humility, repentance, and his love for God, for people and for his own salvation; through seeking mercy for himself, and interceding on behalf of his brethren.

St Jacob El-Serougi presents to us the following magnificent portrait of standing before God's wrath by repentance:

❖ Jonah said: There is no way to cancel the wrath of God! The great city of Nineveh shall be overthrown, for the wickedness of its people has come up before the Lord. The affliction is eminent; and the falling is close at hand.

The mighty Lord who bears the creation has sent me, to proclaim the voice of terror on your walls. His voice struck the king of Nineveh on the face; He was terrified to hear the terrible news. His fear of Jonah was more than of the forces of mighty men; The fearful king humiliated himself before a lowly man. He got down from his high throne, cast his crown, put on sackcloth, and prepared himself for repentance. Realizing that the battle was not of the usual sort, he gathered his people, and provoked them to strive... He gathered his forces and provided them with prayers to strengthen the gates... To confront the eminent wrath, he instructed the men, the women, and even the kids to fast, everyone according to his ability. The king provoked his forces to prepare themselves for a new kind of war! To prostrate themselves before God and pray!

Not even a one-day infant would be spared! Everyone must join and support the strife before evil strikes!

In this kind of battle, kids could be stronger than men; and infants more effective than mighty warriors!

Thousands of infants who have not sinned will join us; because by them the struggle will be far better.

The Hebrew prophet is threatening us with destruction... Let us work, lest he would rejoice to see us defeated... He did not spare any effort to call for our destruction... And so shall we, to seek God's mercy for our salvation.

The prophet is holding fast to his word;... Let him preach;... And let us seek mercy from his Master.... Let us resort to his Master, the one with authority... The man is just a messenger uttering his message... He only has the authority to preach, and not to destroy... If it is up to him, the whole city would be overthrown!... Let us not loose heart. Destruction is in the hand of the Lord, and not in that of the prophet... Let his voice, provoke us to arouse the voices of repentance, and to call for lamentation... By that we may mute his voice. Let us not ask him; He will not listen to us anyway! Let us instead, lift up our voices to the Most High; He is the One to save us.

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“God will not turn back His anger; the helpers of Rehab bowed beneath Him”
(Job 9; 13).

When He gets angry, nothing would turn back His anger, but His mercy and love. He would crush the haughty opponents; and as it came in the book of Zechariah: *“Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord”* (Zechariah 2: 13). It is only repentance with its sighs, humility, and tears that would turn back the divine wrath.

❖ Repentance is fire that consumes every human weakness; takes away slothfulness, laziness, **and the heaviness of body; provides the soul with wings, by which it flies**

to heaven; where, on such a high summit, the vanity of the present life, would be revealed.

Whoever does not ascend to the vintage point, cannot grasp a true portrait of the earth and its contents. Many things down here darkens the range of vision, deafens the ears, and mutes the tongue; That is why it is befitting for man to free himself of this chaos, to get away from the blinding smoke, and to enter into where the deep peace, quietness and tranquility, with enlightenment, are.

When the eye concentrates on the love of God; and the ear hears nothing but His words, as though a sweet spiritual symphony; the soul becomes a captive (of God), and feels disgusted of any food or sleep. The disturbing noise of the world, and the material cares, could indeed slide over the soul, but could not enter into it. And by rising up, the soul would no more care for the furious bangs of earthly storms.

As those dwelling on the high mountains, hear the noise of the city below as vague murmur, and see no more of what go on in it; So are those who opted to forsake the world through their own will, and set lying to the high places of philosophy (wisdom), They care no more for the worries of the world; for all their senses are directed toward heaven.

Let us then pursue, not only the solitude of the wilderness, but also that of the inner desire; Let us hide above the highest summit of the soul, where nothing earthly dwells. The power of repentance is like air that would easily drive away the dust; and would quickly wipe out the lusts, like smoke.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ What sins, could repentance fail to cleanse?! What resilient stains, could such tears not remove?! By his triple confession, Peter could wipe out his triple denial¹!

St. Jerome

❖ The extended prayer and the flowing tears could draw the mercy of God.

❖ Weeping alone, could lead to blessed laughing.

❖ Intending to reveal in Himself all blessings, He says: *“Blessed are those who mourn”* (Matthew 5: 4). And he himself wept, to set well the foundation of this beatitude².

(The scholar Origen)

3- HIS INABILITY TO REASON WITH GOD:

“How then can I answer Him, and choose my words to reason with Him?” (Job 9: 14).

‘Job’ stands crushed before God, confessing that he is unable to enter into a debate with Him. But, as many believe, concentrating his eyes on his weakness, ‘Job’ unfortunately slid into despair instead of looking up to God’s exalted mercies and His love of mankind. He forgot that the Almighty God always longs to enter into a debate with His creation; and has allowed even Satan to debate Him, as we saw in the two first chapters of this book.

❖ It is worth noticing how the righteous ‘Job’ has judged himself, so that when the judgment of God comes, It would find nothing in him to condemn. Looking at his

¹ Letter, 77:4.

² In Jer. hom 3:49; In Luc. hom 18.

weakness, he says: **“How then can I answer Him, and choose my words to reason with Him?”** (14). He does not lean on his self-righteousness, but resorting to hope in drawing God’s compassion, he says: **“For though I were righteous, I could not answer him; I would beg mercy of my Judge”** (15); Then adds: **“If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice”** (16). Why is he so belittling himself?... Why is he having such a sad doubt? Before the awe of the Judge, and the power of His searching eye, he feels himself, and everything he does, as nothing!

Pope Gregory the Great

“For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge” (Job 9: 15).

Man can justify himself, for he does not know even the truth about himself, or realize what goes on inside him.

That is what the apostle Paul expresses by saying: **“I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this”** (1 Corinthians 4: 4). Namely, the apostle fears, that, if he justifies himself, some hidden sins that he knows nothing about, would probably be revealed. That is what made ‘Job’ seek mercy from the divine Judge who searches the hearts; and throw himself on His mercies, and not on his personal worthiness.

What preoccupies Job’s mind is not to be justified in people’s eyes; for, although they insult him, cast him to the ground, and tread over him with their feet; it is the merciful divine Judge who judges him; before whom he cannot justify himself, but would seek His mercy and His compassion.

❖ ‘Job’ says (to Bildad): You vainly revile me. What do you benefit by treading on the righteous with your feet? I resort to God, and to His divine mercy and compassion. He would never listen to what is said about me without searching for truth. For, though I may be righteous, compared to others, yet I still need the testimony from the Most High. If my life conforms to the divine truth, nobody can nullify the strength of this truth.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Every human righteousness, if accurately measured, would not be counted as righteousness. As though he clearly says: Although I am committed to grow in practicing virtue, Yet, if I do well in life, it would not be because of my worthiness, but of God’s forgiving grace. That is why, we should fervently pray, so that all the ways of righteousness along which we walk, become salted with humility.

Pope Gregory the Great

“If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice” (Job 9: 16).

Some interpret this phrase saying: In case he has faith, his prayers would be heard, not for the sake of his prayer itself, but for the sake of the holy name of God in which he has faith **“Not for your sake do I do this’, says the Lord God. ‘Let it be known to you’”** (Ezekiel 36; 32).

Pope Gregory the great believes that, in Job’s talk here, there is a living portrait of the continuous struggle in the believer’s life, who, by grace, calls God, and He listens to him, when his heart flares with the love for divinities. Yet, amid that amazing exalted

state, temporal thoughts force their way into the mind; And the believer would find himself as though he has fallen, and thinks that God does not listen to his voice.

- ❖ It happens often that the mind flares with the fire of divine love; is lifted up to see the heavenly things and the hidden secrets; is wounded by the perfect love; and is alienated from the lowly things. But, once it is struck by a sudden temptation, the soul, that was supported by God for an obvious goal, would bow down; would stand confused, between the good and the bad practices; and would not be able to tell which side is stronger.

It often happens that the soul stands confused: How it is possible for it to acquire the high facts, while wrestling with the evil thoughts. It becomes in need to know, how the evil thoughts could infiltrate into it, while the zeal of the Holy Spirit brings it over to the exalted things. This fluctuation between the good and the evil thoughts is clearly seen by the Psalmist as he proclaims: *“They mount up to the heavens; they go down again to the depths”* (Psalm 107: 26). Getting terrified by such movements, which he involuntarily goes through, the mind assumes that he is cast away and driven out.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause”
(Job 9: 17).

‘Job’ felt that, although he has not committed unusual sins, yet he faced unusual calamities. The tempests of temptation, has blown, not to just to disturb, but to crush him, without cause.

Some interpreters believe that, by saying, *“without cause”*, ‘Job’ attacked the divine justice. Yet others believe that he was merely wondering, why is he going through all that when he did not commit a serious offense, or a major crime?!

- ❖ ***“For He crushes me with a tempest”*** (17)... Proclaiming a disturbance of the elements, it was truly called ‘a tempest’, as testified by the Psalmist in saying: *“Our Lord shall come and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him”* (Psalmist 60: 3). Another prophet says: *“The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm”* (Nahum 1: 3). **In such a whirlwind, the righteous will never break; because he is always aware, and in fear lest he would be broken.**

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Notice how, in his bitterness, he does not say: ‘He wounds me without cause’, but says, ***“He multiplies my wounds without cause”*** (17). These multiple wounds came on him, not because of his multiple sins, but for testing his endurance.

Again he says: *“I have kept His way, and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips”* (Job 23: 11, 12). He never forgot God’s commandments, despite his weakness; he abided on the race to fulfill them; sometimes stumbling and falling, but never quitting. On the way to perfection, his faults subsequently became less and less all the time¹.

- ❖ It is as though he says that, about the Jews, who, being so sure of themselves, they despise the grace, and do not believe in Christ. He says that intending to set their

¹ *On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness, 26-27.*

righteousness, in the law; they counted themselves capable of keeping the law by their own strength, “*ignorant of God’s righteousness*” (Romans 10: 3); not keeping the righteousness of God, but that granted by God to man¹.

St. Augustine

“He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness” (Job 9: 18).

Every man is exposed to suffering every now and then; but, as far as ‘Job’ is concerned, he never had the chance to catch his breath, but had his fill of bitterness. And yet, he had no idea about the cause for what he was going through.

- ❖ As my wife and my friends also ridicule me and talk to me with malice, I feel that what is dwelling upon me, has to be allowed by God, who could otherwise keep it from happening to me. Nevertheless, I will never stop testifying to God’s justice and might (Psalm 71: 19), who, by His divine care, keeps everything in hand; And no man, with a good sense, can oppose His judgment, coming from the Mighty Righteous God.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“If it is a contest of strength, He is the strong One; And if it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him?” (Job 9: 19).

Looking at God, Job sees Him as the strong One; before whom nobody can stand; “*I the Lord have spoken, and will do it*” (Ezekiel 22: 14). As far as justice is concerned, there is no higher court to hear man’s appeal.

He is the Judge of all, and above all creation.

- ❖ ‘*Being such a strong Judge, who can, therefore, challenge His judgment?*’ ... His greatness and might are proclaimed by the sun, that His commands could not be disobeyed (See Psalm 104: 19); By the moon, that, according to its system, grows progressively from a crescent to a full moon, then becomes smaller and smaller until it disappears; By the sea, that could never surpass its designated limits; And by the sand that rein the violence of the waves.

If this is the case of the physical elements, Who, among mankind, could dare to challenge or question His judgments? Abraham says about himself: “*Who am I, but dust and ashes?*” (Genesis 18: 27); and with the same spirit, David says: “*My equities have gone over my head. Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me*” (Psalm 38: 4); And Isaiah proclaims: “*Woe is me for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*” (Isaiah 7: 5). That is why the wrestler ‘Job’ goes on to say: “***Though I was righteous, my own mouth would condemn me***” (Job 9: 20). And as it is not easy for anyone to be blameless in his works and words, he adds: “***Though I were blameless , it would prove me perverse***” (20).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Someone may say: ‘What should I do? How could I be light, when I live in such evil and iniquities?! And would thus be overwhelmed with despair and grief! Having no salvation without a fellowship with God, who is Light and no darkness is in Him; how could I be purified from sin that is darkness?! ... To this, the apostle responds, saying: “***... The blood of Jesus Christ His Son purifies us of every sin***”. What a great

¹ Grace & Freewill, 24.

warranty granted to us! Being in this world, in the midst of such temptations, man could stumble, after having his sins forgiven in baptism; that is why we should do our best and confess our status as it is, so that the Lord Christ would heal us by His precious blood¹.

St. Augustine

“Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse” (Job 9: 20).

If ‘Job’ justifies himself, his defense would turn into transgression, and he would be condemned by his own words; because God knows all the hidden secrets of the heart, that may be unknown to man himself. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 8). In case ‘Job’ counts himself as blameless; that would be a transgression by him; an accusation against God; and he would be haughty and ignorant of what actually lie in his depths.

❖ I should not boast of being sinless! I should not boast of being of benefit for anyone, or of anyone being of benefit for me. I should boast on account of being saved; because my sins are forgiven; because Christ is my Intercessor (My Advocate) before God the Father; And because the blood of Christ has been shed for my sake².

St. Ambrose

“Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I loathe my own life” (Job 9: 21).

Looking at his life, ‘Job’ sees himself as an old man who has not benefited from the long years he lived! They were fruitless! This is how man feels when he looks at his life outside the range of the love and grace of God, the Grantor of fruition.

4- WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCES:

“It is all one thing; Therefore I say, ‘He destroys the blameless and the wicked’” (Job 9: 22).

Job’s friends insist on their view that the righteous do well in this world, and are protected against temptations; and that if they happen to dwell on them, they would soon be taken away. The wicked, on the other hand, are complete failure, and would be surrounded and crushed by temptations in this world, with no help in sight. ‘Job’, contrary to this point of view, confirms that some wicked may do well and flourish in this world, while the righteous may experience successive temptations. That was the main controversy in all the debates between ‘Job’ and his friends, whose real goal was to confirm that ‘Job’ was a wicked hypocrite, who bore the image of piety, while hiding evils that made God angry.

‘Job’ confirms here, that temporal events are not the proper measure to evaluate whether man is righteous or wicked.

“It is all one thing”. Calamities and death could dwell on both the blameless and the wicked; *“The sword devours one as well as another”* (2 Samuel 11: 25); It devoured Josiah, the good king, as well as Ahab, the wicked one; ***“He destroys the blameless and the wicked”***...Both were carried away captives to Babylon (Jeremiah 24; 5-9).

❖ ***“It is all one thing; Therefore I say, ‘He destroys the blameless and the wicked’”***

¹ St. Augustine: 10 Homilies on 1st Epistle of St. John.

² On Jacob and the Happy Life 6:21.

(22). It is as though he says: If I say these words about myself, Even though I may be blameless, yet, It may be proved otherwise if I am thoroughly investigated; and the other way round is true as well. It is only the firm divine Judge who is aware of everything, and can amazingly expose the tricks of the wicked, and judge everyone according to his due.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *Are these not the words of David, the citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem?!*
“My tears have been my food day and night” (Psalm 42: 3)
“I am weary with my moaning; Every night I flood my bed with tears” (Psalm 6: 6)

“My sighing is not hidden from You” (Psalm 38: 9)

“My sorrow was stirred up” (Psalm 39: 2)

Aren't the children of God moan under their burden; not wishing to be bared naked, but to be clothed over; “for the mortal to become swallowed by life”? Aren't even those “who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within themselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of their body?” (Romans 8: 23).

Was not the apostle Paul himself, the citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, representing all that, when he was burdened, and in continuous grief of heart, for the sake of his brethren the children of Israel? Yet, there would be no death in the city, until it is said: “Where is your authority, O death; where is your sting?”... As the sting of death is the sin¹.

St. Augustine

“If the scourge (the sword) brings sudden death, He (mocks) laughs at the plight of the innocent” (Job 9: 23).

As the sword suddenly came to slays this and that: the wicked for his perdition, and the righteous to justify his faith “These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor” (1 Peter 1: 7). Yet the righteous mock death, on account that it is a crossing over to glory.

Pope Gregory the Great commenting on the phrase “*laughs at the plight of the innocent*”, says: [he may be using the term “laugh”, to mean (rejoice); Namely, God, with His compassion, (laughs) or rejoices for the temptation of the righteous, who zealously seek Him (at the time of their temptation). Their suffering brings Him some sort of joy, when He see their holy desire to chastise themselves, for the sake of their love for Him].

- ❖ The apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 4: 17) says that our present sorrows are light, as they happen within certain limits of time and place. But, compared to this little labor, we will acquire glory in an immeasurable degree².

Abroseaster

- ❖ Every calamity is either a punishment for the wicked, or a test for the righteous... The same applies to peace and tranquility at the times of controversies, that could lead to the benefit the good, and the corruption of the wicked³.

¹ *The City of God, 20:17.*

² *CSEL 81:227.*

³ *Eighty Three Different Questions, 27.*

St. Augustine

“When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds the judges. If it is not He, then who is it?” (Job 9: 24).

God often allows the wicked to get away with their wickedness, and even to have authority on the land. On one aspect, to deny the enemy the right to complain that the righteous worship God in order to gain temporal blessings and earthly success. And on another aspect, to give the wicked more freedom, hoping that they may come to repent their wicked ways, if they get in touch with God’s love; or to let their cup of evil overflow, in case they persist on their rebellion and arrogance.

If the evil enemy is called “the prince of this age”, we should not marvel to see the land fall into the hands of the wicked, who may assume that they are successful and kings! The land is delivered to the wicked; whereas the righteous enjoy heaven, because there, the Heavenly dwell.

“The judges are blindfolded”. While the righteous are oppressed on land, the wicked wear deceiving masks, to appear as though they are the judges of the land who give justice; although this is far from being the case.

Yet, many believe that these words of ‘Job’ carry some kind of protest! How would God let the wicked succeed, have authority on the land, and appear as judges to condemn the righteous?! Job’s wise words should have provided him with some inner comfort, to pay no attention to the accusations of his friends; But it seems that the tendency to protest – being a human weakness – has aroused within him bitter feelings; as he sees that the days of his prosperity have passed so quickly, flown away with no trace left, as though he has never had a taste of them!

St. Augustine believes that the land here refers to the body¹ of the righteous, which God may allow to be delivered to the hand of the wicked, for the sake of chastisement, of test, or justification; whereas his soul is unapproachable to the wicked.

What does he mean by saying: ***“The land falls into the hand of the wicked” (24)***; but that God may allow the bodies created out of dust, to be delivered to the wicked, to have authority only on the dust it includes. But, having born the new nature, according to the image of its Creator; and having become clothed with the new image of the second Adam, who is from heaven, no one could have authority over it. **St. Augustine** believes that the divine incarnate Word Himself, took this body of dust, and allowed it to be delivered to the wicked, to be tried, and be killed; to let us not fear the wicked, but to partake of the passion and death of our Christ, in order to experience the glories of His resurrection².

❖ The righteous is often delivered into the hand of the wicked, not to honor the later, but to test the former. And although the wicked will eventually come to a sudden death, as is written in (Job 9: 23), yet, in the meantime, the righteous would be a mocking stock; while God’s goodness, and His great treasures stay hidden for both of them³.

St. Gregory, the Nezenian

¹ On Ps. 26.

² Cf. On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 28:2.

³ On the Great Athanasius, 17.

- ❖ What is the meaning of: “**The land falls into the hand of the wicked**” (24)? The body is delivered into the hand of the oppressors; Yet God would never leave the righteous there; For from the captive body, He would bring over the unconquerable soul¹.
- ❖ “*The wicked lies in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives, but the Lord will not leave them in their power, or let them be condemned when brought to trial*” (Psalm 37: 32-33). Why then, did he leave the martyrs in the hands of the wicked, to do to them whatever they wished? (Matthew 17: 12); slaying some with the sword, crucifying some, throwing some to the ferocious beasts, burning some with fire, and leading others in chains. And if God allowed His saints to be delivered into the hands of the wicked; How did he leave his only-begotten Son in their hands? Listen to what the Holy book says, prophesying about the coming passions of our Lord on the hands of the wicked: “**The earth is given into the hand of the wicked**” (Job 9: 24)... Here, he is talking about delivering the body into the hands of the oppressors²; Yet “*He did allow His Holy One to see corruption*” (Psalm 16: 10).
- ❖ “*Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance will be ours*” (Mark 12: 7). How foolish you are! You may have indeed killed Him; But you will not have the inheritance!... When you boasted that you have killed him; He actually went to sleep; having said in another Psalm: “*I lay down and slept*” (Psalm 3: 5).
 “*I lay down and slept*”, because “*I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again*” (John 10: 18).
 Let the earth be given into the hands of the wicked; Let the body be delivered into the hands of the oppressors; Let them hang Him on a tree, Let them fix Him with nails,... Let them stab Him with a spear!
 Did He not add, that He will sleep, then will rise again... When was Eve created? Was it not when Adam slept? When did the secrets of the church come out of Christ’s side? Was it not when He slept on the cross³?
- ❖ Let the oppressors celebrate! ... Let the earth be delivered into the hands of the wicked! Let the body be nailed on a tree, and stabbed with a spear! He, who lays and sleeps, says: “**I will rise again**”⁴.

St. Augustine

5- THE HORROR OF HIS TROUBLES AND CONFUSION:

“*Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they are no good*” (Job 9: 25).

Swift runners have been used in the old times to carry urgent messages, especially by kings and leaders. When King Hezekiah sent a proclamation throughout all Israel, that they should come to keep the Passover to the Lord God at Jerusalem, “**The runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the King and his leaders**” (2 Chronicles 30: 6). And in the days of Jeremiah, it seems that this service has been well established. In his prophecy about the desolation of Babylon, it was said: “**One runner will run to meet another and one messenger to meet another, to inform the king of**

¹ On Ps. 36, Discourse, 3: 13.

² On Ps. 37 (36).

³ On Ps. 41 (40).

⁴ On Psalm 4. On Feast of the Martyrs, 9.

Babylon that his city is taken on all sides” (Jeremiah 51: 31). The Persians, as well, used swift runners, when the order was issued to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews in the empire (Esther 3: 13, 15). And when another order was issued to avenge them against their enemies, **“the couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king’s command”** (Esther 8: 14)¹.

- ❖ Tell me; is there anything permanent in this world? Is it the wealth that could not last until the evening? Or is it the glory? Listen to what a righteous man says: **“My days are swifter than a runner”**² (25).

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that God created man to see goodness; namely to see God, the Greatest Goodness. Yet, when sin entered into his life, leading to the loss of his insight, and to seeing the divine light or Goodness no more, he started to doubt the actions of God!

- ❖ Man was created for this goal – to see goodness; namely, God. But, having declined to stand in the light, he fled from the light and lost his eyes, submitted to blindness, and became unable to see the inner light. But, when we think about such things, perpetually doubting (God the Beneficent), we become confronted with difficult questions: Why does God create someone whom he foresaw that he is going to perish?! Why, being the greatest in power and goodness has not put in mind to create man imperishable?!

The mind, in his silence, so wonders; and man, through his daring questions, fearful of falling in pride, retreats to humility that reins the thoughts of the heart.

Getting under more cruel tribulations, and in the midst of his trouble to interpret the secret significance of those events he is going through, ‘Job’ goes on to say: **“If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will change my expression and wear a smile”** (Job 9: 27).

Pope Gregory the Great

“They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey” (Job 9: 26).

The days of his prosperity skimmed past like a boat sailing fast toward its secure harbor; and like an eagle swooping down on its prey; both leaving behind them no trace on the water or in the air. Time hastens with man to nothingness; and will soon bring us over to eternity, where time has no more place.

- ❖ Our days pass, swifter than a runner; skim past like a boat, or like an eagle swooping on its prey; What we say, we soon forget, and there would be no apparent sign of our passing, except that it was full of sadness and misery. **“I still dread all my sufferings; If only there is someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both”** (Job 9: 28, 33)³.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ As the sea would never leave any trace of boats passing by; nor the air, of an eagle swooping on its prey (Wisdom 5: 10-11), So will be the riches of this world; When it passes away; It will leave no trace of happiness behind it; The rich and all what he has

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 208- 209.

² *Letters to the Fallen Theodore*, 2:3.

³ *The Prayer of Job and David*, Book 1, 6:16.

ever done, will be cast into forgetfulness. 'Job' as an example, despised every impact of this life; advising us to do the same.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“If I say I will forget my complaint, I will change my expression and wear a smile” (Job 9: 27).

It seems as though, when 'Job' started to look beyond the time, to see that his calamity is eventually going to be resolved and is going to disappear altogether; When his soul goes forth out of this world, and his life becomes like a shadow that passes with no trace; he tried to persuade himself to forget all he is passing through, to get comforted and even to smile.

Even if the righteous 'Job' intends to hold his peace, and to put in his heart to disregard all what dwelt upon him; yet the expressions on his countenance, without uttering a single word, would still testify to the viciousness of the temptation, and would proclaim the cruelty of the tempest.

- ❖ The evils dwelling upon you will pass; and what you patiently anticipate will come; He will wipe out the sweat of labor; He will dry out every tear; and there will be no more weeping! It is only here on earth, that we have to moan among our temptations; and say together with 'Job': ***“Are not man’s life on earth, but a tribulation¹?”***

St. Augustine

“I still dread all my sufferings, for I know you will not hold me innocent” (Job 9: 28).

'Job', assuming that, even if he enters into a debate with himself concerning his sufferings, he may err against God; he dreads thinking about them. He fears to admonish God for allowing those sufferings to dwell upon him; on account that God would not hold him innocent; but on the contrary He may be hold it against him.

- ❖ ***“I still dread all my sufferings (all my doings according to the Arabic version), for I know You will not hold me innocent, since I am already found guilty” (28-29).***

Now, let us think about those (doings), practiced by the righteous 'Job', as told by this holy history: *“He would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of his children. For Job said, ‘It may be that my son have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’”*.

Speaking about his works of compassion, he proclaims, as his friends disturbed him, saying: *“Have I not wept for him who was in trouble?”* (Job 30; 25); and, *“I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame”* (Job 29: 15).

He kept his heart pure, and reverently reveals his soul, saying: *“If my heart has been enticed by a woman”* (41: 9).

Reaching the summit of humility, he says: *“If I have denied justice to my manservant or my maidservant when they had a grievance against me”* (31: 13).

About giving with great abundance, he says: *“If I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless”* (31: 17). And about practicing hospitality, he says: *“No stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler”* (31: 32).

¹ On Ps. 29, Discourse, 2: 8.

Amid all those things, and to consummate his virtues by the most exalted ways of love, **he loved even his enemies**, saying: “*If I have rejoiced at my enemy’s misfortune, or gloated over the trouble that came to him – I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life*” (31: 29-30).

Why then did ‘Job’ dread all his doings (9: 28), when he always practiced what pleased God? Unless we reach the conviction, through the words and deeds of that righteous man, that we should truly fear even those same good things we practice; And in particular, we should seriously fear two things: ‘deceit and slothfulness’, as, according to the prophet, “*Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully*” (Jeremiah 48: 10).

Man commits the crime of deception in the work of the Lord, when he unduly thinks high of himself for the sake of his good deeds; There are three ways for practicing deception: When his goal would be to gain the vain glory of hidden appreciation of his fellow men; When he fishes for their commendation; Or intends to get material benefit from their hands. On the contrary, the prophet says about the upright man: “*(Blessed is he), who keeps his hand from accepting bribes (benefits)*” (See Isaiah 33: 15).

That is why even the good deeds, should be practiced with great caution and fear; putting before our eyes the words of the righteous man ‘Job’: “***I still dread all my doings***”.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*Since I am already found guilty, why should I labor in vain?*” (Job 9: 29).

‘Job’ believes that he labors in vain to justify himself before God.

❖ Whoever knows the weakness of human nature, would gain the experience of the power of God.

Father Maximus the Confessor

❖ He says: ‘Before the limitless justice of God, I know I am weak; But before men, I am righteous according to your testimony’ (1: 1, 8; 2: 3).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **Looking at the greatness of God, they realized their own smallness.** Looking at the waves of His splendor, the purity of His nature, the amazement of His eternity, the glory of His greatness, the power of his non-limitation, and the exalted beauty of His holiness; At all these things, known in, about, and of Him, their thoughts became enlightened to see themselves, as they actually are; And they became aware, lest their minds and hearts would erroneously embrace the iniquity of assuming that they have earned their goodness, because of their own virtues, to reach the summit of the greatness of God¹.

❖ My soul would not be capable of abiding to the true humility, to realize its own smallness, and to think of the poverty of its nature; unless it becomes overwhelmed by the splendor of the hidden riches of God, and moved by its exaltation; As poverty is forsaken by richness, the darkness is hated by the shining of the light; and the humility of the soul is felt through the amazing exaltation of God; Whoever felt the greatness of God, would realize his own smallness²!.

¹ الرسالة الثامنة والثلاثون.

² الرسالة الثامنة والثلاثون.

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“Even if I washed myself with snow water and my hands with soap” (Job 9: 30).

❖ The snow here is the tears of humility, in which all the other virtues become exalted in the sight of the firm divine Judge... Some may grieve, yet without humility; may weep, yet, together with shedding their tears, they take lightly the life of their fellow men, or feel haughty above the ordainments of their Creator. Those have water, but they do not have ‘snow water’; and will not be washed, because their tears are not ‘tears of humility’. He, who washes himself from sin by snow water, is the one who says: “*A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*” (Psalm 51: 17).

❖ ‘Snow water’ could also be understood in another way: Water coming from a spring, and running in a stream, originates from the earth. Whereas snow comes down from above. Many grieve and wail on earthly things. They fervently pray; yet, for the sake of temporal pleasures; They are not washed with snow water; because their tears are coming from down below.

Whereas those who long for higher rewards, washing themselves with snow water, flooded by heavenly remorse, seeking eternity with tears and grief, and flared with longing for it; will get from above the ways by which they would be purified.

❖ By ‘**the hands**’, is meant (the deeds); according to the words of the prophet addressed to certain people: “*Your hands are full of blood*” (Isaiah 1: 15); namely, your deeds are full of cruelty.

Pope Gregory the great

❖ In this great battle; when man lives and is helped by grace; and subsequently, fights well, and fearfully rejoices in the Lord; he does not need mighty warriors to bring the works of the body to death; but can be healed of some wounds of the sin by daily praying: “*Forgive us our debts*” (Matthew 6: 12); striving by this prayer, cleverly, and with great caution, against wickedness, and against the devil, the prince of wickedness, bringing to naught his deadly counsel; namely, that of not judging one-self, and offering excuses to justify sins. These evil counsels, would not only leave the wounds unhealed, but would also lead to serious and deadly harm.

Here, there is the need for chastity, full of caution, to overcome the human lust of pride, by which man becomes pleased with himself, and would not see himself as worthy of blame. If he sins, he would never admit it; and instead of accusing himself with healing humility, he would, in a deadly haughtiness, search for an excuse to offer.

To subdue that pride, he who seeks chastity from God, by saying: “*Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to the words of evil*” (Psalm 141: 3, 4); we find him fear, lest he would resort to excuses, because that would be worse than the words of evil themselves.

The wicked denies that he is wicked, despite committing evil that he cannot deny. Being unable to hide his evil work, that he has obviously committed, he searches for ways to refer it to others, assuming by this that he gets away from what he deserves. And

instead of admitting his guilt, he adds a new one by offering excuses, not aware that by this he deprives himself of any chance of forgiveness¹.

St. Augustine

“You would plunge me into a slime pit, so that even my clothes would abhor me” (Job 9: 31).

There is no way to justify oneself before God. The snow water cannot cleanse his skin; and the soap cannot wash his hands. The more man tries to prove his innocence, the deeper he finds himself plunged in the slime pit, that his own clothes would abhor him, and he would even hate to touch himself.

‘Job’ believes that his vain trials to prove his innocence before those around him would only make God reveal his secret weaknesses. In the sight of men, he would see himself plunged in a hateful slime; and he does not dare to debate with God, as though with a fellow man; as the pottery cannot debate the potter!

❖ Humans could be called righteous and could be said to be blameless; But once slothfulness finds its way to them, they fall. Man may slide from the highest virtue to the lowest iniquity; and he can, as well, climb from iniquity to virtue. He would never feel safe, and should always fear that his boat may collapse even in good weather. No man could be without sin; as according to the holy Scripture, *“There is not a righteous man on earth, who does what is right and never sins”* (Ecclesiastes 7: 20);... *“There is no one who does not sin”* (2 Chronicles 6: 36);... and the blessed David says: *“Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults; Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me”* (Psalm 19: 12, 13); and also, *“Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you”* (Psalm 143: 2). The Holy Book is full of such quotations².

St. Jerome

Pope Gregory the Great sees in job’s words here, screams of repentance; Feeling that, although he may be counted as righteous in the sight of men, yet in that of God, he is guilty, and seeks forgiveness. ‘Job’, having lived his whole life seeking repentance, his life became blessed.

❖ Brother, in one single day, you can acquire eternity; and in a single one, you can lose it. You are given thousands of days on earth to use, either for your eternal salvation, or for your eternal judgment. A hundred times blessed, is the day in which you repent all your wicked deeds and unclean words and thoughts; and return to God with a scream seeking His mercy. That will be for you a thousand times better than any other day!

When the dawn of that blessed day rise; in which man condemns himself; he, who, so far, used to condemn the whole world; ... When he sees himself as the greatest sinner on God’s land;... When he starts to feel ashamed before God, before every one, and before everything created by God on earth.... This feeling of shame flares in him like fire, when he realizes and proclaims: [I am the most sinful man on God’s earth... All other humans are better than me... O Lord has mercy on me, a sinner... Cleanse me of the filth of my sins, to become worthy of being counted among Your creation]

¹ العفة للقديس أغسطينوس، 13.

² *Against the Pelagians, 1:2.*

Do not expect, O brother that this blessed day of repentance would come by itself; hold fast to it once you encounter it; and say: [You are the blessed day in which I purchase the eternal life¹].

Bishop Nicolai Velimirovich

- ❖ What does he mean by “*clothes*”, but the earthly body by which the soul is covered?... He says that “*his clothes would abhor him*” (31). He has the same feeling, he who says: “*But I see another laws at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members*” (Romans 7: 23). Those same clothes in which he could never have pleasure, he zealously wished to cast aside, to have them again on another day in a far better condition; adding, “*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*” (Romans 7: 24).

Pope Gregory the Great

6- THE NEED FOR A MEDIATOR:

“He is not a man like me that I might answer Him, that we might confront each other in court” (Job 9: 32).

- ❖ He means to say, that if he, who punishes me is a man like me, I can confront him in court and prove that he is unjust. But being God that makes it impossible!

St. John Chrysostom

“If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9: 33).

Job’s complaint represents the cry out of humanity since its fall; It is in need to a Mediator, to whom it can resort to bring man back to the divine bosom.

Who is He, who has the ability to stretch his hand with love to join man to God?

Who is He, who has such a favor with God the Father, except the incarnate Word of God, the One with the Father, equal to Him, with the same essence; that became One with mankind, became the second Adam.

Being alone without sin, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Intercessor who can carry out the reconciliation between God the Father and man.

- ❖ Do you see how ‘Job’ proclaimed the coming of Christ, prophesying in his prayer the secret of the Mediator of our life? About whom the apostle Paul also said: “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ*” (1 Timothy 2: 5). Christ has incarnated, and realized what the prophet Isaiah said to rebuke people: “*Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*” (Isaiah 1: 16-18).

Why Christ was called ‘*the Mediator*’? Because, being God in His very nature, He took the appearance as man. A mediator, to be able to lead the enemies to reconciliation. (Romans 5: 10), has to carry the appearance of both parties (Philippians 2: 8). Intending to reconcile His Father with man (2 Corinthians 5: 18), Christ took the appearances of both.

¹ Bishop Nicolai Velimirovich: *The Prologue from Ochrid, May 25.*

He even went beyond that, when He proclaimed to men what He is going to do concerning their ultimate judgment: How He, the One who loves them, will be their Judge; And, being the beneficent, and the compassionate, He prescribed the cleansing, testifying to Baptism.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ *“We have peace with God”* (Romans 5: 1) through our Lord Jesus Christ, who reconciled us with the Father by the sacrifice of His blood.

Christ came to destroy the enemies, to make peace, and to reconcile us with God, from whom we separated ourselves by the wall of evil that we set by our sins.

❖ He appeared in a His carnal form to draw to Him the carnal, to transfer them first to the likeness of the incarnate Word, then to how He was before incarnation..

The scholar Origen

“Someone to remove God’s rod away from me; so that His terror would frighten me no more” (Job 9: 34).

❖ Who would be the One who can remove God’s rod away; namely His divine anger, so that His terror would frighten man no more? It is our Lord Jesus Christ, who put our iniquity on Himself, and brought us to the divine love, to become by His Holy Spirit, children to God, who have favor to Him.

Being incarnate, and having become like us, He would not strike us with the rod or with terror; on one condition; namely, if we resort to His grace and to faith in Him; if we resort to the One who, when resurrected from the dead, the angel said to the women: *“Do not be afraid”* (Matthew 28: 5, 10); which he also told His disciples, when He appeared to them. In this same sense, ‘Job’ added: *“Then I would speak and not fear Him”* (Job 9: 35); As He took fear away from us, and set instead the law of love (Matthew 22: 37-39); as also written by St. John, saying: *“Perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4: 18)

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Then I would speak and not fear Him; but as it now stands with me, I cannot” (Job 9: 35).

By the Mediator, we can be brought forth to the Father, with the favor of adoption, to enjoy His love, and rejoice in the union with Him.

❖ In the law, God held the rod, when He said: *“If man does this or that, he would die”*; but with His incarnation, He removed the rod, and demonstrated the way of life in milder ways; as is told by the Psalmist: *“Come, reign, and rejoice for the sake of truth and righteousness”*. Being God, He does not intend to bring fear to us, but to dwell in our hearts as a loving Father; As, according to the apostle Paul: *“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption; And by Him we cry, ‘Aba, Father’”* (Romans 8: 15). That is why, it is befitting for the righteous ‘Job’ to add here: *“I would speak and not fear Him”* (35); having seen with the eye of prophecy, the Savior of the world coming in meekness, he was no more terrified, but with the grace of adoption, he ascended to the level of love. St. Jon says: *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4: 18); And Zechariah says in his prophetic song: *“...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve Him without fear”* (Luke 1: 74).

Fear has no power to raise us up from the death of sin; but the grace of meekness poured in us, will raise us up to the throne of life. That is what is referred to by Elisha, when he sent his servant with his staff, and failed to bring life back to the dead child; But when he personally came, stretched himself out on the dead body of the child walked back and forth in the house, and breathed in his mouth seven times, he brought the child back to the new light of life, through the ministry of compassion...

God, when He introduced the terror of the law through Moses, He, as though has sent His rod with His servant. But He then, personally came and humbly stretched Himself over the dead body; *“being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as man,...”* (Philippians 2: 6-8).

Breathing seven times in the dead body, He proclaimed the divine grace; granting the sevenfold grace to those fallen under the death of sin. Then He was risen alive, in that child, whom the rod of fear could not raise, but was brought to life by the spirit of love.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Why are you so afraid, O Christians?

Christ tells you: *“It is I, Do not be afraid”*.

Why are you so disturbed? Why are you so fearful?

I told you beforehand that these things will certainly happen. *“It is I, Do not be afraid”*. Having recognized Him, they were overjoyed and became afraid no more. Instantly the boat reached where they intended to go. They moved from water to solid land; from disturbance to steadiness; from the way to the destination¹.

St. Augustine

❖ It is God’s will, not only to free you of fear; but even to incite you to despise fear, which is greater than being free of it².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 25:7.*

² *In Matt. hom 34:2.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 9
GRANT ME AN ETERNAL RECONCILIATION

- ❖ Who would be justified before You, O Holy One?
If you judge, you will be justified.
If you declare my sins, they would be countless.
If you introduce a thousand charges, I would not be able to answer even one word.
You search the heart and mind.
You are aware of my hidden thoughts and weaknesses.
I confess to you; I am a sinner.
- ❖ I can not stand before you with a controversy!
For you is the wisdom itself and the might.
Before you, the steadfast mountains would move without knowing it.
Before you, the haughty souls would collapse.
And the human mountains would melt like wax before the fire.
Let all pride within me move.
And let all corruption in my depths melt.
Set Your holy mountains, Your steadfast Word within me.
In place of my failing haughty mountains.
- ❖ The Jews assumed that they are the ones with mighty mountains.
Having got the law; and from them came the fathers and the prophets.
Yet those mountains moved away from them.
You moved them to us to enjoy by the spirit and not by the letter.
You revealed to us the inner secrets of the law.
You proclaimed to us the prophecies that were realized by Your coming.
You shone with your truth on us instead of the shadows.
Thine is the glory; O who set the mountains in our depths.
- ❖ How can I enter into a trial with You, O Mighty Creator?
You, who commands the sun, not to rise; and the stars, not to move.
Let the sun not shine, to expose my inner darkness.
And let the stars not move, to find no trace of light inside me.
Instead of the material sun, Shine on me, O the Sun of righteousness.
Sitting in my darkness, I need you.
Shine on me with the light of your righteousness, to set out me a star that bears the
splendor of Your glory.
Instead of justifying myself before You, I would become justified, by acquiring You.
- ❖ How can I appear before you in a court of justice?
You, who stretch the heavens; and who walks on the high sea?
Set out of my earth a heaven; to become a dwelling place for yourself.
Pass through my inner self, as though over a stormy sea.
Your presence would mute the waves, and calm down the winds and the storms.
I am in need of the riches of Your grace.
You may pass by me, without seeing or feeling you.
Who can say to the Creator: Why have you done so?

I keep silent in the middle of the tempest.
And anticipate Your presence, O the Physician of my soul.
To heal me of my many deadly wounds.
I need to see You
I need to hear Your voice.

- ❖ Why was I disturbed when You delivered the land into the hand of the wicked?
Here, the devil became the prince of this world.
Let him reign; But the earth will become no more, and he will go down to hell.
Why is my soul moaning in me? You the Holy One have become man.
The devil aimed the arrows of death toward you.
Not realizing that you are the resurrection and the eternal life.
By Your own will, you have temporarily delivered your body to death.
In order to bear death, and to kill it in its own home.
I fear the evil one no more.
Because in me, he would find no land to take.
Turning my land into heaven, He has no more places within me.
- ❖ I anticipate my departure from this world with joy and a rejoice of heart.
My life is like a boat sailing on the sea that leaves no trace on the water behind it.
I fly like an eagle, leaving no trace in the air.
By Your Holy Spirit, I fly to you.
And settle down in the bosom of your heavenly Father.
I boast nothing, but your cross, and the riches of your grace that covers my weaknesses
and wickedness.
- ❖ I shall not justify myself! No, there is nothing to justify me.
Grant me an eternal reconciliation.
You alone, can take away the enmity, and bring me over to Your Father's bosom.
By Your blood You speak; And I become filled with hope and love.
In You, and by You alone, I can enjoy the eternal glories.
Responsibility

CHAPTER 10

WOULD THINKING ABOUT DESTINY BE THE SOLUTION?

It is difficult for us to judge 'Job', because we have not been exposed to such quantity, quality, and timing of calamities like he did. Besides, he neither had the law nor the bible, in which the Word of God tells us about the role of the devil as an unrelenting opposing adversary, about the sin, and the life to come. And although we have all these spiritual possibilities to support us, yet. In many situations, we fail to realize the wisdom and significance of God's ordainments.

In this chapter we shall see the tempted 'Job', wrestling between the following facts:

1- His conviction that he has done no hidden evils that warrant such bitter temptations from all sides.

2- His complete trust in the divine exalted care, being God's very beloved creature,

3- His conviction that no man can question God's wisdom; nor debate Him, like in a court of justice.

4- His trust in the justice of God.

5- His inability to keep quiet; as the temptation is far beyond human endurance.

Before all these facts, 'Job' believes that the only thing he could do is to contemplate in his inevitable end. As though he is saying to the Lord: If You do not give me convincing basis for Your dealing in this way with someone innocent like me (2-3); And not being possible to deceive like a human judge (4-5); did you have the intention, since the beginning, to treat me as such, whether I am a sinner or not? Was I predestined to destruction?! (6-7).

Yet, how can this conform to the miracle of my creation, when your hands shaped and made me, out of dust, into flesh and bone (8-11). You still grant me life, and care for me (12); and yet, from the beginning, you seem to have decided to destroy all you have given me (13); whether I am good or evil (14-15). Even if I could manage to hold my head high, and prove my innocence, you are persistent on pouring over me every possible suffering and grief, to testify to my guilt before the eyes of the world (16-17).

It was sure better for me not to come ever into being (18-19); But, being alive, With all such sufferings, my life, would most probably be of short duration; I will surely soon die, and go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and darkness (20-21).

In his response to the words of Bided, although 'Job' continues to confirm that the wicked and the righteous are both prone to face temptations, Yet, under such heavy burden of calamities, he could not help moaning. Although it is not possible to justify himself before God, Yet, he feels helpless to endure so much sufferings. He was confused between his commitment to deliver himself to the will of God, and the heavy weight of his burden, and his desire to get rid of it even by death.

1- He loathes his very life	1 – 7
2- His life is in God's hand	8 – 13
3- God's justice and mercy	14 – 17
4- Death is the end of troubles	18 – 22

1- HE LOATHES HIS VERY LIFE:

“I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint, and speak out in the bitterness of my soul” (Job 10: 1).

With some courage, ‘Job’ stands before the divine Judge, to raise his complaint to the One who issued the verdict for him to enter into such bitter afflictions. The tempted man realized that there is no other way to complain about what dwelt on him, but to raise it to God Himself.

Not able to defend himself before God; fearing His greatness; and finding no one to reconcile him with Him, ‘Job’ could not help but scream: ***“I loathe my very life”***; and, in despair, he longed for death.

Being unable to accuse God of oppression or cruelty ‘Job’ raised a complaint against himself; accused himself of being ignorant of the basis of the controversy, and assumed that it must be his own fault, although he does not know how it could be!

He did not attempt to utter a single word, for fear that he might say the wrong thing; But the bitterness deep inside him; or, according to the apostle: *“the sin living in him”* (Romans 7: 20), set forth to show itself.

❖ Now, as his present life became tasteless, contrary to the sweetness of his love of God, his soul started to flare against itself, accusing it of the sins it tried before to justify, with the excuse of ignorance of the high things; and added: ***“Therefore I will give free rein to my complaint (against myself)”*** (1).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Let your sufferings be like books to advise you.

St. (Mar) Ephram the Syrian

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the righteous ‘Job’, in the midst of his great tribulations, with his heart, being lifted up toward the heavenliest, and flared with love toward God, the sins he was not aware of, or that he tried to justify, started to become apparent before his eyes. That is why he came to loathe his life, and started to accuse himself, and to utter a complaint against himself.

‘Job’ would rather become his own accuser, rather than to fall under judgment in the great day of the Lord. He would rather condemn himself, than to get condemned by God, even in this world, and be delivered to his enemies, who would gloat to chastise him.

How sweet it is, for man to put the blame upon himself! The affliction would then turn, from being a burden that brings bitterness to the soul, into an enjoyment of a weight of eternal glories, to experience in the midst of sufferings; according to the words of the apostle Paul: *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all”* (2 Corinthians 4: 17).

❖ ***“I will speak out in the bitterness of my soul”*** (1). Whoever tells about his sins in disgust; should speak out in the bitterness of his soul; for the bitterness itself to be a punishment for the attempts of his tongue to justify his conscience. But, we must put into consideration that this brings on a kind of security against the pains of regret; lifting them up to confront with greater confidence the examination of the heavenly Judge.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The soul would not return to God, unless it is taken away from the world; and it would not be truly taken away, except through labor and suffering.

St. Augustine

❖ The nature of the apostle Paul was not different from ours; nor his soul was different from our souls; or he lived in a different world. He lived in the same world, and submitted to similar laws and customs. Yet, as far as virtue is concerned, he was exalted over all humans in the past and present. Now, where are those who claim the difficulty of virtue, and the easiness of sin, who are condemned by the words of that man, saying: ***“For the light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4: 17)***. If troubles were light and enduring, how much more are our troubles, which are nothing in comparison, or are mere pleasures!

Paul embraced his sufferings with love, and endured all the difficulties and obstacles he faced on the way to virtue, with joy. He did not complain because of the weakness of the body, the pressure of responsibility, the burden of different customs, or anything else. Although his responsibilities surpassed those of rulers and kings, yet he daily grew in virtue; **and the increase of the risks he faced, made his zeal stronger**, to say: ***“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead” (Philippians 3: 13)***.

And approaching death, he called everybody to partake of this joy, saying: ***“So you too should be glad and rejoice with me” (Philippians 2: 18)***. **Greatly rejoicing in affliction, in suffering, and in every humiliation**, he wrote to the Corinthians saying: ***“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, and in difficulties” (2 Corinthians 12: 10)***; calling them ‘the arms of justice’, and a fruitful source for his own benefit, that make him undefeatable before his enemies. Despite all the strikes, persecution, and insults, he felt as though in a continuous wedding, correcting several of the concepts of conquest; and thanking God by saying: ***“Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ” (2 Corinthians 4: 14)***¹.

❖ How glorious are the sufferings by which we seek the analogy of the Lord’s death!

Like the goldsmith, when he cast a piece of gold in the furnace, for a certain duration of time to get it purified; So it is when God allows testing humanity by afflictions to be purified and to gain much benefit. I wish we would not get disturbed, nor despair when temptations dwell on us; because like the goldsmith who knows well, how long he should leave the piece of gold in the furnace, and when to take it out before it gets overheated and damaged; God knows **when we are sufficiently purified, to relieve us in proper timing, of the temptations he allowed for us to go through because of our increasing evils**.

When something we do not expect dwells on us, we should not murmur or have our hearts fail; but we should know for sure that God who thoroughly knows these things, intends to test our hearts by fire, according to His will. That is why we are told to submit in everything to God, who knows when to bring us out of the furnace of fire (Wisdom of Joshua 1: 1, 2)

We should always submit to Him, continuously thank Him, and endure everything with pleasure, whether He is granting us blessings, or testing us with chastisements, which likewise are some kind of blessings.

A physician may let us enjoy swimming in a soothing pool, or go to a pleasant garden; and he may also put us, for our own benefit, under his scalpel and knife... He is a physician!

¹ في مديح بولس: عظة 2.

A father may show compassion to his child, but may also chasten and punish him... He is a father!

Knowing that God is more compassionate than any physician or father, we should not examine his dealings, nor ask Him for an account, but should let Him do what He finds proper in His sight, whether to relieve us of temptation, or to chasten us with it. In both cases He means us good; intends to grant us fellowship with Him; knows for sure our different needs, what suits each of us; and how and what is the best way for our salvation.

Let us then follow Him wherever He takes us, whether He intends for us to take an easy and paved way, or a rough and difficult one¹!

St. John Chrysostom

“I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges You have against me” (Job 10: 2).

Together with what ‘Job’ may show of protest; he, proclaiming his ignorance of the secret of the controversy, considers himself guilty, even though he does not know of what sin. That is why, he humbly asks God, saying: ***“Do not condemn me”***; namely, (Do not separate me from yourself).

If you intend for me to suffer, Do not allow the sin, the cause of my trouble, to settle down inside me!

If you intend for the rod of chastisement to fall on me, Do not allow for my perdition!

Chastise me; but do not condemn me as being worthy of judgment. And as the apostle says: *“When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world”* (1 Corinthians 11: 32).

What ‘Job’ coveted was realized in Jesus Christ: *“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death”* (Romans 8: 1).

God allows for temptations, to let the believer cry out to seek knowledge, and to discover the secrets of God, saying: ***‘Let me understand, but do not condemn me’***.

The righteous ‘Job’ realized that he for sure, must be a sinner to go through all this affliction; Yet, that was not enough for him; He wishes that God grants him an understanding to know what his sin is; because he would then confess it, and get rid of it through the divine grace.

❖ How great is faith, and how great is the power of conscience, for man to call God to testify to the realization of his goal. ‘Job’ did not object to what dwelt on him through his human condition, but he objects to what would come as a result of lack of holiness;; confessing that if it does, it would be because of weakness on his part.

Man may sin through his human status; as no one is exempt from falling. But to act in an unholy way; that would be because of a lack of faith through an evil heart, which is not how a righteous man should act.

Forgiveness of man’s sins depends upon God’s mercies, and not upon man’s strength².

St. Ambrose

❖ ***“I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges You have against me” (2).*** Proclaiming in the bitterness of his soul that he is a sinner, what

¹ والمفلوجان: للقديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم، ترجمة القمص تادرس يعقوب ملطي، 1966، ص 35 الخ.

² *The Prayer of Job and David, Book I, 6:17.*

could he say to God, but not to condemn him; as the bitterness of his present regret, would take away the pains of frustration over his sins?

God judge's man in this life in two ways: Through the realization that his present troubles are just the beginning of the ones to come; Or by waiving the coming troubles through the present ones.

Chastisement spares those who change themselves from having what is worse; whereas those, whom the present troubles do not change, would consequently enter into further troubles.

If the present troubles are not to save from the eternal woe, the apostle Paul would not say: *"When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world"* (1 Corinthians 11: 32); and *"The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son"* (Hebrew 12: 6); and as it was said to St. John by the voice of the angel, *"Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline"* (Revelation 3: 19).

"Tell me what charges You have against me?" (2). It is as though he says to the Lord: [By the strikes You brought over me, You make me secure from the eternal judgment.

We can also understand this phrase in another way: A righteous man often receives strikes of temptation; Yet, despite thorough examination, he cannot decide, on account of which particular sin he is stricken. Even though he feels that he is a sinner, but what makes him more terrified is his ignorance of the real reason behind getting these strikes. As he is certainly positive that the Mighty God would never oppress anyone; and that he was put under the scourges as a kind of warning, He prays to the divine Judge to reveal to him the goal behind His chastisement, so that he may wail for his sins; even though he fails to discover what he should wail for!

"Does it please You to oppress me, to spurn the work of Your hands, while You smile on the schemes of the wicked?" (Job 10: 3).

'Job' now, admonishes God for letting the wicked consummate their evil schemes in the life of His believers, the work of His hands.

In the whole book, it is obvious that, although 'Job' does not refer oppression to God, yet, despite being sure of God's care, he is going through a great confusion; being unable to interpret the events going on. Concentrating, in his weakness, on his own afflictions, man often wonders how God could let the wicked consummate their evil schemes against His children; and assumes that God might have forgotten the works of His hands and the objects of His care; to let the wicked do what they want.

But raising his eyes toward God, the believer will realize, that the good heavenly Physician would turn the schemes of the wicked to the edification and the glory of His children. He may allow His children to go through afflictions, yet He grants them the strength to endure them with perseverance. Never allowing for a temptation to go beyond the endurance and possibilities of His believers, they can sing, saying: *"The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers"* (Isaiah 14: 5).

❖ The Lord would never let the schemes of the wicked suppress the soul of the righteous, even if He delivers his body to them... But their schemes would be nullified, and the Creator would adapt the strikes to our ability of endurance; according to the words of the apostle Paul: *"God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out, so that you can stand up under it"* (1 Corinthians 10: 13). As, if

the merciful God allows for temptations beyond what we can endure, no man would be able to stand before the schemes of the wicked spirits, without falling down.

- ❖ He befittingly says: “*the work of Your hands*”; As though he says: [You would never press hard on those You have created by Your grace].

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ He does not say: ‘... to spurn the **righteous man**’; but says: “... *the work of Your hands*”.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ “*You smile on the schemes of the wicked*”; If, because of my sins, you chastise me; how come You smile on the schemes of the wicked?
- ❖ Indeed, the righteous may suffer now suppression by the wicked within certain limits; by those who may reach high places of authority, to become judges and even kings. But although God may allow that to chastise His flock, His people... Yet He would never allow the rod of the wicked to settle down forever on the portion of the righteous.

St. Augustine

- ❖ “*As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, both now and forevermore*” (Psalm 125; 2)... Namely, Although the mountains protect Jerusalem, yet it needs the protection of the Lord to be secure; It should not trust only in the protection of the mountains.

What makes it so protected? He adds: “*The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous*” (Psalm 125: 3). Here He refers to a fitting reason for the righteous to have the help of the Lord, to encourage them to trust in Him. What is it? The Psalmist says: ‘he could not bear to see the portion of the righteous in the hands of the wicked’ and if He allows it to be, it would only be for a limited time, for the sake of their correction, edification, and chastisement¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Do you have eyes of flesh? Do You see as a mortal sees?” (Job 10: 4).

‘Job’ was sure that God’s eyes are not like human eyes; He sees in the darkness, knows the hidden, and “the eyes of the Lord *are everywhere*” (Proverbs 15: 3); and “*range throughout the earth*” (1 Chronicles 16: 9). Because everything is exposed before the Lord, the apostle says: “*God’s judgment is based on truth*” (Romans 2: 2).

Being aware of the secrets and purity of Job’s heart, and of his love for Him; the Lord is accordingly not in need to allow the enemy to tempt him to be justified before Him. He allowed it to put Satan to shame; when ‘Job’ proves justified through his perseverance and endurance with thanksgiving, without blaspheming God.

In admonishment, ‘Job’ says to God that His eyes are not like those of the mortals; that they search the depths of man; that they even know what he is going to do in the future. So what is the need to test him? Then he asks Him not to deliver him to the devil, lest he may succumb to his pressure, and sin.

- ❖ **The physical eyes of man cannot see the works of temporal eras**, except within the limit of certain time. Moreover, the days and years of man are different from

¹ On Ps. 125.

those of eternity. Our life begins and ends at a certain time; whereas eternity is without limits.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ **“Do you see as a mortal sees?”** You do not need to test ‘Job’, to see if he is as the enemy claims. Being God, You know him beforehand. Not seeing as a mortal sees, why should I be delivered to the enemy, to commit me to sin?

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Are your days like those of a mortal; or your years like those of a man?” (Job 10: 5).

God being limitless so is His days, He is the Creator of time. We remember how Jacob said to Pharaoh that the days of man are few and difficult (See Genesis 46: 9). That is why God’s look on things is different from those men.

As far as God is concerned, the past, like the present, and the future, are all before His eyes.

“That You must search out my faults, and probe after my sin” (Job 10: 6).

‘Job’ believes that God is greater than to search out his fault. In his own eyes, he is worthless, for God to get preoccupied with probing his sins. As though he is saying together with Jeremiah: *“O Lord, we acknowledge our wickedness, and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you. For the sake of Your name, do not despise us; do not dishonor Your glorious throne”* (Jeremiah 14: 20, 21).

- ❖ As though he humbly wonders: Why are You testing me with strikes in time; when even before the existence of time, You know me? When, with the ability of Your eternity, You know me before You created me?

Pope Gregory the Great

“Though you know that I am not guilty, and that no one can rescue me from your hand?” (Job 10: 7).

Although he previously confessed that he is a sinner, yet, because he is not an evil rebel, nor an adversary to God and his commandment, or a hypocrite, he says: **“though you know that I am not guilty”**.

It is befitting for us to proclaim that we are sinners; but with God’s grace, we can also proclaim, together with the apostle: *“Lord, You know that I love you”* (John 21: 17).

Together with my confession that I am a sinner, yet, no one can rescue me from Your hand but You! In You, I take refuge; do not be angry with me!

- ❖ It is as though he says: What else can you do, but to forgive me, O You, whom no man can stand before Your might? As there is no one who is worthy of Your grace; It is only Your compassion that allows for getting forgiveness.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Even though You testify to me, I cannot be saved by my own righteousness. In case You intend to strike me, *“Who can rescue me from Your hand?”* All creation is in the right hand of Him, to who is the eternal glory.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

2- HIS LIFE IS IN THE HAND OF GOD:

“Your hands shaped me and made me. Will You now turn and destroy me?” (Job 10: 8).

Man is indebted to God for his existence; but once he falls into temptation, he believes as though God intend to destroy him.

Many fathers of the church used this phrase to respond to the followers of ‘Mani’ and others, who claimed that the body of man is nothing but darkness; that he is corrupt by nature, and deserve to be destroyed¹.

St. Jacob El-Serougi believes that the body cannot exist by itself; and so is the soul. The body was not given a permanent life without the soul; and the soul was not given feeling without the body. The life of soul is nothing without the body; and the dead body laid in the ground is lifeless without the soul.

Many fathers of the church refer that one of the blessings of the divine incarnation, is that God restored to the body its dignity; when the divine eternal Word took on Himself to bear a real human body, and to practice human activities.

❖ Because the eternal Word came down to become a body among humans; he walked along their ways and with humility, He lived in the world for thirty years, before starting to act according to His might.

It is amazing, how he lived so long in the household of a humble carpenter, mixing with them, and acting according to their customs!

It is amazing how, when heaven is filled with His glory, He got raised in such a humble little house!

It is amazing how he, as an infant was fed on his mother’s milk;... how he, as a young man paced the market place, and worshipped in a carpenter’s house;... how he, as a man, bowed his head before John the Baptist; and together with the repentant, He humbly accepted baptism.

Let us believe, how he came and took a body, not symbolically, but truly; how He became a man to let the world feel that the second Adam revealed Himself to renew the world, in place of the first Adam, who was stung by the serpent.

If He started performing miracles since His childhood, they would have assumed that His carnation was imaginary, and that His body was just a kind of shadow! That is why He waited thirty years to prove that He is a complete man, just like Adam; in order to confront the devil instead of Adam.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

❖ We do not wish to get rid of the body, but of the corruption in it. Our body is a burden on us, not because it is a body, but because it is corrupt and prone to pain. But once the new life dwells in it, it takes away the corruption; I say the corruption, and not the body as a whole²!

❖ If you wish to know the quality of body that was first created by God; let us go to paradise and look for the first man there. We shall find that his body was not corrupt or dead, but was like a golden statue coming out of the furnace; shining with splendor, free of any corruption, no labor could wear him out, nor perspiration form on his forehead, there was nothing that could disturb him³!

St. John Chrysostom

❖ “*Your hands shaped me and made me. Will You now turn and destroy me?*” (8). As though he is humbly saying to the Lord: Even though what I am doing to beg for Your favor, is not befitting, Remember Your mercy, lest You would destroy the work of Your hands... Why do You despise me, after creating me with such dignity?!

¹ راجع تعليق البابا غريغوريوس (الكبير) على هذه العبارة، وأيضًا القديس كيرلس الأورشليمي (عظة 12 : 26).

² In 2 Cor. hom 10:3.

³ Concerning Statues, homily 11.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“Strike me!”*, not as a Judge, but as a father to correct my path.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

What does he mean by “the hands of God”?

- ❖ Reading that the Holy Spirit is the ‘Finger of God’ (Luke 11: 20); we understand that the fingers refer to the ‘Son’ and the ‘Spirit’. Finally, to confirm that he acquires the holiness from the Son and the Spirit, ‘Job’ says: *“You hands shaped me and made me”* (8)¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ *“Your hands shaped me and made me”*. Refers to the divine care that works following our creation².

Theodoret Bishop of Coresh

“Remember that you molded me like clay, Will you now turn me to dust again?” (Job 10: 9).

‘Job’ resorts to God’s exalted love for man. He modeled him from clay, and granted him all those exalted possibilities. Would God retreat from His love, and turn man back to what he was?!

As man should not boast that he was created from clay; he should not, at the same time, despise his life, because he is made by God in His own image and likeness

- ❖ It is as though ‘Job’ says to God: ‘Remember the weakness of my body, and forgive my iniquity’.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Why do You forget the work of Your hands?

Yes, why do You forget my weakness? What is man, but you're being mindful of him? (Psalm 8; 4; Hebrew 2: 6).

Remember, O Lord, that You created me weak; Remember that You molded me like clay (Psalm 103: 14; Job 10: 9). How can I stand, unless Your care continuously guides me, to support this clay! Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be terrified (Psalm 104: 29)³.

- ❖ The needs of the body create certain interests, and bring us over to things that may hinder the strength and concentration of the soul. This was properly expressed by ‘Job’ when he says: *“Remember that you molded me of clay”* (Job 10: 9). Being molded of clay that would corrupt and pollute the soul, through going to extremes to fulfill the lusts of the body. *“You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knitted me together with bones and sinews”* (Job 10: 11). By that our souls are connected to and suffer through the sinews of the body. *“if I sinned, You would be watching me, and would not let my offense go unpunished. If I am guilty – woe to me! Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame, See my misery... You bring new witnesses against me”* (Job 10: 14-15, 17 LXX)⁴.

St. Ambrose

¹ The Holy Spirit, 3: 5:33.

² Commentary on Ps. 139.

³ The Prayer of Job and David, Book 4: 6: 22.

⁴ Death is Good, 3: 12.

- ❖ Man is put in the hands of God (Psalm 31: 6), a “*desired haven*” (Psalm 107: 30), “*a strong tower against the foe*” (Psalm 61: 3); In the hands of Him, who by nature, is compassionate, rescues, saves, and greatly cares for those He created out of clay... for those He set according to a royal form, clothed by glory (Psalm 8: 6); in an image worthy of honor; and with features after those of their Creator. That is why, it is befitting for each of us to keep that image all the time, and particularly at that of temptation. Here, ‘Job’ accurately portrays all the history of Adam, providing us with a concise teaching that was previously elaborately explained by the prophet Moses.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ When ‘Jonah’, was greatly displeased after the people of Nineveh were reconciled with God, got angry and was grieved in a human way, God provided a vine and made it grow up over his head to ease his discomfort; Then He commanded a scorching east wind to blow, and the vine withered, something that made Jonah extremely angry. To that God responded by saying to him: “***You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. Should I not be concerned about Nineveh that has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?***” (Jonah 4: 10-12). You rejoiced in the shade of that vine, Should I not rejoice in the salvation of the people of Nineveh? You grieved because it withered. Should I not grieve for the perdition of mankind?!

He did not just say to him: “***You have been concerned about this vine***”... But added: “***though you did not tend it or make it grow***”. Intending to confirm His love for mankind, It is as though God said to Jonah: ‘You strongly defend the work of others, How much more, it is befitting for me to defend the work of my own hands! And to make the accusation against them lighter, he added: “***who cannot tell their right hand from their left***”; namely, they sinned without knowledge.

Admonishing those moaning and complaining that they are forsaken, He says: “***Do you question me about my children, or command me about the work of my hands?***” (Isaiah 45: 11); As though He says: Who can remind a father of his son, or provoke him to think about him? Or: Who can remind an artist to keep his work from corruption?

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the man of dust bears thoughts of dust, that lean more toward temporal and earthly things; But the Holy Spirit lifts him up to the heavenliest.

Through God’s love for man, He sometimes take the grace of His Holy Spirit away from him for a certain time, to help him discover his real self, and let him cry out, “***Will you now turn me to dust again?***” (9). Feeling his weakness, man would realize that without the breath of the heavenly grace, he would be just dry dust.

“***Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese?***” (Job 10: 10).

What a marvelous analogy! The way a simple man can easily pour milk or curdle cheese, So God made man.

- ❖ Having taken a human body, God does not despise it! Who tells us that? The Lord says to Jeremiah: “***Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you***” (Jeremiah 1: 5). Not being ashamed of creating the body of man; Would He be ashamed of the body in which He hid His deity?! He, who

create the fetus in the womb; and who, according to ‘Job’, **“poured him like milk, and curdled him like cheese; clothed him with skin and flesh, and knitted him together with bones and sinews” (10, 11)**¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

With the work of the grace of the Holy Spirit, our mind becomes poured like milk; remodeled anew into compassion and gentility, to become like a piece of cheese.

- ❖ The eternal rational nature hides within our frail body, and demonstrates itself wholly in and through it. Now, having acquired such a body, which became an altar on which incense is offered, Put on this altar, all your evil thoughts and counsels before the face of God;... Lift up to Him your minds and hearts,... Beg Him to send down His holy fire to burn up and purify everything on the altar;... to put fear in the hearts of your adversaries, the demons and sins – the priests of Baal – to perish by your hands; as it happened in the days of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18: 25; etc.). You can then behold the holy Comforter in the divine water (in the font of Baptism), who pours on you a spiritual rain.

St. Anthony the Great

“Clothed me with skin and flesh, and knitted me together with bone and sinews” (Job 10: 11).

God did not create man naked, but clothed him with skin; nor created him weak, but knitted him together with bones and sinews. Man could have lived in dignity and strength, if it was not for the sin that bared him and weakened his abilities.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the inner man is clothed with skin and flesh; because, while rising up to the heavenliest, he is hindered by carnal lusts and interests that interfere with his progress.

And **St. John Chrysostom** believes that ‘Job’ is very much aware of the exalted care of God, who created him from nothingness, and granted him skin, flesh, bones, and sinews. How could it be possible for such Creator, exalted in His love, care, and might, not to care for man, His beloved creation?!

- ❖ He means to say: It is You who confirm to him the greatness of Your love toward man, and the greatness of Your wisdom. If ‘Job’ refers to the formation of man in such detail, it is to prove that after creating him from nothingness, it would be hard for him to deny the great care of God, and His exalted wisdom! Having revealed that man by himself is nothing!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ He is such a wise Craftsman; He who prepares the womb to carry the fetus!
He, who gives life to lifeless things inside you!
He, who clothed us with skin and **flesh and knitted us together** with bones and sinews?!

Once the infant is born, milk would pour from his mother’s breast to feed him!

How does the infant grows to become a kid, then a young man, then a man; and an elder; with no one sensing that incredible transformation from day to day²!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in Your providence watched over my spirit” (Job 10: 12).

¹ Catechetical Lectures, 12:26.

² Catechetical Lectures, 9:15.

Even if we have some grievances toward God, yet we still seek refuge in Him. He allows for affliction, to teach us to resort to Him; He, who created us to enjoy Him, and not to murmur or complain!

Beside His gift of the body in such a splendor of form, and with its apparent and hidden possibilities, God gave us what is greater – the breath of life from His divine mouth.... He gave us life and mercy; beside the grace of mind, heart and emotions.

He set the soul hidden in the body; to be kept, not by the body with its capabilities and energies, but by the care of God.

- ❖ How eloquent is this righteous man's lamentation for the general weakness of all men! How heavy is the charge, that after God created man strong with His mighty hands, Man gives excuses for his transgressions, that he is weak!... While the divine grace proclaims the eternal work in us through the compassion of His heavenly protection¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ ***“And in Your providence, You watched over my spirit” (12).*** Throughout my whole life, I resort to Your divine care.

- ❖ If you doubt God's care, Ask the earth, the heaven, the sun, and the moon; Ask the irrational creatures and the plants... ; Ask the rocks, the mountains, the sand dunes, and the hills...; Ask the night, and the day...; God's care is more apparent than the sun and its rays. Everywhere, in the wilderness and the populated cities, on the earth and the sea, you will hear a loud testimonial to the divine care.

Everywhere, voices, louder and clearer than those of rational humans, proclaim to everyone who listens, God's watching love!

Intending to demonstrate the strength of these voices, the prophet says: ***“Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Psalm 19: 4).***

While no one can understand our language, except our own race, the creation utters a language, understood by all peoples²!

St. John Chrysostom

“But this is what You concealed in Your heart; and I know that this was in Your mind” (Job 10: 13).

‘Job’, wrestling between these free divine gifts, together with the exalted care of God, to keep the body and soul; and those exuberant troubles, He allowed to dwell upon him; says: ***“You concealed it in Your heart”***. Namely, both things conform together through Your will concealed in Your heart, that no one of us can realize their depth. He is however sure, both of God's care, and of His allowance for his sufferings; ***“He knows that this was all in (God's) mind”***.

- ❖ **I know that You are capable of everything, and that nothing is difficult for You.** Don't you see how the possibility of recognizing God is proclaimed in His creation (Revelation 1: 19), which reveal God's existence and power, with no help from heaven. Being so created from a seminal seed, to have such help, and to be kept from falling in dangers; are enough to reveal God's power and authority. That, beside keeping the sinner unpunished, and chastising and punishing the righteous, here on earth!

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 6:18.*

² *The Divine Providence, 5.*

❖ How could all this (granting life and mercy) be impossible for such a Creator?

What could ever be impossible for Him?

Having molded the clay in the image of God (Genesis 2: 7);... Having raised the dust to the level of the rational being;... and having granted the earthly beings as much happiness as the heavenly ones;... How could You not be able to perform a miracle for me?!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

3- GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY:

"If I sinned, You would be watching me, and will not acquit me of my iniquity" (Job 10: 14).

'Job' does not deny that he is a sinner; and that his sins are known and marked by God; and accordingly, he could not be justified before Him. *"If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?" (Psalm 130: 3)*

❖ If I sinned, you would be watching me, lest *"I go down to the pit"* (Psalm 28: 1), to an ultimate sin, and be completely lost; and lest I go astray from the flock (John 10: 1), and fall a victim to the wolves. According to the law of justice, You would not justify me, but I would be blamed under the strike of the inherited curse (Genesis 3; 17).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

'Job' realized that he would not be justified by himself, but would need the grace of forgiveness. Like all the rest of the fathers of the Old Testament, he was anticipating the coming of the Savior Messiah.

❖ The Lord Christ suffered passion, while Pontius Pilate acted as a governor and a judge!

Who was the One who suffered? It was our Lord, the only-begotten Son of God!

What happened to Him? He was crucified, died, and was buried!

For whose sake? For that of the evil and the wicked!

What a great sacrifice! And what a great grace!

"How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?" (Psalm 116: 12) ¹.

St. Augustine

❖ Christ reveals Himself for everyone according to his personal needs. To those in need of joy, He comes as a Vine; to those in need of being in the presence of the Father, He comes as the Gate; Those in need of someone to carry their prayers, find in Him the Intercessor High Priest; And to the sinners, He is the slain lamb for the sake of their sanctification.

For everyone He is everything, with no change of His nature, He remains as He is, and the work of His sonhood stays unchanged. He adapts Himself according to our weakness, being a superb Physician, or a compassionate Teacher. He is Himself the Lord, and son hood is natural for Him².

❖ The word 'Jesus' means (A Savior), while in Greek, it means (A Healer). He is the Physician of the souls and the bodies; and the Healer of Spirits; He opened the eyes of the one born blind; led the minds to light; cured the lame; led the sinners along the way of repentance; He said to the one paralyzed: *"Stop sinning"* and *"Get up!"*

¹ عظة للموعوظين عن قانون الإيمان.

² Catech. Lect. 10:5.

Pick up your mat and walk” (John 14, 8); As the body was paralyzed because of the sin of the soul, He ministered first to the soul, for the healing to extend to the body.

That is why, if any of you feels pain because of his sins, you will find Him the healing Physician; And in case you are of little faith, say to Him: *“Help me to overcome my unbelief”* (Mark 9: 24).

And if you suffer physical pains, do not be an unbeliever but a believer; Know that Jesus is Christ, who deals with such cases¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ It often happens, with the memory of sin, that the mind becomes so deeply confused, that it is provoked to go back practicing sin in a way, probably worse than it did before!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“If I sinned, You would be watching me” (14)***. Man, Come and confess your sins to gain forgiveness *“State your case, that you may be acquitted”* (Isaiah 43: 26 LXX).

Why should you be ashamed to confess, since *“You were sinful from the time your mother conceived you”* (Psalm 51: 5); Whoever denies his transgression, and does not confess it, would be, as though denying his own birth!

But to keep what he was given, let him who is sinner and unholy among you confess his sin; and let the righteous not be haughty, lest he would lose the reward for his righteousness through his pride (Job 10: 16)².

St. Ambrose

“If I am guilty – woe to me! Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame, and drowned in my misery” (Job 10: 15).

Without repentance we would fall in this woe, referred to here by ‘Job’; as there is nothing to save us from it, neither our exalted behavior, nor our way of worship. That is what ‘Job’ means by saying: ***“If I am righteous”***, namely, if I lean on my own righteousness, behavior, or ministry; all of which would not lift my head up before God.

The Holy Book warns us against sin, whatever it may be; as it brings about shame and disgrace: ***“I am full of shame, and drowned in my misery” (15)***.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Proverb 14: 34)

“Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt” (Psalm 123: 3)

“The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame” (Proverb 3: 35)

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” (Proverb 11: 2).

“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever needs correction is honored” (Proverb 13: 18)

“When wickedness comes, so does contempt, and with shame comes disgrace” (Proverb 18: 3)

“Do not exalt yourself, or you may fall and bring dishonor upon yourself” (Sirach 1: 38)

¹ Catech. Lect. 10:13.

² The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 6:19.

28) “*A liar’s way leads to disgrace, and his shame is ever with him*” (Sirach 20:

22: 1) “*The idler is like a filthy stone, and everyone hisses at his disgrace*” (Sirach

“*The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glory for something disgraceful*” (Hosea 4: 7)

“*Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts; even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones*” (Romans 1: 26).

❖ Beside the (serious) inherited sins, I added evils on my own... Adam’s sin undoubtedly keeps man from daring to look up; nor can he glorify himself; hence the words of ‘Job’: “***I am full of shame***” (15).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Yes, the ‘woe’ is for the wicked, and the ‘grief’ is for the righteous.

The eternal punishment comes upon the sinner, whereas every one of the elect is purified by temporary grief.

If we temporarily disregard the sin of our first father Adam, we find ourselves caught by the evil habit of pride.

It often happens that man, through granted virtues, becomes puffed with pride, daring, and self-righteousness; but through the amazing divine care, he is allowed to have before his eyes, contradictory things in which some fall.

When the righteous sees what happens to others, he utters a scream for fear of the dangers that he could face.

Through reading about the ‘grief’ of someone, we learn to grieve over what is in us.

Now, once the pride finds a place in our thoughts, the feeling, wounded by the love of the high things, would

Depart from us; But when the grace from up there, dwells on us, it instantly incites us to long for it with tears.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ ‘Job’ truly says: “***Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame***”(15). A righteous man knows his weakness.

The wise sets forth to recognize it; whereas the fool does not.

Truly, the wise, remembering his faults, sets forth toward repentance, whereas the ignorant is content with them.

The wise accuses him; whereas the wicked defends him.

The righteous intends to go ahead and accuses himself of his sins, before anyone else does; whereas the wicked intends to mute his accuser.

One hastens, from the beginning, to talk about his shortcomings; and another intends, by talking nonsense, to accuse the others, before his sins become exposed¹.

St. Ambrose

In one of his Paschal messages, **St. Athanasius the Apostolic**, portrays for us the contempt that dwells over the human soul because of sin; while the righteous, with the pure hearts, enjoy the glory; namely that of beholding God.

❖ When we say that the wicked are dead, we do not mean that they are dead in a life of worship against sin; nor that they, like the saints, are bearing death in their bodies; **but they bury their souls in sins and iniquities**, that bring them near to

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, 6:19-20.*

death. And fulfilling their souls with deadly pleasures, **they turn them into little eagles that swarm over the dead corpses**. That is why the Mosaic Law symbolically commands not eating the eagles and all the other birds of prey (Leviticus 11: 13).

Such people kill their souls by lusts, and say: *“Let us eat and drink,... for tomorrow we die”* (Isaiah 22: 13).

The prophet describes the fruit acquired by these kinds of people who plunge themselves in pleasures, saying: *“The Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: ‘Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for’”* (Isaiah 22: 14).

Yes, even if they live, **they would be in shame**, counting their bellies as their gods; and once they die, they will be tortured, because they boasted it.

St. Paul, testifying to this fact, says: *“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food – but God will destroy them both”* (1 Corinthians 6: 13).

And the divine word proclaims that *“Evil will slay the wicked; and the foes of the righteous will be condemned”* (Psalm 34: 21); because the wicked inherit bitter fire and deadly darkness.

Whereas the righteous and those who truly practice virtue, have brought to death their earthly members: *“sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed”* (Colossians 3: 5); and in them, because of their purity and clean nature, the promise of our Savior will be realized: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”* (Math 5: 8).

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

“If I hold my head high, You stalk me like a lion, and again display Your awesome power against me” (Job 10: 16).

In another version it came: “If I become haughty like a lion, you stalk me”

- ❖ The righteous, who honors God’s image in him, becomes a terror to his enemies; according to the words of the book of proverbs: *“The righteous are as bold as a lion”* (Proverbs 28: 1); Whereas, if he descends to greed, in response to the advise of enemies, he would instantly be caught for slaughter, and would become the mocking stock of those who used to chase him.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“You bring new witnesses against me, and increase Your indignation toward me; You bring fresh troops against me” (Job 10: 17).

What doubled the tribulation of ‘Job’, and made his temptation more bitter, was his feeling that God’s indignatio toward him was increasing. God did not lack witnesses against ‘Job’; If one fails, another one would take his place.

The word ‘witness’ in Greek, may also mean (a martyr). It is as though those who testify to God’s love, care, and salvation work, until death, become witnesses against those who doubt and rebel against Him. The appearance of these saintly witnesses judges us, and deprives us of any excuse or justification of our faulty deeds. ‘Job’ expressed this by saying: ***“You increase Your indignation toward me; You bring fresh troops against me” (17).***

- ❖ God’s witnesses are those who bear witness by practicing holy works..., and are also those who suffer for the sake of the truth. In Greek, the words ‘witness’ and ‘martyr’ are synonyms. The Lord says through St. John, on the tongue of the angel: *“... even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was put tp death in your city”* (Revelation 2: 13).

Now, God renews His witnesses against us, when He doubles the life of the elect, challenging our wickedness, to instruct and teach us... Because all what they do, contradict our evil; hence the word 'truth' is called (the adversary); according to the words of the holy Scripture: "*Settle matter quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way*" (Matthew 5: 25) It is as though the children of perdition, persecuting the soul of the Savior, say: 'He is our adversary all the way'; "*He is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions*"; and, "*His manner of life is unlike that of others*" (Wisdom 2: 12, 15). To rebuke us, God renews His witnesses against us, to reveal to us that the good deeds that we disregard, is done by others.

It was befitting for him to add "*You increase your indignation toward me*"...*As is also testified by St. Peter, saying: "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God"* (1 Peter 4: 17). . That is why, renewing His witnesses against us, God the Almighty, increases His indignation toward us, as is befitting; by putting the life of the righteous before our eyes; and revealing how strongly He will strike our stubbornness in practicing sin, on the day of Judgment.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- DEATH IS THE END OF TROUBLES:

The writings of the early church, her concepts of worship, her laws, and all the aspects of her life, had an eschatological scriptural feature. For her, the dogma of another life for, was not only a main faith factor, but was the backbone of faith! The early church, as a scriptural church, was an eschatological church, that puts her heart in heaven, to live as an ambassador of the heavenly Christ; that draws the world to heaven, and bring it over to a paradisiacal life, to anticipate, in perfect hope, the eternal glory and the heavenly inheritance.

As to **the concept of the believers of the Old Testament of death**, it was, as expressed by what came in the book of wisdom of Solomon: "***God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of His own eternity; but through the devil's envy, death entered the world***" (Wisdom of Solomon 2: 23, 24). Because God did not create death; By righteousness man can gain eternity: "***...Because God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living. For He created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal***" (Wisdom of Solomon 1: 12-15). And as it also came: "***For to Know You (God) is complete righteousness, and to know Your power is the root of immortality***" (Wisdom of Solomon 15: 3).

Believers of the Old Testament looked at death as joining or gathering with their fathers (Genesis 25: 8; 47: 30). They only feared to descend to the abyss (Sheol) in sorrow (Genesis 42: 38); they counted death in a good old age a blessing (Genesis 15: 15; 25: 8); But to be cut from the land of living in the prime of life, they considered a horrible thing (Isaiah 38: 10).

However, the look of the Jews to death differed from one person to another. Alfred Edersheim presented to us the views of two prominent Jews¹.

The first is Rabbi Jochanan ben Saccai, It came in the Telmud² that his disciples came to him while on his bed of death to find him crying bitterly. When they

¹ Alfred Edersheim: *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, 1994, ch. 10.

² Ber 28b.

expressed their disbelief, how could the light of Israel, the true pillar of the temple be betrayed by such signs of fear, their teacher said to them: [If I am going to confront an earthly king - who live today and die tomorrow; whose anger and chains, are not eternal; the death verdict he may issue, is not an eternal death; whom I can debate; and whom I can bribe - I would be terrified, and I would weep. How much more would I be, when I am about to confront the holy and blessed King of kings; who lives forever; whose chains are perpetual; whose death verdict is eternal; and whom I cannot debate, nor bribe?!

Besides, I have before me two roads: one heading to paradise, and the other heading to hell; and I do not know which road I shall take! How, then, could I stop weeping?!

The second prominent Jew is **Rabbi Jehudah**, who was called ‘the saint’. Approaching death, he raised his hands toward heaven, to confirm that not a single finger in them has ever broken the law of god.

The first man lost hope altogether; and, despite his position as the head of the greatest Jewish Synagogue, was in great despair, and feared to encounter God,; Whereas the second man, in great confidence, was absolutely sure that he would enjoy paradise, because he did not break a divine commandment with any of his fingers. Two contradictory portraits of prominent dying men: one broken down by despair, and the other broken down by pride¹!

“Why then did You bring me out of the womb? I wish I had died before any eye saw me” (Job 10: 18).

Here ‘Job’ repeats the same wish he expressed before (3: 11). Probably feeling that he became an example and an eye-sore for everyone seeing him, he wished he never existed, and no one has ever seen him!

“If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave” (Job 10: 19).

Like the one who puts his heart in temporal life, is at fault; So is the one who despair of life and wishes for death. The first one is at fault for loving the world and the creation more than the Creator, and the second for despising God’s plan for him.

“Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me, so I can have a moment’s joy” (Job 10: 20).

Knowing that man’s days are few, ‘Job’ seeks in this few a little comfort, every now and then.

❖ As Solomon says: *“However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. All that comes is vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 11: 8). And as he also wrote: ‘Whatever you get in your hand, remember your end, lest you err’. That is why, when sin tempt the mind, it would be befitting for the soul to realize the goal of her rejoice; lest the sin would hastily bring it to a sure death; As it is obvious that mortal life would come soon to an end.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ O children of Adam! On whom death has reigned; Remember death, but think about life; and do not break the commandment like your first father.

O kings, crowned with crowns; Remember death that will take the crowns away from your heads, and will reign over you, until the time comes for you to be raised for final judgment.

¹ للدراسة بتوسع راجع كتابنا: رجاؤنا في الحياة ما بعد الموت؛ الكتاب الثاني: الأخرويات في الكتاب المقدس وفي الفكر اليهودي؛ 1998.

O haughty, proud, and arrogant; Remember death that would break down your haughtiness, dissolve your members, loosen your joints, and bring corruption to all your bodies. By death, the haughty would come down, and in its darkness, the cruel and the arrogant would be buried.

O greedy and robbers of others; Remember death, and do not double up your sins. As there, the sinners would not repent; and he, who robbed the possessions of his neighbor, would not possess even his own. He would go to that place where no wealth could be used, no dignity would be of benefit, and only man's sins would remain to stand against him on the Day of Judgment¹.

St. Aphrahat

"... before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow" (Job 10: 21).

Putting death before his eyes, 'Job' seeks a little comfort, probably to prepare himself for departure; lest he would err, even by thought under the burden of temptations; According to the words of the Psalmist: "*Give light to my eyes, before I sleep in death*" (Psalm 13: 3) He sought a little time to return to himself, to reconsider God's work in his life, before death comes, and the door is finally shut down; As though saying to God: "*Do You show Your wonders to the dead?*" (Psalm 88: 10).

He does not seek comfort because he is fond of temporal life; as he knows well, that he is about to go to the land of no return.

Here, 'Job' presents to us a gloomy portrait of death and grave, that was prevailing even among believers before the resurrection of Christ; as going "***to the land of gloom and deep shadow" (21).***

As Job's condition was the object of ridicule to his friends and even to the passersby, he probably wished for the grave, where, in its darkness, no one would see his sores, and where his body would dissolve like any other.

For us, our life is a perpetual battle; its ground is the heart, the mind, and the senses; a battle between the light and the darkness; where the enemy would never hold his peace until the last breath; counting himself as a king who has the right to acquire all mankind under his authority. The believer, by his departure, proclaims his ultimate conquest, or that of God's grace working in him.

❖ Many in our congregation go through this kind of (physical) death, to set them free of this world.

The death, counted by those of the world as a catastrophe, is seen by the children of God as a departure to salvation.

The righteous and the wicked both will die... Yet the righteous are called to comfort, whereas the wicked are called to judgment. A great peace is granted to the believers, and a punishment to the non-believers².

❖ +Concerning comfort, **what would we find in the world, but a perpetual war against the devil**, and a struggle against his arrows and swords?! Our war is set against the love of wealth, pride, anger, and love of appearance. And our struggle is perpetual against carnal lusts and the pleasures of the world.

Man's mind is under siege on all sides, exposed to the attacks of Satan from every direction. It can barely defend himself on every front. If it disregards the love of wealth, lust would flare in it; if it overcomes the lusts, love of appearance would pop

¹ *Demonstrations, 22:6.*

² *Treatise 7 On the Mortality, 15.*

up; and if it conquers the love of appearance, it would be torn apart by anger, pride, envy, and jealousy.

And in spite of such multitude of persecutions and dangers that afflict the heart every day, it still rejoices in staying in the midst of all these wars against the devil, here in the world. We would rather have our longing and desires, concentrated on hastening to depart to Christ, through a hurried death; having been taught by the Lord Himself, saying: *“I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices; You will grieve but your grief will turn to joy”* (John 16: 20).

Who among us, does not wish to be without grief?!

Who among us, does not long for hastening to rejoice?!

The Lord Himself also proclaimed the time when our grief will turn into joy by saying: *“I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy”* (John 16: 22). **Now, as long as our joy is in seeing Christ... What blindness would be dwelling on our mind; and what foolishness would be coming on us, when we love the grief, the afflictions, and the tears of this world, more than hastening to the joy that no one can take away from us¹?!**

Cyprian, the martyr

“... to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness” (Job 10: 22).

St. John Chrysostom did not intend to talk about the location of Hades, except that it is ‘out of this world’². Yet he talked in some detail about its curses in one of his sermons, saying:

[It is a sea of fire, not of the similar dimensions we are familiar with here, but much greater and more violent; with a great pit full of awesome and terrifying waves of fire coming out of it like tongues of voracious beasts.

There, no one can resist; and from it no one can escape.

There, the gentle face of Christ, the Grantor of peace, is not to be seen.

And like those violent men condemned to work in mines, who cannot see their families, but only those who force them to work; the same thing, yet worse, could be said of those being tortured in hell. For concerning those forced to work in the mines, one of them can raise an appeal to the emperor to seek mercy, and could be pardoned; whereas in hell, that would never happen, but they would be there forever, bearing indescribable sufferings with no end in sight³].

St. John Chrysostom says that the main suffering and the worst of all for those condemned, **is their deprivation of the presence of the lord, and the fellowship with the saints in heaven⁴**.

In hell, although there are different grades of suffering⁵, that depend on the sin of the condemned, yet all would eternally fall under them⁶.

These sufferings are not intended just to realize the divine justice, but are set to provoke mankind to repent and to refrain from sin.

He says that a suffering of hell is real⁷: If God cares that we refrain from sin¹, to avoid falling in such terrible conditions; It is obvious that He punishes the wicked and reward the righteous². He sets hell, so as not to condemn anyone to hell³].

¹ *Treatise 7 On the Mortality, 4.*

² *In Rom. hom. 31:4.*

³ *In Matt. hom. 43 (44):4; cf. In Hebr. hom. 31:4.*

⁴ *In Phil. hom 13:4; In Matt. hom. 23(24):8; In Eph. hom. 3:3.*

⁵ *In Matt. hom. 75 (76):5.*

⁶ *In 1 Cor. 23:4; In 2 Cor. 10:4; In 2 Thes. 3:1.*

⁷ *In 1 Thes. hom.; cf. 2 Cor. 10:4; In 2 Thes. 3:1.*

- ❖ As the outer death separates the body from the soul; the inner death separates the soul from God. The “shadow of death” is the darkness of the latter separation; As everyone of those condemned to the eternal fire, would be in darkness, as far as the inner light is concerned.

Now, the natural fire, beside being destructive, emits light; Whereas that fire set to punish sins, is destructive, yet emits no light. That is why the Truth says to the wicked: “*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25: 41); and, represented all in one individual, He says: “*Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness*” (Matthew 22: 13).

If the fire prepared for the wicked could have light, it would not be said: “*Throw him into the outer darkness*”; and the Psalmist would not say: “*Fire will fall upon them; and they will not see the sun*” Psalm 58: 8 Vulgate).

Pope Gregory the Great

“*To the land... of disorder*” (22) . It so seems that in the grave, there is no special order; there, the kings are equal to the slaves, and the rich to the poor, etc. Yet, there must be an elaborate plan concerning the chastisements that would await us, even those we cannot interpret.

- ❖ The words: “... *of disorder*” are amazing; As the Almighty God, who truly punish for wickedness, would never allow, even sufferings, to be “*of disorder*”! How could the punishment be “*of disorder*”, if they are according to the measure of the crimes committed by those to be eternally condemned?!... When it is written: “*For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy; but the mighty will be mightily tested, for the Lord of all... will not show deference to greatness,... but He takes thought for all alike*” (Wisdom 6: 6, 7). And as is said concerning the judgment of Babylon: “*Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself*” (Revelation 18: 7). So, if the punishment would be according to the measure of the sin, there would surely be an elaborate order for them.

And the same way, “there are many mansions in our Father’s house”, according to the diversity of virtues, there should be many grades of punishments in hell, according to the diversity of crimes. Although it is only one hell for all, yet that does not mean that all would suffer the same way!

- ❖ “... *where even the light is like darkness*” (22). Although, there, fire emits no light for comfort, yet, for the sake of giving those condemned more torture, it emits a kind of light for a certain goal, to let them recognize by it their followers sharing their fate, those for whose sake they preferred the love of carnal life to the commandments of the Creator.

The Lord tells us, how that rich man who was condemned to go down into the sufferings of the eternal fire (Luke 17: 19-31), asked Abraham to send a messenger to his five brothers to advise them, to avoid falling under the same punishment in the future! It is then obvious, that if remembering his absent brothers has doubled his suffering, how much more would it be, when he sees them later on, joining him?!

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ In 1 Tim hom. 15:3.

² In Rom. hom. 31:4.

³ In Ps 7:12.

- ❖ On the day of final judgment, the good will, no doubt, be separated from the bad, and the righteous from the wicked; Every soul in God's judgment, will occupy a place befitting to its worthiness¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ Here, we talk about several grades and levels in both paradise and hell. God, as a just Judge, gives everyone according to the measure of his faith².
- ❖ As in the light and in the glory, there are different grades; So it will be in hell³.

St. Maccar the Great

¹ *De Principiis 2:9:8 (Cf. Butterworth).*

3:40 عظة²

4:40 عظة³

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 10

YOU ARE MY ETERNITY

- ❖ When You put me through afflictions, I feel bitterness;
I hate my life, and wishes for death.
Anxiety would fill my depths, and all my inner being would shake.
I will cry out together with 'Job': "I detest my life".
Indeed in my weakness, I often wished for death.
And I often wondered why I have been created?
Yet, when, amid my temptations, I raise my eyes up toward You, I will not forget
that I am the work of Your hands.
Amid my chastisements, I will never disregard Your perpetual care for me.
Amid my chastisements, when I look up at You, You bring me into Your bosom.
When I remember Your fatherhood, I forget all my troubles.
I truly realize my hidden sins; And instead of thinking of my afflictions, my soul
would get weary of my iniquities.
Instead of wishing for death, I would seek Your grace, the forgiver of sins.
Instead of murmuring, I would accuse myself of sin.
I would confess my sins now, with the hope that You will cover me up on the day
of judgment.
I would expose myself before myself, to get covered by Your righteousness.
My affliction would then, turn into peace.
When I hide in You, and resort to You, O the refuge of my life!
Instead of the afflictions that destroy my soul;
I would enjoy the weight of an eternal glory, that lifts my soul to heaven.
I would then forget every pain, and would even long for it.
As long as it is the way of a fellowship with You in the cross, as well as in the
resurrection.
- ❖ Amid my affliction and my sufferings, I realize that I am a sinner.
But I am in need of Your Holy Spirit to enlighten my insight.
I know my sin, I discover it, and I confess it.
I detest it, and cry out to You to support me by Your grace, to flee from it.
Who would ever expose myself before myself, but Your light, O my Lord?!
Shine on me to realize my weaknesses, and to hope joyfully for the riches of Your
love, that forgives all my sins.
Grant me to judge myself here, so that You would not condemn me on the day of
Your second coming.
- ❖ In my weakness, the sufferings swallowed up my soul.
I assumed that You have forsaken me to be destroyed by the wicked.
But when I raise my eyes up to You, I realize that You would never let me go
through sufferings beyond my endurance.
By Your love, You put my affliction within certain limits;
And by Your grace, You grant me the gift of bearing it with joy.
And pour on me, as a fruit of the Spirit: patience, as a way to cross over to glories.
You indeed, would never let the rod of the wicked fall over the righteous.
But through it, You would justify them, and would bring them over to eternity.
- ❖ O my Lord, You are aware of my depths.

- You are the Creator of time, and above time.
 You do not need to test me by temptations.
 In my weaknesses, I fear the pressure of the enemy on me.
 Lest he would divert me to evil.
 I resort to You, to keep me from him.
- ❖ O my Lord, I confess to You that I am a sinner.
 By Your grace, I cry out together with the apostle Peter:
"My Lord, You know that I love You".
 I do not intend to oppose You, or to disobey You.
 Yet, this would not justify me;
 I am weak; Support me with Your grace, to bear Your righteousness.
 - ❖ Indeed I moan because of my body'
 Yet I know that it is the work of Your good hands.
 Scatter the corruption that infiltrated in it.
 Sanctify the body that You created, and wish to glorify it.
 You, the eternal Word, have become a body;
 So that, by Your incarnation, You sanctify my whole being.
 Then, I should not despise my body, the partner of the soul in glory.
 To You is the glory, You who honor our bodies in You.
 You have honored my body, being the work of Your hands.
 Having disgraced it by my sins, You incarnated to glorify what You created.
 - ❖ Because I am the work of Your hands, With me You are pleased.
 I am sure of Your exalted care, however would be the ferocity of the waves against me.
 Yet my mind remains on its weakness, unable to realize Your wisdom.
 Reveal to me the secret of Your love, so as not to stumble.
 Let me know Your ordinances, to meditate in Your love.
 - ❖ You are amazing in Your care for me.
 If I sin, You would be watching me, lest I go astray more and more.
 You lead me by the rod of chastisement, so as not to fall into the den of wolves.
 You draw me by love full of firmness, and by firmness full of compassion.
 - ❖ I soon look up toward Your cross;
 And cross over to Your tomb, O my Savior.
 Then, death for me, would not be despair;
 But a fellowship of love with Him who died for my sake.
 I would long to die together with You, for loving you and Your beloved.
 I would no more consider the years of my life;
 But would anticipate the salvation of the whole world.
 I would not fear events, but would rejoice in the salvation of many.
 You are so amazing in Your love.
 You, who, even to death, have been transformed into a joyful gift.
 - ❖ I will no more be preoccupied with my afflictions.
 I will no more foolishly cry out, saying:
 'Cease, leave me alone, I have been submerged in my bitterness'
 I will not cry out to You in ignorance;
 Counting death as comfort from my troubles.

❖ Shine, O Sun of Righteousness, on me and on all mankind?
To scatter the darkness of our thoughts?
And to bring us out of our inner graves?
And to turn our dry bones into a great, great army?
To enjoy, together with Ezekiel, to see by You, the resurrection of all mankind
(Ezekiel 38)
So that there would be in my life no more darkness;
And that I would no more suffer night.
But in Your light, I would realize the secrets of Your salvation.
Would enjoy the rejoice of recognizing Your amazing ordinance.
And would always be in the light, and the son of the day.

CHAPTER 11

THEORIES AND FACTS

Both Eliphaz and Bildad could not move Job's mind one single centimeter; Would Zophar be able to do otherwise?

It seems that Zophar has been the simplest of Job's friends; he was practical, like a man of the church; but, unfortunately, being literal and with no personal relationship with God, he lacked the true church way of thinking; which is not the love for barren and foolish debates; but that of holding fast to the spirit of the truth, uprightness, and sound faith, with a spacious heart, a bowing soul in submission and humility, and a face with a perpetual smile, like that of the Savior.

Job's soars were bleeding, and the wounds of his broken hearts were increasing; with no one to pour oil, to soothe the soars or to bandage the wounds. And now came the talk of the third friend Zophar to make the inflammation of the wounds more intense, even if he sounds to be uttering the truth.

Zophar listened to 'Job' protesting against what dwelt upon him, when he is righteous. He assumed that, if 'Job' encounters God face to face, he would realize that he is a great sinner; and that what dwelt upon him is far lighter than what he actually deserves (4-6).

He talks with seemingly eloquent words of great divine wisdom, showing that, as God is Omnipotent (7-10), unfathomable; has full authority over the guilty; watches justly over men; and no one can hide his sin from Him (11-14); It is therefore befitting for man to repent, to cast away his sin, in order to enjoy prosperity and peace (15-20).

Zophar draws a convincing portrait of Job's misery, and of the possibility of being saved of it, if he confesses his sin and repent, by following the following steps: To look deep into his soul, and to change his way of thinking.

1- **To look deep** into his soul, and to change his way of thinking.

2- **To look up** and move on to get attached to God; and to pray to Him fervently and zealously.

3- **To mend his twisted ways**; and, if he happens to find in his hands something that he has got through iniquity, deceit, cheating or oppression, he must make up for it.

4- To do his best, likewise, to mend the behavior of his own household.

Despite all the wisdom he presented in his talk, Zophar was arrogant and lacked humility. Although he talks with a seemingly sound logic, yet without fellowship in the sufferings of his brother in true love.

1- **Accusing 'Job' of pride and deceit** 1 – 4

2- **God's justice would never err.** 5 – 6

3- **God's perfection is unfathomable.** 7 – 9

4- **God's authority is infinite** 10

5- **God's knowledge is whole** 11 – 12

6- **There is no escape from God's anger, except by repentance and prayer**
15 – 20

1- ACCUSING 'JOB' OF PRIDE AND DECEIT:

“Then Zophar the Naaamatite replied: Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated?” (Job 11: 1, 2).

Whereas Eliphaz started his talk to ‘Job’ with great reservation and dignity; and Bildad was a little more rough, Zophar came to strike at him without mercy, and with extremely harsh words.

Zophar could not accept Job’s logic that God allowed for him to go through temptations despite being righteous (9: 21; 11: 4; 10: 7); as that contradicts every religious philosophy that prevailed in his age or any preceding one.

He started by saying: ***“Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated?”***. According to him, ‘Job’ is a man of many words and no deeds, and nothing in his talk is worthy of a response.

According to Bildad, Job’s words are *“a blustering wind”* (8: 2); And here, Zophar; although seemingly presenting sound and wise views, yet he unjustly accuses ‘Job’; does not share his feelings as someone very much in pain; nor appreciates his pitiful situation. He accuses him of talking too much, despite the fact that, in his talk, he does not justify himself, but admits that he is a sinner (9: 20).

Here, Zophar calls ‘Job’ to be wise and sit quietly at the feet of the elders. *“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”* (James 1: 19). He most probably means that ‘Job’ should sit quietly at the feet of his three friends to listen to their sermons, advises, and counsels.

❖ Zophar was not wrong to say: “whoever talks too much cannot justify himself”, and would lose the virtue of silence; As it is written that *“The effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever”* (Isaiah 32: 17); *“Like a city whose walls are broken down, is a man who lacks self-control”* (Proverb 25: 28 Vulgate); *“When words are many, sin is not absent”* (Proverb 10: 19); *“Let slanderers not be established in the land”* (Psalm 140: 11); and true words lose value, when said with no discernment.

True words are against the wicked, if they are intended to be of benefit to the good. The wicked, on the other hand, cannot readily listen to good counsel, disregard mending their life, and preoccupy themselves with finding the words to defend themselves.

❖ Who recalls the words of the righteous ‘Job’, would know how vain is this accusation!... As how would he call himself pure, he who says: *“If I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me”*? (Job 9: 20).

Pope Gregory the Great

Indeed, the Holy Book incites on silence, as much as possible, if it is holy; the same way it incites on edifying talk. The

Psalmist prays saying: *“Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; Keep watch over the door of my lips”* (Psalm 141: 3).

❖ The Holy Spirit instructs man to keep his whole body – from his head to his feet – in harmony:

To keep **his eyes** seeing with purity.

And to keep **his tongue**, uttering only good words. To give weight to every word; and never to let anything unclean or defiled mix with his talk¹.

- ❖ Flee from those who pretend to be ‘monks and virgins’, without having the true realization and the good discernment. Because if you mix with them; being themselves cold with no fire, and going after their own lusts; they would keep you from progressing, and would even quench the fire of your zeal. In case they come to talk to you about earthly things, according to their own views, do not listen to them, but heed the words of the apostle Paul, saying: “*Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt*” (1 Thessalonians 5: 19). Nothing would put out the Spirit’s fire like vain talk².

St. Anthony the Great

- ❖ Silence for God’s sake is good; and talking for God’s sake is good as well.

Father Bemen

- ❖ When your tongue is as pure as that of Christ; when your mouth becomes like that of the Father; And when you come to be a temple for the Holy Spirit; What kind of honor will be yours? If your mouth is made of gold and precious stones, it would never emit so much light, like when it is adorned with meekness. What would be more loving than a mouth that does not know how to revile, but is used to bless, and to utter good words³?

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ I often talked and regretted; but with silence, I never did⁴.

St. Arsany, teacher of royal sons

- ❖ Although the righteous keeps silent, knowing that there is “*a time to be silent and a time to speak*” (Ecclesiastes 3: 7); yet he does not become mute – a feature of the Sadducees, and of all those who teach vanity, who are not silent, concerning the truth, but are mute. The Lord commanded the sea, and not man to become mute, rebuking it for being stormy⁵.

The scholar Origen

“Will your idle talk reduce men to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock?” (Job 11: 3).

Here Zophar calls ‘Job’ a mocker, mocking God by complaining against Him; mocking men, and shamelessly deceiving those around him. He also accuses him of talking idle. Zophar uses harsh words against ‘Job’, and calls him by unbecoming names.

Some believe that by his words, Zophar indirectly blames his friends Eliphaz and Bildad for keeping silent and not defending the truth, when they heard ‘Job’ haughtily utter vain lies. They should have told him to stop talking such meaningless nonsense!

“You say to God, ‘My beliefs are flawless, and I am pure in Your sight’” (Job 11: 4).

¹ Epistle 1.

² Epistle 16.

³ In Matt. hom 78:3.

⁵ PG 13:1599.

⁴ عن بستان الرهبان.

By this he is accuses 'Job' of words he did not utter!
Job's belief was actually flawless; He indeed expressed his wish for death because of the heavy burden of temptation; yet he never thought of committing suicide!
He indeed admonished God, yet he did not deny His justice and mercies!
He indeed proclaimed that he is not wicked nor a hypocrite, yet he did not deny that he is a sinner, begging for forgiveness.
Job's beliefs about God were actually far better than those of his friends, who misjudged him, especially Zophar, gave his words the wrong meaning, did not appreciate his situation, and did not think that, if put in his place, they would probably do wrong against God!

2- GOD'S JUSTICE WOULD NEVER ERROR:

"Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that He would open His lips against you" (Job 11: 5).

Here, Zophar resorts to the testimony of God Himself, who, even if He keeps silent and does not answer 'Job', yet that would be for a certain time, after which He would open His lips to tell 'Job' that he deserves more than what so far dwelt upon him.

How difficult it is for us to put ourselves, as though on the throne of God, to claim that we know what He has in mind, to judge others, and to refer our judgment to God!

Zophar's wish has actually been realized, and God eventually talked; Yet when He opened His lips, He defended 'Job', commanded his friends to apologize to him, and to seek his prayers and forgiveness!

There is indeed a great difference between, when man open his mouth to judge his brethren and to condemn them, on pretension of defending the truth and testifying to the holy God; and when God opens His mouth and talks to man. God talks the truth, yet the truth filled with love and practical wisdom. He openly admonished Simon Peter, and even called him 'Satan', when he objected to the crucifixion and the death of Christ; Yet He supported and commended him when he confessed and proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

When man opens his mouth, he reflects his weakness and faults on others; Whereas God opens His mouth to grant the sinner the strength to confess, the possibility to repent, the ability to perpetually sanctify, and to continuously spiritually grow, through the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

❖ The Truth says to Peter who was still filled with earthly concepts: *"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"* (Mark 8: 33); yet, when he proclaimed well, He said to him: *"This was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 16: 17). So God opens His lips, frankly proclaiming His will to men.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **Being unable to take on ourselves the job of judgment, because of our sins, we should therefore refrain from doing it;** as, being ourselves sinners, how could we judge and condemn others?!

The law has not appointed you a judge; So taking on yourself this name and job, would bring you under the judgment of trespassing on the law.

We should examine ourselves before sitting on the bench of judgment, especially if we are in a position of guiding or mentoring¹.

St. Cyril the Great

❖ Stretch your robe over the guilty and cover him, if you are unable to carry his transgressions on yourself²!

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

“... and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for wisdom is many-sided. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves” (Job 11: 6).

According to Zophar, it was befitting for ‘Job’ to keep quiet instead of accusing God of injustice, through tempting him while being righteous. He confirms to ‘Job’ that what dwelt on him is a punishment far less than what he deserves, and he should consequently expect to get more of it.

Being unable to convince ‘Job’ of his views, Zophar wishes that God would reveal to ‘Job’ **the secrets of His divine wisdom**, and give him a double understanding, to realize that what dwelt upon him is less than what he deserves.

Pope Gregory the Great discerns between the knowledge of two kinds of the great works of the divine wisdom: The first kind: is the great works of the divine wisdom, which is rather easy to know through the nature He created for man, and through his daily gifts to him. The second kind: the **secret** great works of the divine wisdom, which would be difficult for man to realize; when it seems that God has forsaken man, and allowed him to go through afflictions or temptations. Man needs a divine grace to realize the hidden wisdom behind his suffering, which, if he gets, would be counted as double knowledge: realizing God’s wisdom when He gives, as well as when He takes away; When he grants man his wish, and when he abstains.

❖ *“... and discloses to you the secrets of wisdom; for wisdom is many-sided” (6).*

The great works of divine wisdom, is that, when God controls those He has created; brings them over to the ultimate goods He started them on; and helps by His inspirations, those He enlighten by the light of His visiting; As it is obvious in the sight of all men, that those He created through His absolute generosity, He would support by His compassion; Granting them spiritual gifts, He Himself would bring to perfection those whom He generously started with compassion.

As to the great **secret works of divine wisdom**; these are when it (seems) that God has forsaken those He has created;... when He does not consummate the good works He started when He created us, because of our sins;... When, while enlightening us with the splendor of His grace, He still allows for the temptation of our flesh;... When, while He seems not to care to keep on us the good gifts He granted us, to provoke the longings of our souls toward Him; He still applies pressure on us in a hidden way, through the helplessness of our nature.

Paul was anxious to reach the secrets of this wisdom, when he said: *“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or*

¹ عظاته على إنجيل لوقا: عظة ٣٢، ٣٣.

² CSEL.

who has been His counselor?" (Romans 11: 33, 34). Unable to reach the secrets of God, Paul has gone back to the knowledge of his own weakness.

Although Zophar was a learned man, who cared to seek knowledge, yet he proved to be ignorant because of the impudence of his arrogant talk. Not realizing his own reality, he saw his weak self as a man of virtue.

Pope Gregory the Great

Zophar says that, proclaiming to man the secrets of His wisdom, God grants him a double understanding. That is actually enjoyed by the true and faithful believer, who keeps on praying to God to grant him wisdom to realize His **secret** plans, to be granted a **“many-sided understanding”**.

What is meant by ‘many-sided understanding’?

1- **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that realizing the secrets of God’s wisdom, is not a mere rational realization, but is the knowledge of experience and life, where wisdom is connected to love. The wise would get many-sided understanding, when he practices double love; namely, the love for God, and the love for man. He would get double and unlimited love toward God, and double love toward his brethren, intending by his whole being to put his brethren ahead of him in everything, and wishing to deal with them as he likes them to deal with him.

The law of love is “many-sided”, in which we are committed to love both God and our neighbor.

Concerning our love for God, it should be a many-sided love; loving Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind; leaving nothing in ourselves that we do not offer God.

And concerning our love for our neighbor, it is also many-sided; being, on one aspect, commanded Not to despise him through greed, to revile him by tongue, or to betray him through the selfishness of carnal lusts; And on another aspect, to deal with him, the way we like him to deal with us.

❖ **“Its law is many-sided” (6).** What is meant by **“the law of God”** but “love”? By it, we read in a hidden way, how to support the commandments of life by outer works. The voice of the Truth says about this law: *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (John 15: 12); and Paul says: *“Love is the fulfillment of the law”* (Romans 13: 10); and *“Carry each other’s burdens”* (Galatians 6: 2). How could the law of Christ be understood, by something other than love, which we indeed consummate, when we lovingly carry each other’s burdens.

That law is called ‘multi-sided’; as love, filled with zealously exalted care, extends to all the works of virtue. Although it was set with only two commandments, yet it goes on to reach an unlimited number of them; the law starts with the love of God and the love of our neighbor (Matthew 22: 39-40).

But **the love of God is divided into three categories:** We are commanded to love our creator with all our heart, with all our soul, and with our entire mind (see Matthew 22: 37). We should notice here, that the holy word that commits us to love God, not only tells us ‘how’, but also tells us ‘to what extent’, adding the words *“with all”* three times. It is fitting for whoever intends to please God, to leave nothing in himself to himself.

As to loving our neighbor, it came in two commandments. On one aspect, it was said by the righteous ‘Tobit’: *“Do not ever hate anyone”*; And on another aspect, it was

said by the Truth Himself: “*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you*” (Matthew 7: 12). By these two commandments, we are committed to good behavior.

- ❖ The law of God is truly called ‘**multi-sided**’; because, though having a single principle – love; once it reigns over the mind, it flares it in limitless ways, as expressed by the apostle Paul: “*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth*” (1 Corinthians 13: 4-6).

Pope Gregory the Great

2- A multi-sided concept means that, as long as we are in the body, we should keep on seeking more and consistent growth in wisdom and knowledge and love. Some fathers believe that this growth would not even cease in the eternal life. The more the believer looks at God, and the deeper union he achieves with Him, he will grow more and more in wisdom, knowledge, and love. He would keep on singing: “*He is making everything new*” (Revelation 21: 5).

- ❖ Although **everyone perpetually seeks more knowledge**, Yet it remains an incomplete knowledge, compared to its true perfection, until the time for what is perfect comes, and for what is partial to disappear¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ He encourages her and provokes her not to sit idle, but to come out to Him, and to try to see Him, not through the windows, nor in a mirror, but to go to Him and see Him face to face; Now, being unable to see Him, **He stand behind and not before her, He stands behind her wall** (Song 2: 9)².

The scholar Origen

Zophar did not know his limits; Although he provoked ‘Job’ to seek the many-sided knowledge, which is a good and holy counsel, yet, with his non-commitment to limits, he foolishly proclaimed that what dwelt on ‘Job’ was less than what he actually deserves, and that he should expect more strikes.

Here, **Pope Gregory the Great** likens Zophar to a friend who accompanies someone to a forest to help him cut wood; and in his foolishness and lack of wisdom, he strikes with his ax, its head gets loose and flies off to cut off his friend’s head.

It is befitting for us, in order to avoid destroying our brethren, to realize the limits of rebuke and of chastisement. And as the apostle Paul says, concerning the chastisement of the young man who had a relationship with his father’s wife; He started by commanding the congregation to isolate him; then got back to say: “*Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you therefore to reaffirm your love for him*” (2 Corinthians 2: 7, 8). Having got what is enough, his chastisement process was complete, and the situation became too critical; If the repentant would not find the compassionate bosom of the church, he would be overwhelmed by despair, and his soul would consequently perish. As they were committed to isolate him, they are now equally committed to reaffirm and renew their love for him, to let his soul rejoice in salvation.

¹ Concerning Faith.

² The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 3:13. (ACW).

❖ **“Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves” (6)...** Here, it is befitting for us to know that Zophar rebukes the righteous man for a great iniquity, and in a wrong way... Yet the word of insult intended could be wiped out, if we take into consideration the root from where it grew. That is why the Lord’s command through Moses, says: *“A man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. Otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought”* (Deuteronomy 19: 5-6). We go into the forest with our neighbor, when we go to see our iniquities; and we cut wood, when we cut the evil deeds of sinners with a deity goal; but the ax flies off our hands, when the reform is extremely difficult, and we strike our neighbor and kill him, **when we rebuke him in a way that kills him by the spirit of love**; as the rebuke often turns into hate, if it goes out of its proper limits!

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Rebuke should be preceded by mercy and not anger.

St. Augustine

❖ It is unfitting for physicians to feel frustrated against their patients, but against their maladies, to be able to heal them.

St. Basil the Great

❖ Shepherd the flock, not with boredom and despite; as though you have authority over them; But as a good shepherd, gather the sheep into your bosom, and comfort the weak and pregnant among them!

The laws of the apostles – Section 4

3- GOD’S PERFECTION IS UNFATHOMABLE:

“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?” (Job 11: 7).

Comparing God’s greatness and glory, to man’s foolishness and ignorance; Zophar reaches the conclusion that we should consequently submit to God, and seek His mercy and care. If man cannot fathom His wisdom, how could he hold Him wrong?!

However strong your longing for God may be, however strong your attachment to Him, and your recognition of His Person; Yet your knowledge about Him will remain utterly incomplete. Do not ever imagine that you can manage to search His essence, or realize the truth of His existence! Because, then, You shall be like the eye which can see the ocean, but cannot reach its end!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem translates the word *“limits”* as (the least) of God’s work; and comments on that, saying: ‘If the least of God’s works are unfathomable, how could be their Creator be fathomable¹?!’

¹ *Catech. Lect. 6:9.*

❖ If, as I said before, you cannot find a trace of a ship that sailed on the sea, or of an eagle that flew in the air, **how can you find a trace of God's ordinances or divine care?!**

❖ It's good of Zophar to say such things about God, yet he did not say them with a pure intention; because while he glorifies God, he utters evil about the righteous man.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ No one has ever, or will, discover the nature or essence of God; that could be done in the future. I wish those who have such thought or intention, search and think about what would happen in the future.

I am told by my mind, which is created according to the likeness of God, that this could happen, when that divines part; namely, the brain and mind, mixes with whom it is like; when the portrait goes back to its origin, to which it longs. That is, I assume the meaning of the great phrase, saying, that we, in the future, will know as we are supposed to know¹.

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

Who can realize the depth of God's secrets and plans? Who can understand His works; or who can follow His **footsteps**? Man will remain continuously enjoying that knowledge; and the more he progresses, the more he realizes his inability to understand the depths of the secret of God.

The fathers present to us, through the evangelic thought, the way to enter into the secret of the knowledge of God; namely 'love'. The more our hearts flare with His love, the more our insight is cleansed, to recognize new depths. And the deeper we go in the knowledge of God, the more we will love Him; then, we will no more care for the temporal things, but will be more preoccupied with the eternal.

❖ What are the "**footsteps**" of God" but the compassions of His visit? We would be enticed to progress toward the high things, when we react with the breaths of His Spirit.

As the spiritual love of God flares the heart, it would be given knowledge of the way to follow the footsteps of God; it would be as though God walks and leave His footsteps on the heart!

The psalmist was clever in following the footsteps of our Creator when he said: "*My soul follows close behind You*" (Psalm 63: 8); And intending to acquire a high insight, he said: "*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with god?*" (Psalm 42: 2).

The Almighty God is there, with an obvious concept, when we tread with our feet over the corruption of our death; Then, He would be seen, by those who rise to heaven, in the splendor of His divine nature. However, in the present time, the grace of the spirit pouring into our hearts, lifts up our soul, from the carnal goals, and exalts it through not caring for the temporal things, when the mind does not look to everything coveted downwards, and flares with longing toward the high things.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ Oration 28:17.

❖ No tongue has the authority to utter the ways of the divine secrets, Their existence could only be seen, enjoyed, and rejoiced, by the pure mind.

In God, it would be swallowed and captivated by seeing His beauty; and united with His glory.

No one who has entered there would ever look with lust to what is seen here.

No one who has enjoyed these secrets would ever appreciate the sweetness of anything on earth.

No one who has seen its beauty would ever consider anything in our world as beautiful.

No one who got fulfilled with its existence, would not see everything else as trash.

No one who has enjoyed its company, and got drunk with its praise, would not despise the pleasure of the company of people.

No one in whose soul and bones, the love of Christ, has set forth, would ever stand the uncleanness of lust.

No one who has enjoyed the company and secrets of angels, would not despise the company of the world.

No one, whose mind is captivated by the beauty of the Lord of lords, would ever be captivated by anything in this world with all its pleasures.

No one, whose mind is preoccupied with God and with caring for Him, would ever be preoccupied with anything else¹.

The spiritual elder, John El-Deliaty

“They are higher than the heavens – what can you do? Deeper than Sheol – what can you know? Their measures is longer than the earth and wider than the sea” (Job 11: 8, 9).

If we cannot measure the height of the heaven, the depth of Sheol, the length of the earth, or the width of the sea, how can we measure the Creator of all these? The Psalmist says: *“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain”* (Psalm 139: 6); and: *“Your judgments are like the great deep”* (Psalm 36: 6).

When we lift our eyes up toward heaven, we see God higher than it is, our souls would then, desire to get liberated from the bondage of our love for the world, through the work of the Holy Spirit of God, that carries us, as though on the wings of a dove.

When we look down into the depths of ‘Sheol’, we see, how God in His love, breaks down its strongholds, to bring us forth to the divine bosoms.

When we wander in the vast reaches of the earth, we find it very narrow, compared with the spacious heart of God that embraces with infinite love all mankind from Adam to the end of ages.

And when we look in admiration to the oceans, we despise them before the exalted swell of God’s love.

❖ ***“(He) is higher than the heavens,... deeper than ‘Sheol’,... longer than the earth,... wider than the sea” (8, 9).*** It is befitting for us to understand that in a spiritual sense, and not in a carnal one. (He) is higher than the heavens; being exalted above everything, as it is not possible to realize His spiritual nature;... (He) is deeper than ‘Sheol’; as, by His exaltation, He helps us in our lowliness;... (He) is longer than the

¹ ميمر على الصلاة وعلى قرات الطبايع الروحانية وعلى معرفة الله.

earth; surpassing the measurements of creation, through the infinite perpetuity of His eternity;... and (He) is wider than the sea; controlling by His power, the waves of temporal things.

Pope Gregory the Great

All these attributes could refer to man as well: **He can be ‘a heaven’, when he intends to connect himself to the high things.**

He can be ‘a Sheol’, when he lowers himself to lowly things, and gets confused by temptations....;

He can be ‘a land’, when he achieves more good works, through the fertility of the steadfast hope;...

And He can be ‘a sea’, when he get disturbed by some circumstances, and get confused through his own weakness.

God is higher than the heavens; as we submit to His authority; even when we exalt above ourselves!

He is deeper than “sheol”, in His judgment of the human mind itself, watching it amid the temptations;...

He is longer than the earth, by the fruits of our life which he ultimately grants us; as our hope in the present time realizes nothing;...

He is wider than the sea; when the human mind goes here and there, and confronts many issues that concern the coming things.

Putting his heart up there, the Psalmist, feeling that he did not reach God yet, says: *“Your knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain”* (Psalm 139: 6). Paul knew Him who is deeper than ‘Sheol’, when he searched his heart; but fearing the more searching judgment of God., he says: *“My conscience is clear; but that does not make me innocent; It is the Lord who judges me”* (1 Corinthians 4: 4).

Pope Gregory the Great

4- GOD’S AUTHORITY IS INFINITE:

“If He comes along and confines you in prison and convenes a court, who can oppose Him?” (Job 10: 10).

By this, Zophar reaches the same conviction embraced by ‘Job’, concerning the absolute wisdom of God, *“If He snatches away, who can stop Him? Who can say to Him: ‘What are You doing?’”* (Job 9: 12); and *“... though You know that I am not guilty, and that no one can rescue me from Your hand”* (Job 10: 7).

If He (*snatches*) by death, confines in prison, or entangles in a net, who can oppose Him? Who can stand before His judgment?

❖ ***‘If He overturns everything, who can oppose Him, or say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’*** God overturns the heaven, when He devastates the soaring ambitions of man by His terrifying secret command; ... Overturns ‘Sheol’, when He allows someone’s soul to get terrified and fall under its temptations;... Overturns the earth when He takes away the fruits of good works through pouring tribulations over them. And overturns the sea, when He nullifies the hesitating waves of our spirit through a sudden terror.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Mercion of the second century B.C., together with his followers, stumbled by what came in the old Testament concerning the divine wrath. I have previously dedicated a

section in my work entitled “The brotherly love” – Chapter 8 – to deal with the (Concept of God’s anger). I said that God does not devastate nor confine any body; and that what came in the Holy Book concerning God’s anger, present certain divine issues in human language that could be understood.

God does not bear human emotions; As He is “Love”.

❖ When we read about God’s anger, we should not understand this expression according to human concept, but in a meaning befitting to God, who is above all emotions; We should look at Him as the Almighty fearful Judge, who avenges all the unjust things done by us in this world; As the human nature is used to fear furious men, and to avoid offending them, like some judges, known to be harsh and extremely strict.

Yet those who fear anger are those whose consciences are torture them. Although Judges are committed to justice in their judgments, always respect the laws they apply, and the principles they vowed to follow; Yet, however gentle and compassionate they may be; those who are justly condemned will always accuse them of being unfair¹.

St. John Cassian

5- GOD’S KNOWLEDGE IS WHOLE:

“Surely He recognizes deceitful men; and when He sees evil, does he not take note?” (Job 11: 11).

While what we know about God is the littlest of little, He knows all our secrets, even those hidden from us. He recognizes the wicked, even those counted by us or by themselves as righteous. He sees the iniquity done in secret; and He would not negatively stand before evil, even if He seems as though He temporarily did not take note of it!

❖ ***“He recognizes (the vanity of men); and when He sees evil, does he not take note?” (11).*** Here we notice a good order: He first states that He recognizes vanity, then he takes note of evil. Every evil is vain; although not every vanity is evil. We practice vain things, as long as we do what is perishable; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro”* (Psalm 39; 6).

Pope Gregory the Great

“But a witless man can no more become wise, than a wild donkey’s colt can be born a man” (Job 11: 12).

Zophar says that man, himself, after his fall, became witless, having deprived himself of the wisdom of God. He became “like beasts that perish” (Psalm 49: 20); witless like a wild donkey’s colt in the wilderness, which assumes that it is wise, knows the truth and justice, and foolishly refuses to submit to the authority of God.

What Zophar says here is a fact in which man has generally fallen; Yet, by it, he refers to no one else but ‘Job’; counting him to be at the level of dumb useless beasts, while counting himself, wise, and capable of offering true and active counsel!

❖ Zophar equals ‘Job’ to a wild donkey’s colt, with which he compared himself, according to his own words: *“The arrows of the Almighty are in me,... Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass?”* (Job 6: 4, 5). By such vain words, he accuses ‘Job’ of witlessly and incessantly, howling like a hungry beast, and not talking like man!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ Cassian: *De institutis caenoboum*, 8:2-4.

❖ **A witless vain man is usually puffed with pride;** which is the ultimate end of vanity. Pride corrupts the heart with sin; And let it arrogantly boast iniquity. Disregarding its iniquity, the soul no more grieves for losing its innocence, and becomes blind as a just punishment. And disregarding the yoke of the fear of God, the heart licentiously often remembers its past evil lusts, and wrestles to bring evil down to the possibility of action.

Pope Gregory the Great

Whereas man has foolishly descended to the level of irrational beasts, and even insects, through the pride of his heart, and his haughtiness before God, the source of wisdom; The Wisdom of God became man, to lift man up to the heavenly wisdom, to enjoy uniting with him by the divine incarnation. We, particularly by the ascension of the Lord Christ, have been lifted up from the low level of beasts, to the heavenly wisdom.

❖ Notice how our nature went down, then climbed up. There is nowhere lower than the level to which man has descended; and there is nowhere higher than that to which the Lord Christ has ascended... Paul clarifies this, saying: “*When it says “He ascended”, what does it mean, but that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same One who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things*” (Ephesians 4: 9-10).

I contemplate in the unworthiness of our race; We, who are nothing but ashes and dust, to reach such honors, through the mercies and compassion of the Lord!

The beasts are irrational by their own nature; whereas we, the creation supposed to be rational, **have become more foolish than the irrational beasts through our own will.**

Thus, when you hear that man has become like irrational beasts, do not assume that he became equal to them, but he actually descended to a lower level.

That is what Isaiah clearly teaches, when he says: “*The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand*” (Isaiah 1: 3).

But I wish we would not be disturbed because of our old transgressions; as “**Where sin increased, grace increased all the more**” (Romans 5: 20).

You have seen how we became more foolish than the beasts, Do you want to see how we became more irrational than the birds?! Jeremiah says: “*the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But my people do not know the judgment of the Lord*” (Jeremiah 8: 7).

Now you see how we became more foolish than the donkey, the ox, the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow; Do you want to see to what further extent our foolishness went?!

We are asked by the wise Solomon **to go to the ant to learn wisdom:** “*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise*” (Proverbs 6: 6).

We ended up learning from the ants; we, who were created according to the image and likeness of God. Yet it is our responsibility, not God’s; as we decline to stay that way!

We even became harder than rocks, hear this: “*Hear you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you everlasting foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a controversy with His people*”(Micah 6: 2).

He judges man, calling the foundations of the earth to testify that men became harder than them!

To what extent of foolishness do they still intend to reach?! Having become more dumb than the donkey, less sensitive than the ox, more listless than the turtledove and the swift; less wise than the ant, harder than the rocks; and even **became like the serpents** (see **Psalm 58: 5**)?!

And why should I talk about the irrational creatures? We (with our evil) are called by the Lord Himself: 'the children of the devil', saying: "*You belong to your father, the devil*" (John 8; 44).

Yet, despite our unworthiness, and the fact that we are senseless, ungrateful, foolish, and harder than rocks, **Yet today, our nature has been raised above all creation.**

St. John Chrysostom

"Yet if you devote your heart to Him, and stretch out your hands to Him..."
(Job 11: 13).

If on the one side, God is the One with authority, who knows everything; And on the other side, man cannot realize the perfection of His knowledge; and not even the riches of the secrets concerning the human nature; Therefore, it is more befitting for man, instead of criticizing God's actions, to resort to Him in prayers; and to take away everything foreign from God of iniquity and oppression; God would then lift up his face, and grant him infinite blessings.

"If you put away the sin that is in your hand, and allow no wickedness to dwell in your tent..." (Job 11: 14).

Zophar asks 'Job', as his two other friends did before him, to resort to God, by his heart, as well as by his practical behavior; and to take away from himself every hypocrisy and deceit, so that God would respond to his prayers! His advice to 'Job' to repent seems true enough; Yet we do not know his real intention: Is he truly seeking his repentance, or intending to confirm his evil and hypocrisy?!

He asks him to devote his heart with purity, and to stretch out his hands persistently in prayer, as though intending to hold fast to God, and never to let Him go until He blesses him, as our father Jacob once did?!

Zophar is asking 'Job' to stop doing sin, and to put wickedness away from his tent! A strange thing to ask of someone dwelling on a heap of trash, whom the worms clothe him like a robe, and the soars cover him from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. What sin could he do with hands incessantly bleeding?! And from what tent could he put wickedness away, when he is living on a heap of trash?!

❖ Sin is either committed by thought alone, or by thought together with work. That is why, "***the sin that in the hands***" is the sin by work; whereas the "***wickedness in the tent***" is that in the heart. Our heart is truly called 'a tent', inside which we are buried, when we do not reveal ourselves outside through work.

Zophar was a friend of a righteous man who knows what to say; Yet he himself, like the heretics, in rebuking such a man, does not really know how to say even what he knows. **He asks his friend to put away the sin from his hands; then the wickedness from his tent.** Whoever puts away from himself all the outer wicked works, is committed by necessity to go back to himself, and wisely test his heart; lest the sin which is no

longer practiced, would remain lingering in his mind. That is why Solomon says: “*Finish your outdoor work and get your field ready; after that build your house*” (Proverb 24: 27). What he means by finishing the outdoor work, and getting the field ready, is to uproot the thistles and thorns of evil, to be worthy of bearing the fruits of the reward. **Then after plowing our field, we can get back to build our house, having learned from the good works, the complete purity of life, that we are committed to build in our thoughts.**

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Repentance is given to mankind as a grace above grace. **Repentance is a second birth from God**, whose advance payment we get in baptism, and get as a gift through repentance.

Repentance is the entrance of mercy, open to all those who seek it. Through that entrance, we enter to the divine mercy; and without it, no one can find mercy.

“*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; and are justified freely by His grace*” (Romans 3: 23, 24). ‘Repentance’ is the second grace, born in the heart as fruits of faith and fear.

‘Fear’ is the fatherly rod, that herds us to the spiritual Eden; Yet, once we are there, it leaves us and return.

‘Eden’ is found in the divine love, in which are all the blessings. That was the place where Paul got a supernatural kind of nourishment; Having tasted the fruit of the tree of life, he marveled, saying: “*No eyes has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him*” (1 Corinthians 2: 9) ¹.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

- ❖ No ailment that may come over man, for which the word of God has no proper medication. And like the medication prepared and mixed by physicians to treat physical ailments, there are medications prepared and mixed by the Spirit of the Lord, to deal and to confront the lusts of sins. Whoever feels the ailment, would find the medication close by, and is healed.

All ailments are treated by medications that are contradictory to them: Ailments caused by cold, are treated by hot or warm herbs; whereas those caused by fever, are treated by cooling herbs.

Now, learn from this, O wise man, who wishes to be healed from the ailments of your soul. Do to your soul what medicine does to the ailments of the body; As all things on the outer level, have been put before our eyes as examples to be followed as far as concerning the inner level; so that our souls can be healed by the same ways our bodies are healed.

Therefore, let us prepare the proper medication to confront every kind of lust:

Against doubt: faith.

Against doing wrong: doing right.

Against apprehension: surety.

Against craftiness: simplicity

Against telling lies: telling the truth.

¹ A. J. Wensinck: *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh*, 1923, p 210.
Dana Miller: *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian*, 1984, p.223.

Against deceit: honesty.
 Against confusion: clarity.
 Against cruelty: compassion.
 Against ferocity: mercy.
 Against carnal lust: spiritual lust.
 Against enjoyment of pleasure: suffering pain.
 Against the worldly joy: that of Christ.
 Against the worldly songs: spiritual praises.
 Against grief: rejoice.
 Against self-admiration and boasting; true hope in God.
 Against carnal desires: spiritual desires.
 Against carnal look: spiritual look.
 Against looking at seen things: thinking of unseen ones.
 Against binding to relationships with physical family (for a monk): binding to the heavenly family.
 Against dwelling in an earthly home: living and dwelling in the higher Jerusalem.
 Each of these ailments could be healed by what are opposite and contradictory to them.

Whoever desires the heavenly life, is committed to do without the material earthly things; as craving for the one inside us, would not be possible unless the other is dead. The spiritual lust would never be born in our thoughts, unless the carnal lust is dead. The death of one leads to the life of the other.

When the body lives in us with all its lusts and desires, the soul would then be dead with all its desires¹.

St. (Mar) Filoksinus

6- THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM GOD’S ANGER, EXCEPT BY REPENTANCE AND PRAYER:

“Then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear” (Job 11: 15).

Here, Zophar, opens the door of hope, like his two friends: Eliphaz (5: 8, etc), and Bildad (20: 7-22); contrary to ‘Job’, on whom, because of the ferocity of temptation, the pessimistic attitude often prevailed, that his early life would never return.

What Zophar said, although it does not suit ‘Job’ in his present situation, yet constitutes a sound principle for any true repentant. No one can lift his face up before the holy One, unless he puts shame and disgrace away from himself through the purity of his heart and the holiness of his tent; by which he can stand before God, firm in his hope and can lean leaning on Him, with his love with no fear.

❖ If you present your prayer with a pure heart (13), with no blame concerning any unfitting work, with sighs over yourself, You will have a confrontation with God; and instead of grief, you will have joy, instead of tribulations, you will get blessings, and the features of your face would be shining like pure water (15). You would not fear any further ailments; as God would put them all away from you, would grant you

¹ Homily 1:21-24.

forgiveness, would bring tranquility over you, and you would be like a boat that found protection from waves and gales in a secure harbor.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Now, having put away those two (the sin of the hand and the wickedness in the tent), we may blamelessly lift our faces up before God; As the soul is man's inner face, by which he can behold and recognize his Creator by love.

Now, lifting up that face is lifting the soul up to God in prayer.

Yet, the hidden intention of work may become a hindrance to that lifting up. Through remembering, while being preoccupied with prayer, the sin under which it was once submitted, the soul would lose every confidence, as well as hope in getting what it longs for; and would always have in mind, that continuous rejection of practicing what it hears from God. That is why St. John says: "*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and receive from Him anything we ask*" (1 John 3: 21-23); and Solomon says: "*If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable*" (Proverbs 28: 9).. Our hearts, while praying, would rebuke us when we remember how we stood against His commandments.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ God would never help anyone, unless he himself contributes something; He would be helped if he prays¹.
- ❖ The perfect reward of faith will be: When we ask, it will be given to us; when we seek, we will find; when we knock, the door, it will be opened to us (Matthew 7: 7). He who argues, would close the door of mercy before himself².
- ❖ There is no way by which the congregation can reach absolute perfection; or any man can achieve any progress toward the true pietistic righteousness, except through the help of our Savior crucified Christ, and the gift of His Spirit. Whoever denies that, as I believe, could never be counted as a Christian³.

St. Augustine

***"You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by"* (Job 11: 16).**

Once the one who suffers enjoys the comforts of God, he would forget his sufferings, like when a mother forgets the painful pangs of labor, once she sees her newborn child; her pains would become like waters gone by. God alone can lift those who suffer above their sufferings, and would even turn them into blessings beyond count.

***"Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning"* (Job 11: 17).**

If 'Job' felt that his light was completely been turned off, and his life has become pitch dark; God's light, according to Zophar, would shine on him again, with his repentance, to make his life brighter than noonday, and would turn the darkness of the night for him into a cheerful morning.

¹ On Man's Perfection in Righteousness 20:43.

² On Man's Perfection in Righteousness 20:40.

³ On Nature and Grace, 71.

- ❖ Life becoming brighter than noonday refers to the renewal of virtue at the time of temptation; as it is written: *“Those who fear the Lord will have a happy end”* (Sirach 1: 13). The more outer crosses he confronts, the more, the light of his inner virtues would shine; as testified by St. Paul who says: *“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all”* (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ O, the unseen Light!
 - O, the Splendor that is not to be compared with any other splendor!
 - You are the Light, before which all created lights would vanish!
 - You are the Splendor, before which every outer splendor would be quenched!
 - You are the Light, the source of all lights; and the Splendor the fountain of all splendors!
 - You are the Light and the Splendor, before whom all lights would become like darkness!
 - You are the splendor by whom the darkness would twinkle with brightness!
 - You are the exalted Light, not covered by any cloud, nor hidden by any vapor; over whom the darkness of the night cannot come; could not be hindered by any barrier; and could not be covered by any shadow!
 - Finally, You are the Light that perpetually enlighten the inner creation.
 - Let me be swallowed by Your majesty!; to be able to recognize all Your depths, by the very splendor of Your deity, and by the splendor reflected on me from You.
 - Never forsake me, lest my ignorance would increase, and my wickedness would become more intense.
 - Without You, I would become void and miserable! Without You, no one would have any good; As You are alone the Truth and the true goodness!
 - That is what I confess, and that is what I know, O my Lord God. Wherever I am, without You, I would have nothing but misery, inside and outside, because any riches that are not divine, are for me, utter poverty!

St. Augustine

“You will be secure, because there is hope; you would dig about you and take your rest in safety” (Job 11: 18).

God’s comfort takes away anxiety from man, gives him a sense of peace and security, and opens before him the doors of hope instead of despair.

He would dig about him, like when soldiers dig trenches in which they rest in safety, under the wings of God.

- ❖ Hope would lift itself up in God, more securely, concerning serious matters that man suffers for the sake of God. No reward of joy in eternity, could be gathered, unless it is sowed here, in the first place, in pietistic grief; according to the words of the Psalmist, saying: *“He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him”* (Psalm 126: 6); and those of Paul, saying: *“If we died with Him, we will also live with Him”* (2 Timothy 2: 11); and as Paul warns his disciples

saying: “*We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14: 22).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ To hope for God, from God, is to love God, the Giver of grace¹.

❖ How miserable I am?!

My Lord... When will this corrupt nature ever depart from me; and when will Your complete power work in me?!

My Lord... How pleasant are solitude, tranquility, truth, and purity; which are all Yours! And how detestable are loud noise, vanity, and wickedness that are all mine!

What more can I say?! You are the true goodness; the merciful, the holy, and the just...; whereas I am the wicked, the selfish, and the oppressive!

You are the Light, whereas I am the darkness!

You are the life, whereas I am the death!

You are the Physician, whereas I am the sick!

You are the Joy, whereas I am the grief!

You are the real Truth, whereas I am the real vanity, like any other man on earth!

With which language, may I speak with You?! I pray, listen to me. I am the work of Your hands; My perdition is fearful to think about!

I am your making; and here I am dying! I am the work of Your hands; and here I am, going down to nothingness!

If I am existing, You are the One who made me exist; “*You hands made me and formed me*” (Psalm 119: 73);

Let Your hands that were nailed on the cross, give me peace;

Would You despise the work of Your hands?!

I contemplate in Your deep wounds; You engraved my name on Your hands. Read my name and save me!

My soul that moans before You, is the work of Your hands; Create out of me a new creation.

As that is Your work, my soul keeps on crying out: “O, Life, Grant me a new life”!

Being the work of Your hands, my soul supplicates to you to give her back its early beauty!

O Lord, Having allowed me to talk to You,... Forgive me,... As, who is man, to dare talk to his Creator?!

Yes, forgive me! Forgive my daring! Forgive Your servant who dared to raise his voice before his Lord!

As necessity knows no law, It is pain that makes me talk to You!

And it is the calamity that dwelt on me, that made me call the Physician, for I am sick!

I seek the light, for I am blind! I seek life, for I am dead!

Who is that Physician, that light, and that life, but You, O my Lord?!

O Jesus of Nazareth, Have mercy on me!

St. Augustine

¹ *Sermon 304:3.*

“You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favor” (Job 11: 19).

It is not befitting of man to get disturbed; he should lie down comfortably and not be afraid; being in the bosom of God, surrounded by His divine care.

Man would become, not only secure, with no enemies to fear, and no calamities to suffer; But many would court his favor; when they find peace and comfort in mere looking at his face; on which they would see printed, the portrait of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, testifying to His dwelling in his heart.

Whoever courts the favor of God’s face, would bear the face of God, and his favor would be courted by many.

❖ Whoever seeks the worldly glory, would fear despise. And whoever perpetually opens his mouth wide seeking profit would definitely fear loss... Whereas he, who only longs for eternity, would become haughty, and would never be shaken by calamities; Having nothing in the world to covet, he would consequently have nothing to fear.

Hadn’t Paul (lie down), with peace in his heart, when he said: *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8: 38, 39).

The power of this love is commended by the voice of the holy church, proclaimed in the Song of songs, saying: *“Love is as strong as death”* (8: 6); Comparing love to the power of death; namely, when the soul holds fast to love, it utterly dies to the pleasures of this world.

Pope Gregory the Great

“But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; and their hope is to breathe their last” (Job 11: 20).

After presenting such a wonderful portrait of the complete repentance and its joyful fruit, he warns against evil and its consequences. The eyes of the wicked will fail; namely, the eyes that do not look up at God, the source of goodness, will get corrupted.

❖ By the “eyes” he means the (intention); according to the testimony of the Truth in the gospel, saying: *“If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light”* (Matthew 6: 22). If our action is preceded by good intention, whatever it may seem to men, it will, in the eyes of our inner judge, be counted as pure action. The eyes of the wicked are their intentions concerning their carnal lusts inside them. These will (fail), because they do not care for their eternal interests, concentrating all the time on the temporal benefits alone. *“Their hope is to breathe their last”*; as *“When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes”* (Proverb 11: 7).

What would be the hope of the sinner here in all his thoughts, except to surpass the others in authority; to have his storehouses full; to break down his competitors in business; and to fulfill all his carnal lusts?!

Now, we could have considered Zophar right in what he said, if the righteous ‘Job’ has not already proclaimed all that, more perfectly through his whole life!

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 11
GRANT ME THE LIVING DIVINE TRUTH

- ❖ My soul praises You, because You created her according to Your image
In her depths, she longs to recognize Your divine Truth.
Like a bride, she anticipates the day of her eternal wedding.
She wishes to be adorned with the thoughts of her Groom, and to recognize His secrets.
- ❖ I confess to You, O the amazing Truth;
I often had a haughty thought;
I thought of myself as Your advocate, O Truth!
Together with Peter, I held a sword to strike the adversary servant!
I foolishly, cut off his spiritual ear!
And deprived him of the ability to hear Your word.
I counted myself as a man of the church.
And foolishly, I defended her with a foreign spirit, unfitting to a son!
- ❖ Grant me the Spirit of truth and knowledge, by the Spirit of love and compassion.
What truth am I defending, with no true love for all mankind?
To our wicked world, You came, O Truth.
In bitterness we presented to You the cross, O Lover of all mankind.
While defending the Truth, we foolishly persecuted it.
Grant me to enjoy You, and Your Holy Spirit.
As You are the Truth, the Love, and the Way.
Let Your Holy Spirit work in me.
The Spirit which rebukes on sin, and grants divine comforts.
Grant me the pomade of compassion, and contrition, in true humility.
By Your love, Your compassion, and Your knowledge, I would draw many into the net of Your church.
- ❖ Put Your holy word in my mouth.
To sanctify my tongue, to utter the truth full of love.
Speak in me, through my tongue, as well as through my silence.
Let me testify, by my talk, as well as by my silence.
- ❖ Open up Your mouth and speak to me.
Your words, like light, would expose and scatter my darkness.
Would grant me enlightenment to save and glorify me.
Teach me how to talk to my brethren, my fellows in weakness.
Instead of judgment, let me be compassionate to them, so that You will be compassionate to me.
Let me be weak, as they are weak, that my heart flares with the fire of Your love.
Let me count myself chained, as they are chained.
Then You would set us all free, O Grantor of freedom.
- ❖ With the light of Your divine wisdom, shine on me.
To make me enjoy double understanding.
To make me realize Your love through the works of Your exalted love.

To discover the secrets of Your care for me; even in the midst of Your chastisements.
I praise You for Your generous gifts.
Whether You give or You take away, I see You God, amazing in Your care.

- ❖ Grant me a double wisdom, to realize both Your seen and hidden plans.
And beside Your wisdom, I would understand the fellowship in the feature of Your love.
By the double wisdom, I would bear a double love.
I would love You, and I would love my brethren, the subject of Your love.
- ❖ I would love You a double love.
I would love You with my heart, my soul, and my mind!
I would know no limit for my love for You!
I would also love my brethren a double love.
I would offer them the spirit of love through generous giving and long suffering.
I would not know how to hate, to envy, or to judge.
I would deal with them the same way I wish them to deal with me.
- ❖ Grant me, O Lord, double wisdom, double understanding, and double love.
Let me every morning enjoy Your new mercies.
To increase in wisdom, understanding, and love.
I shall never be content with what You grant me, until I become Your icon!
Your gifts flare my longing for You.
And provoke me to have a fellowship with You, and to follow Your example.
O You, the divine Wisdom and Love.
- ❖ Grant me to be compassionate, even when I rebuke my beloved brethren.
Anoint my words with Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
- ❖ When I confront You, O Almighty,
My heart flares, longing to confront You more and more.
My soul within me, moans, longing to recognize You more and more.
Tell me, O Lord:
If I am not able to know the secrets of Your seen creation,
How can I dare to claim to know its unseen Creator?!
If I can not see the trace that a boat leaves after it passes by,
Nor that of an eagle after it flies along,
How can I follow Your steps to recognize Your plans?!
- ❖ Grant me Your love, that in it, I can recognize You and Your plans.
Lift up my heart above every vain love.
To let it perpetually soar in Your heavens, to recognize You.
To let me know You, that my love for You would increase.
And that I would despise every earthly love.
- ❖ Tell me, where should I look, when the heavens and earth are not wide enough to accommodate You?
Shall I look to heavens, and desire that Your Holy Spirit would carry me up there?
That He would bring me up from glory to glory, until I settle down in Your bosom?

Shall I look down into the depths of 'Sheol', to find out that I have no place in it?
After You have descended into it, and broke up its locks
And carried me on Your arms, and brought me over to the glories.
When I look at the earth with all its width,
I would feel its extreme narrowness, compared with Your spacious heart toward me
and my brethren!
I may be so impressed before the extent of the ocean;
Yet I will realize that it counts as nothing, compared to the extent of Your exalted
love.
Indeed, what is the height, the depth, the length, or the width of Your infinite love?!

- ❖ In Your absolute authority, we rejoice, O divine Love!
You are the undisputable authority!
Nobody can ever stand to debate before You!
Your authority is that of love and compassionate fatherhood, O the Beneficent!
You wish that all would be saved, and come to know the truth.
Your authority is always for edification and glory.
As long as we put our life in Your hands;
And as long as we respond to the grace of Your exalted goodness.
I confess to You, O Lord, the lowly level to which I have descended.
I have lost the true understanding, and my heart became void.
Who can fill it up but You, O the wisdom of God?
To dwell in me, and to carry me in You.
To enjoy You, and to walk along the amazing way of wisdom.
By You, I climb up from the abyss of ignorance.
And soar up together with You to the heavens of wisdom and knowledge.
By Your Spirit, You perpetually take away from me the works of the old man.
You destroy my ignorance and foolishness.
And renew in me the works of the new man.
To become indeed, an icon of You, O the whole Wisdom.
- ❖ Grant me the life of true repentance.
Make me give my back to ignorance.
Make me give my face toward You, O the divine wisdom.
Make me proclaim my repentance, by forsaking all wickedness.
Make me walk in the truth through the riches of Your grace.
Make me lift my heart up to You.
To get more than what I seek, and more than what I need.

AN ANNEX TO CHAPTER 11

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

BY FATHERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Having reached the talk by Job's third friend, I found myself committed to deal with the connection between Knowledge and love; between the divine Truth and the divine love; or between the divine wisdom and the divine love. Job's three friends thought of themselves as having a true divine knowledge; and as advocates of the truth; they were wise in their own eyes. They have indeed often uttered the truth; yet they lacked the true love. That is what terrifies me as a Christian who, while knowing much about heavenly facts, fears that he may lack the love for all mankind, even for his adversaries. As a priest, I feel this fear more than anybody else.

There is nothing that deprives man of his fellowship with God – who is Love – like holding Peter's sword to defend the truth, by cutting off the ear of someone around us, even though he is an adversary to the truth.

By love we hold the sword of the Spirit that strikes in our depths, as well as in the depths of those around us; to cut off the ear of the old man, to replace it with the ear of the Spirit, that finds sweetness in hearing the voice of the truth, submits to it, and responds to it.

How great is knowledge!

- ❖ A paradise, filled with joy, is a soul that does everything possible to find knowledge¹.
- ❖ O Lord Jesus Christ; Let Your servants be knowledgeable about the temptations of the mighty demons; **Grant them the knowledge of Your godly wisdom; Clothe them with Your holy power;** by which they can humiliate the pride of the devils, and overcome them in their war against them. Amen².

The spiritual elder - John El-Deliaty

Gnosticism or (The true Knowledge):

We have previously dealt with the Gnostics, who have put in their hearts, to replace faith with knowledge or Gnosis, as a way to salvation; that the word 'Gnostics' came to refer to groups of heretics. But **St. Clement of Alexandria** gave this term a new Christian concept; to refer to 'Christians who live in the knowledge of God'. And, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, some use the term 'A true Gnostic'; namely, 'A Christian Gnostic', to differentiate him from 'A heretic Gnostic'.

Who is a Gnostic?

In his second work of 'Stromata', St. Clement stated that 'A true Gnostic' has to possess three criteria³: Practicing meditation, keeping the commandments, and having the good teachings. In case he lacks one of them, his gnosis is handicapped⁴. It is as though the Gnostic should possess the divine Gnostic knowledge, which he called 'Meditation';

¹رسالة 51 (ملحق 15).

²ميمر عن شيطان الزنا.

³ *Stromata*, 2:10.

⁴ *Louis Bouyer: The Spirituality of the N.T. & The Fathers, 1960, P 265f.*

should live according to it; namely, to keep the commandments; and to walk according to the Spirit of the church; namely, to have the good teachings.

Waltham Volker clarified well, that Clements's Gnosticism, if it flourishes by controlling oneself; Yet it is above anything else, a knowledge of the holy books through the enlightenment by the work of Christ, in the light of the church's tradition¹.

❖ The Gnostic is divine; became holy; carries God, and is carried by God².

St. Clement of Alexandria

The goal of Gnosticism:

The goal of our Teacher is to proclaim the truth to us; The Lord Christ, as a Teacher, instructs man to discover the 'Truth'³, which is in Christ Jesus.

A teacher's task does not end at revealing the Truth, but extends to developing in the soul a longing to know the

Truth; saying: [**Teaching – or Paideia – develops a love for knowledge**⁴].

Finally, the truth proclaimed in Christ, is not just a theoretically philosophical mental knowledge, but it embraces the strength of work: [**Its goal is to mend the soul, not just to teach it; and to lift it up to virtuous life, not just to provide it with mental knowledge**⁵].

St. Clement of Alexandria

Sources of Gnostic knowledge:

St. Clement clarified in several works, that God is the Source of everything good and of benefit; That is why he believes that all the partial points of truth, found by the philosophers, are divine gifts. Whereas the Gnosticism in its perfection; namely, the perfect truth, **is the gift of God through the Son; the gift of Christ Himself to us.**

Someone may say that the Greeks have discovered philosophy through human understanding; But I see the Holy book says that understanding is from God; That is why the Psalmist cries out: "*I am Your servant; give me discernment...*" (Psalm 119: 125)⁶.

Gnosticism; namely, the knowledge, and the realization of the present, the future, and the past, as sure and confirmed things, are all granted and proclaimed by the Son of God, who is the Wisdom⁷.

St. Clement clarified that the lord Christ grants Gnosticism **through reading the Holy Book**⁸ by the Spirit of the church, lest we misunderstand it like the heretics; By which we bear perfection through our perfect evangelic behavior; Saying: [By receiving the gospel, man becomes perfect, after having walked according to the law⁹].

He also confirms **that Baptism** makes Gnosticism possible for us, by the enlightenment of our inner insight¹⁰.

¹ Waltham Volker: *Der Waher Crostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, Berlin - Leipzig, 1952.

² *Stromata*, 7:13.

³ *Strom* 4:6.

⁴ *Strom* 4:15.

⁵ *Paed* 1:1:1.

⁶ *Strom.* 6:8.

⁷ *Ibid.* 6:7.

⁸ *Ibid* 6:7.

⁹ *Strom* 4:21.

¹⁰ *Paed.* 1:28:1.

St. Clement paid much attention to ‘love’ as a source Gnosticism; being based on it: God is love, known by those who love Him... That is why we are committed to enter into knowledge through the divine love; to meditate into the thing through its like¹... and to know the God of love through practicing love; namely, practicing the heavenly life.

St. John Chrysostom says: [How amazing is such a friendship?! Telling us His secrets “*the secret of His will*”; the things that are in His heart... It is truly the secret full of amazing wisdom and understanding?!... Those who were worth nothing, in an instant He lifted them up to riches and abundance; He, who has been a detested enemy, was instantly lifted high up...; and in the designated time. It is the work of wisdom, realized through the cross].

- ❖ Only when one has love, he could be said to know as he should²!
- ❖ Paul says that knowledge is great and extremely useful for those who acquire it, when it is sweetened with love³.

Ambrose

- ❖ This could be only understood by the concept that, **without love, knowledge presents no goodness**, but would rather puff man up, and would make him boast by a vain wind. Those who have knowledge without love are haughty; They long for the divine honors through practicing religious rites, which they know, hide the true God; and yet they do their best to provoke those under their influence to follow their lead.

Contrary to the pride, which is a character of the devil; because of which, the human race has submitted to a well-deserved punishment; the Almighty appeared in the form of a servant...; Yet men failed to recognize Him, because they became like the devils in pride and haughtiness, and not in knowledge⁴.

- ❖ Knowledge is good as long as it goes hand in hand with love; and if not, it puffs man up with vain pride⁵.
- ❖ The proud is indeed called haughty; namely, puffed up with wind; according to the words of the apostle, saying: “*Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*” (1 Corinthians 8: 1)⁶.
- ❖ “*Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*”. That is why; I wish knowledge comes to be, like a novel set upon the notion of love that would last forever, when knowledge fails⁷. fails⁷.
- ❖ Knowledge of a good kind is in the service of love; as knowledge without love puffs up; whereas when love edifies, it so fills the heart, that knowledge would find no void, in which it puffs up⁸.

St. Augustine

¹ Strom. 5.

² CSEL.

³ CSEL.

⁴ City of God 9:20.

⁵ City of God 9:20.

⁶ Sermon on the Amount 1:1:3.

⁷ Ep. 55:39.

⁸ Ep. 167:11.

- ❖ The Psalmist believes that the higher man ascends, level above level, in the exalted knowledge of God; he will find that God is higher and higher, The more exalted in the knowledge of God you reach, and the more intense the fire of His love flares in your heart, Yet there would still be innumerable levels beyond the knowledge and the love you have already reached.

Cyprian, the martyr

Knowledge is a divine gift:

“*God created man in His own image*” (Genesis 1: 27). , and granted him the most valuable gift; namely, the free will: he has the choice between good and evil; to connect to his Creator, or even to oppose Him, and to rebel against Him.

God has not created man a tool He moves with no choice on man’s part; but granted him a mind and ability to think; as well as a true and real knowledge. God gave him that gift free, and gave him as well the ability to build it up, or to destroy it at will.

The features of this gift are:

1- It is both a personal and a collective gift:

It is a gift given to man on a personal level, to support him in his relationship with his Creator; as well as in dealing with his human brethren and the heavenly creatures.

This personal gift could grow in the collective atmosphere, and it could also be destroyed through it. While the holy friendships, the spiritual and the knowledgeable collective works, may support man in the continuous growth of his knowledge; Evil friendships, on the other hand, may corrupt and destroy that knowledge.

In a commentary by **St. Gregory of Nyssa** on the Song of songs 1: 8, he demonstrates that the secret of beauty of the inner man, is to “*follow the tracks of the (holy) sheep*”; to herd his depths to enjoy the beauty of true knowledge, and its continuous growth; receiving, in his fellowship with the saints, the true Light – Jesus, the Lord of glory – as the secret of his enlightenment and his enjoyment of the exalted pure and holy knowledge. Man would become an icon of Christ, the divine Wisdom, and the divine Light, to enjoy the knowledge of the holy heavenly secrets in his daily life.

- ❖ “*If you do not know, most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the sheep, and graze your young goats by the tents of the shepherds*” (Song of songs 1: 8). It is the sure way to protect you; to realize that God has created us at a level much higher than that of other creatures; He did not make the heaven, the moon, the sun, the beautiful stars, or anything else, in His image.

You alone, He created in that nature, which is far beyond any comprehension; in the image and likeness of the eternal beauty. **You received as well, the true divine blessings, and the seal of the true light; You will become like Him when you look at Him, and follow His lead -- “the light which shines in your heart” (2 Corinthians 4: 6), that is reflected through your purity¹.**

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa

- ❖ Who, among the earthly creatures, was created in the image of God, except man? And to whom was given the authority over nature and all its creatures, as his own?

¹ *Commentary on Song of Songs, Homily 2.*

It is a true honor that crowns his forehead, and exalts him to heaven, above the stars, and higher than the sun...; although he is in a lower level than the angels, because he is bound by a material body, he was granted the grace to comprehend and to know His Lord and Creator¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ We need to learn from God, how to think about God; we have no source other than Him. You can elaborately learn, according to the world philosophy; and you may probably lead a righteous life; that all could help to achieve a mental fulfillment, yet it would not help you to know God. The daughter of Pharaoh adopted Moses, and taught him the wisdom of the Egyptians; Besides, in loyalty to his own race, he avenged the murder of a Hebrew by killing the Egyptian, Yet he did not recognize God who blessed his fathers².

St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitier

2- A knowledge connected to the holy pietistic life:

The devil's mental knowledge of God surpasses ours; he knows much more of the divine and heavenly secrets; Yet he is considered ignorant and foolishly unknowledgeable. On the last day, God will say to the wicked: "*I do not know you, or where you come from*" (Luke 13: 25). Although God knows everything, yet His recognition of the wicked is not that of uniting with, and connecting to them. And as said by **St. Augustine**: They are not worthy of being the object of His knowledge.

- ❖ "*And you know the truth*". Truth is unchangeable. Truth is good, flourishes our brains, and never fails; Changes whoever eats it, and would never be changed in him; Truth is the Word of God... the only-begotten Son, who took up a body for our sake, and was born by a virgin, to realize the prophecy that said: "*Truth shall spring forth from the earth*" (Psalm 85: 11). That Truth, when talking to the Jews, hid in the body; not to be denied, but to postpone proclamation, to suffer in the body, in order to save the body from sin. In that way, he wholly appeared in the weakness of the body; while hidden, as far as the majesty of the Godhead is concerned³.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Man is not just him, who has man's hands and feet; **nor him, who is rational**; but him, **who courageously practices piety and virtue**⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ You are all one in Jesus Christ; not that some are enlightened and knowledgeable, while others are spiritually less perfect. Let everyone put aside all the carnal lusts, **to become spiritually equal before God**⁵.
- ❖ He who knows also does the works fitting for virtue. But there may be someone who practices work, without necessarily being a person of knowledge; as he may be able to discern between what is right and what is wrong; and yet he lacks the knowledge of heavenly secrets. Moreover, some people may do well for fear of punishment, or

¹ *Hom. In Ps 48, 8, PG 29:450 b.*

² *On the Trinity, 5:21.*

³ *St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 41: 1.*

⁴ *Second Instruction, 1.*

⁵ *Paedagogus 1:5:31.*

hoping for a reward. That is why John Cassian teaches us that a man with a perfect knowledge practices these works out of love.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ It is impossible for an impure soul, however longing for reading, to get spiritual knowledge; as one can not pour good perfume, honey, or any precious matter, in a dirty container with repulsive smell; because such a container would corrupt what is poured in it, more than would be affected by it. A pure thing is more easily affected by an impure one¹!
- ❖ In case you are longing to get the light of spiritual knowledge, not for the sake of vain pride, You ought first to be flared with longing to get that blessing uttered by the Savior: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”* (Matthew 5: 8); by which you can get what the angel said to Daniel: *“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever”* (Daniel 12: 3)... So, we should strive consistently on reading, beside first, seeking earnestly to gain the practical, experimental knowledge; namely the ethical knowledge.

Having given so much effort and labor, we can earn the spiritual knowledge as a reward. And as we acquire such knowledge, not merely by meditating in the law, but as a fruit of our labor; we can sing and praise, saying: *“I gain understanding from Your percepts”* (Psalm 119: 104)².

Father Nestor

3- Knowledge is acquiring Christ Himself:

The Wisdom of God descended incarnate for us to acquire; Wisdom to us then, does not stop at the limits of experiences that we, or those who preceded us enjoyed; Nor at mere study and research; But it is befitting for us to acquire the wisdom of God Himself.

- ❖ Notice that even He Himself, **who is the Truth and the Word**; by whom everything was created; Who became a body to dwell among us; Yet, about Him the apostle says: *“Even if we have known Christ according to the body; yet we do not know Him still”*. As Christ never intended just to grant reward to those who consummate the way; but to become **He the way for those who intend to walk**³.

St. Augustine

4- Our present knowledge is partial:

Whatever the extent of our knowledge; As long as we are still in the earthly body, our knowledge would be counted as partial and incomplete. God does not keep us from attaining a complete knowledge; But He gives us what is partial, in order to flare our hearts to seek the complete knowledge with a spirit of humility, to keep us from falling into pride because of our knowledge.

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13: 12).

¹ مناظرات يوحنا كاسيان، مناظرة 14:14.

² مناظرات يوحنا كاسيان: 7، راجع مناظرة: المعرفة الروحية.

³ *On Christian Doctrine, 1:34 (38).*

- ❖ **Although everyone always seeks more knowledge;** Yet it will remain an imperfect knowledge in every respect, compared to its true perfection; until it is time for what is perfect to come, and what is partial to go away¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ “*Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, just as I also am known*”. Do you see how, in two ways, He takes pride away from them? He gives them partial knowledge; and even that, is not their own. He say: “*For I do not know Him, but He let Himself be known to me*”. So far, He started by making Himself known; He hastens to come to me, so that I would hasten to come to Him, more so than I do now².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ In the voice of the turtledove, heard in the promised land, it is befitting for us to see Christ Himself preaching; **to see Him face to face, and not anymore dimly in a mirror**³.
- ❖ If knowledge is proclaimed now to those worthy of it, seeing it dimly in a mirror; and will later on be fully proclaimed; it would be foolish, not to assume that it would be likewise proclaimed as far as the other virtues are concerned⁴.
- ❖ He encourages her, and provokes her not to sit idly, but to come to him outside and try to see Him, not through windows, or in a mirror dimly, but face to face; as now, she cannot see Him, because He stands behind and not in front of her, behind her back, and behind the wall⁵.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ When we all become unified, and believe the same way; and become that would be what he calls “***the perfect man***”; Even though we are fully grown, yet he calls us in another place ‘children’ (1 Corinthians 13: 11); when he compares our present knowledge with our future one; saying: “*knowing in part*”, and adding “***in a mirror, dimly***”. And in another comparison in his epistle to the Hebrews he says: “*But solid food is for the mature*” (Hebrews 5: 14) ⁶.
- ❖ This is what he means by the expression “*as I also am known*”: Not that we shall know Him as He really is; but, as He hastens to us now, we shall connect to Him, shall know many things that are so far are secret, and shall enjoy the more blessed and wise society⁷.
- ❖ As an example for this, we now know that God is everywhere; yet we do not know how! We know that He created everything from nothing; yet we have no idea how that was realized! We also do not know how Christ was born by a virgin; and so on⁸.

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *Concerning Faith.*

² *In 1 Corinth., hom. 34:2.*

³ *The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 4:14. (ACW).*

⁴ *On Prayer 11 :2.*

⁵ *The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 3:13. (ACW).*

⁶ *In Ephes., hom. 11.*

⁷ *In 1 Corinth., hom. 34:2.*

⁸ *In 1 Cor., hom., 36:2.*

- ❖ That means that we believe in the things which we know now through the Holy Books. But after resurrection, we shall see them by our own eyes, and recognize them as actual facts, when knowledge is no more in part. As knowledge based on hearing or faith, is considered 'in part', compared to that based on testimony by eye and actual experience¹.

St. Dedymsus the blind

- ❖ So far, no one has discovered the nature and essence of God; this may happen in the future.

As my mind, which is in the image of God, tells me – When that divine; namely, the mind, unites with its like;... when the image joins its origin, to whom it longs. This, as I think, is the meaning of that great phrase: “*Then, I shall know fully, as I also am known*”².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ Now we know and understand in part; But then, we shall fully know; when, not the shadow, but the true greatness and eternity of God, start to shine and proclaim itself with no veil before our faces³.

St. Ambrose

5- To enjoy knowledge, It is fitting for us, not to stop at reading and research, but to seek from God the “**knowledge as one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit**”; according to the words of the apostle: “*To one there is given through the spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12: 8).

- ❖ Paul did not learn faith just through words; **but he enjoyed the riches of the Spirit, for the proclamation to enlighten all his soul, and for Christ to talk through him**⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Knowledge is not given through learning from a book, but through the enlightenment by the Holy Spirit⁵.

Ambrosiaster

In a talk to young people, **St. Basil the Great** did not dismiss the benefit of reading the works of poetry and history, etc.; saying: [We should start by reading the thoughts of the world, then rise up to the secrets of faith... In case there is conformity between the former and our dogmas, their benefit would be of great value; and if not, the comparison would still make our sound beliefs hold more fast⁶].

Yet, as far as the monks are concerned, he says, that they should read, not what they choose, but what is of benefit to their spiritual life, and in the proper times, according to the counsel of their guide⁷.

Knowledge and senses:

¹ *On the Trinity* 103:2.

² *Oration* 28:17.

³ *On His Brother Satyrus*, 2:103.

⁴ *In Gal. hom*1:16.

⁵ *CSEL* 81:134.

⁶ *Durkheim E.: Education et sociologie, P.U.F. Paris 1966, Introd. P. 1-2.*

⁷ *Reg. Brev. Question* 96, 180, 307.

Senses are divine gifts; through them knowledge enter, to let us enjoy the growth in wisdom; if they are used as is befitting for us, as rational creation of God.

❖ Although our knowledge would always be incomplete in this life, yet it would be dependable within limits. Believers trust in the testimony of their senses, which are in the service of their minds; and though they are probably sometimes deceived, yet, that would be better than having no trust in senses at all, as is believed by some¹.

St. Augustine

How to acquire the divine knowledge:

We find the philosophical look of St. Clement on the knowledge of God, particularly demonstrated in the fifth book of his ‘Stromata’; in which he gives faith and hope in the comprehension by the mind of the unseen things, that the senses could not realize. The way to knowledge passes through three stages:

a- The stage of purification from sin: It is befitting for man, in order to enjoy the divine knowledge, to rid himself of his wrong ideas concerning God, which are the fruit of his servitude to his carnal lusts; through which, man used to find a goal for himself, to become farthest from God.

Having clothed themselves with mortal issues, as though in bivalve shells, centered on their lusts like porcupines; the majority of humans used to think about the blessed and immortal God, by the same terms by which they think about themselves². Thus it is befitting for men to rid themselves of such sufferings of the soul, and earthly influences, in order to realize God.

b- The logic analysis, or thinking about God in a material carnal way: The words of the bible should not be literally understood. When saying “the right side of God”, we should not assume that God has right or left side; for He is above place and time, beyond the world of names, and earthly concepts.

c- The vision stage: Knowledge of God as a divine gift, not reached without His grace. Philosophy may Indeed support us; telling us what is not God, which in itself is important, to take away the wrong thoughts in our minds, and the minds of others. **But realizing God could not be achieved except by divine grace alone**, beyond the limits of logic thinking.

Knowledge and faith:

This, according to **St. Clement of Alexandria**, is the goal of the Gnostic; to recognize God (the Truth), and to see Him face to face³; namely, to cross over to the perfect knowledge through faith, the experience of pure life, and the perpetual meditation. If we have crossed over from atheism to faith, it would be fitting for us to cross over from faith to knowledge⁴; to see and recognize God. This knowledge is a divine gift we get through the Son, by receiving Him and following His lead; namely through the purity of heart, by which we can see God and realize what would be unrealizable to others⁵.

¹ *City of God, 19:18.*

² *Strom. 5:68.*

³ *Strom. 2:10.*

⁴ *Strom. 7:10.*

⁵ *Strom. 6:8.*

- ❖ They claim that they believe and know, and connect the two of them together; as man should both believe and understand. To accept the divine issues by faith does not imply to refrain utterly from searching them. We should rather try to reach a reasonable knowledge; according to the apostle Paul “*in a mirror, dimly*” (1 Corinthians 12: 12). They did well by not saying that they knew first then believed; but have put faith ahead of knowledge; according to the Scripture, saying: “*If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established*” (Isaiah 7: 9 LXX).

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ It is not that we knew and believed, but “*we believed and knew*”. We believed to know; because if we intend to know first then to believe, we shall neither know nor believe.

What did we believe and know? “*You are the Christ the Son of the living God*”; namely, ‘You are the eternal life itself; that You only grant in Your body and blood, that are You’¹.

- ❖ Haven’t they reached that knowledge when the Lord was with them? If they did not have the knowledge, how did they believe? **They believed, not because they knew, but in order to know.** We believe in order to know, and not the other way round. As what we are to know, “*no eye have seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived*” (Isaiah 64: 14; 1 Corinthians 2: 9); As what is faith but to believe in what we have not yet seen²?
- ❖ When the Lord spoke to them about His Father, they asked Him; “*Where is Your father?*” By that they meant His biological father, because they understood the words of Christ according to the body. The One who spoke was apparently the body; Yet the hidden was the Word; The seen man and the unseen God... They despised Him because they did not know Him; They did not know Him because they did not see Him; They did not see Him because they were blind; and They were blind because they did not believe³.
- ❖ We see You alone, and we do not see Your Father with You; So how can You say that You are not alone, but with Your Father? Let us then see that Your Father is with You⁴!
- ❖ Now, as well, He is in us, and we are in Him. This is what we believe now; whereas then, we shall also know it; what we now believe is by faith, while what we are going to know will be by actual vision⁵.

St. Augustine

Knowledge and the inner freedom:

Our lord Jesus presents Himself to us to acquire; being the Truth, who alone can carry us over to the knowledge of our salvation, by and in Him. The goal of knowledge is

¹ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 27:9.*

² St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 40: 9.*

³ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 37:1.*

⁴ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 37:2.*

⁵ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 75: 4.*

to acquire the Truth, the Grantor of freedom, where the believer enjoys the fellowship of eternal glories.

- ❖ **“You will know the Truth”**; namely, *“You will know Me”*, as I am the Truth. All the Jewish things were symbols; but in me, you will know the Truth, who will set you free from your sins.... He did not say: “I will free you from servitude”, He let them deduce that by themselves¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Knowledge and the fellowship with God:

The goal of knowledge is to unite with the beloved one or ones, and to have fellowship with him or with them. We should not marvel to hear that Adam knew his wife Eve when he united to her, and had fellowship with her. We are counted with divine knowledge when we enjoy union, and have a living practical fellowship with God as His children.

- ❖ The verb, *‘to know’* in the holy books, most probably, does not imply (to comprehend) a certain thing, but (to have a personal relationship) with it. Jesus knew no sin, not because He had no idea about sin, but because He never committed one Himself.. Although He was like us in every other respect, yet He never sinned (Hebrews 4: 15). With this meaning of the word “knows”, it becomes obvious that, to know God, man is committed to keep His commandments; as both of them go together.

St. Dedymus, the blind

- ❖ The Lord knows His own; in the sense that, through their good works (in Christ), He accepts them in a deep fellowship with Him².

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ Those who perish do not know God; And He, in turn, will deny that He knows them; saying: *“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”* (Matthew 7: 23)³.

Hilary, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ The Holy Book says somewhere else, that those who united with a certain person, **and became one with him**; know him and are preoccupied with him. But before this union and fellowship, even if they have got information about that person, they **cannot claim that they knew him**.

As an example, When Adam said about Eve: *“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”* (Genesis 2: 23), he still did not know his wife; But once he got united, and became one with her, it was said: *“The man knew his wife Eve”* (Genesis 4: 1).

He, who gets offended, because of our use of this phrase, *“Adam knew his wife Eve”*, as an example of knowing God, let him take into consideration, first that *“This is a profound mystery”* (Ephesians 5: 32); Then let him compare it with what the apostle says about the male and the female, where he used the same language concerning man, with the Lord; saying: *“Do you know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?... But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit”* (1 Corinthians 6: 16, 17). That is why, he who unites with a prostitute, knows the prostitute;

¹ *Homilies on St. John 54: 1.*

² *Ep. 235:3.*

³ *Introductory Commentary on 1 John.*

while he, who unites with his wife, knows his wife; and much more, he, who unites with the Lord, knows the Lord; yet in a holy way.

In this case, we can say that the Pharisees knew neither the Father nor the Son¹.

- ❖ If someone is able to give a full account of the things concerning God, and learned from his fathers that only to Him, men should worship; If he does not walk upright, he, according to the Holy Book, does not bear the knowledge of God.

There was no one who truly knew the things concerning the Creator and His priestly service, more than the sons of Eli the priest; having been dwelling in the very place of worship. Yet, having done wrong, it was written about them in the first book of kings: *“The sons of Eli were the sons of perdition; they did not know the Lord”* (see also 1 Samuel 2: 12).

The same applies to certain wicked rulers of Israel and Judah, and to the Pharisees who did not know the Father, having not lived according to the will of the Creator².

The Scholar Origen

Knowledge and the Holy Trinity:

“Everything was given to me by My Father; No one knows who the Son is but the Father; and no one knows who the Father is but the Son, and to whom He is pleased to give it” (Luke 10: 22)

- ❖ The phrase: *“You know me, and you know where I am from”* (John 7: 28), concerns His Person as Man; whereas the phrase: *“You know neither Me nor My Father”*, concerns His Godhead.... It is obvious that the words of those people of Jerusalem, saying: *“We know where this man is from”* (John 7: 27), refer to the fact that *“He was born in Bethlehem”* (Matthew 2: 1); and they knew that His mother is called Mary, and His brothers (the aunt’s sons) are James, John, Simon, and Judah (Matthew 13: 55). That is why, to them He testified, saying: *“You know who I am, and where I came from”*; Whereas, to the Pharisees He said: *“Even if I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, for I know where I came from, and where I am going” (John 8: 14)*; speaking about His divine nature, on the basis by which He is the Firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1: 15)³.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ Whoever denies that the Son is from the Father, does not know the Father from whom the Son is; And likewise he does not know the Son, because he does not know the Father⁴.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Because Philip’s eyes were still not sound enough to see the Father (John 14: 8); and consequently to see the Son, who is equal to the Father; the Lord Jesus Christ healed him with the medications and ointments of faith, to make the weak eyes of his mind stronger, to be able to see such great light, saying to him: *“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?”* (John 14: 10)

¹ *Commentary on John, Book 19:22 – 24.*

² *Commentary on John, Book 19:13, 15.*

³ *Commentary on John, Book 19:7, 10.*

⁴ *On the Christian Faith, Book 1:19:127.*

I wish that he, who is unable to see what the Lord will eventually reveal to him one day, would not seek to see, but to believe. Let him first believe, that his eyes would be healed, by which he could see¹.

The Lord rightly rebuked the disciple, having been aware of what is in his heart (John 14: 9).

If, by seeking to know the Father, Philip meant that the Father is, in some way, better than the Son; he, likewise, did not know the Son. So, in order to correct such concept, the Lord told him: “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’*” (John 14: 9)...

Why do you intend to discover a difference between two identical entities?

Why do you seek a separate knowledge between two, who are not separate?

What he said after that was not addressed to Philip alone, but to all of them, to help us interpret things more carefully².

St. Augustine

- ❖ Here He talks about a certain kind of knowledge (a knowledge through the unity of essence), which is only His³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Why is it that God asked Satan: “*Where have you come from?*” (Job 1: 7); if it is not to judge his ways, as though they are not known to Him? As the Light of Truth knows nothing about the darkness which He rebukes, and about the ways of Satan which He condemns, It is fitting for Him to enquire about them as though they are unknown to Him. That is why it was said to Adam in his sin, by the voice of his Creator: “*Adam, where are you?*” (Genesis 3: 9). The divine Power was not ignorant of where His disobedient servant hid, but He intended to show that the one fallen in sin, is **hidden from the eyes of the Truth, by his sin**.

Because He condemns Satan, He enquired about his ways; whereas there is no need to enquire where the elect angels came from; Representing God’s ways; and submitting only to His will, **they could never be unknown to Him**.

Pope Gregory the Great

God’s knowledge of us and of His creation:

God knows His children and His holy ministers; and does not know the wicked evildoers. That is why, when Adam fell in sin, He asked him: “*Where are you?*”. And according to **St. Jerome**, [God knew that Adam was in paradise, and knew about everything he has done; Yet once Adam sinned, God did not know him, and asked where he is⁴, as though He did not see him; because Adam forsook the divine light and righteousness, and became under the shadows of sin and the darkness of death]. **St. Augustine**, commenting on the words of the Savior: “*I do not know you*”, says: [I do not see you in my light, or in the righteousness I know⁵]. God does not see us in His light,

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 38:4.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 70: 3.

³ In Ioan hom. 60:1.

⁴ On Ps. hom 1.

⁵ In Ioan 49:20.

when we extend our prayers in vain, preach, or perform powers in His name, But sees us when we live with, and by Him, and walk along His ways.

- ❖ To have our names written in heaven is a proof of our virtuous life; whereas driving demons away is a gift from the Savior. That is why He says to those who boast in doing powers without practicing the virtuous life: **“I do not know you”**; As God does not know the way of the wicked¹!

St. Athanasius the apostolic

- ❖ God does not know the sinner, but knows the righteous².

St. Jerome

- ❖ How amazing, that He, who came to raise him from the dead, seems as though He does not know the location of his grave; and asks: **“Where have you laid him?” (John 11: 34)**. As many fathers say, God who knows everything, seems not to know the place of darkness, nor the evil or evildoers. That is why, when Adam sinned in paradise, God asked him: **“Where are you?” (Genesis 3: 9)**. And on the day of judgment, He will say to the wicked: **“I do not know you” (Matthew 7: 23)**.

- ❖ **“I do not see You in My light; in the righteousness that I know”³**.

- ❖ Probably because **“The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Timothy 2: 19; Numbers 16: 5)**, He does not know those who are not; And as He says about some: **“I never knew you” (Matthew 7: 23)**; He also says about Judas who is not His: **“I never knew you”**; Because if Judas was Christ’s and then fell, it would be possible to say to him: **“I do not know where you are from” (See Luke 13: 27)**... And because of this, he did not say: **“I know all of you”**, but: **“I know those I have chosen”⁴**.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ He called her name, He whom she thought dead, and asked where they have laid Him; He called her name, as though to say to her: **“know Him, who knows you”**. Once she was called by her by name, she recognized Creator, whom she seeks outside her; while He teaches her to seek Him inside her⁵.

Pope Gregory the Great

Growth in knowledge:

- ❖ In case someone moves zealously forth, God, on His part will give him everything; whereas, if he does not preoccupy himself with these things, and contributes nothing on his part, he will be denied God’s gifts⁶.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Let their souls be blessed by partaking of the understanding, the knowledge, and the secrets; Let them altogether be blessed through the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ⁷.

¹ Vita S. Antonii 38.

² In Ps. Hom 1.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 49:20.

⁴ Commentary on John, Book 32: 154 – 155.

⁵ Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 193.

⁶ In Matt. hom 45:1.

⁷ صلاة تبريك للشعب.

Liturgy of Bishop Serapion

The following are quotations from a commentary by **St. Ambrose** on this situation:

[We may consider the testimony of the multitude to Him, of no value; As some of them thought of Him as being Elijah who rose up; having believed in his coming; While others thought of Him as being John the Baptist, knowing that he was decapitated, and believing that he would rise; And still others thought of Him to be one of the early prophets.

Research in Him; (namely, in the Person of Christ) is something beyond our ability; but corresponds to the mind and wisdom of someone like Paul, for whom it is enough to know Christ, and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2); For what more does he long for, than to know that He is Christ? In this name, the Godhead transfigures, and the incarnations, as well as the passion are proclaimed.

All the rest of the disciples knew Him, but Peter alone said: "*You are the Christ of God*" (Luke 9; 20); as this Name includes everything, expresses His nature, and embraces all virtues.

Will you raise questions around how the Lord was born, When Paul says that he knows nothing except Christ and Him crucified; and when Peter confesses that He is the Christ of God? We, with the eyes of human weakness, do research around: when, how, and what is His greatness. Whereas Paul sees in all these enquiries no edification; he wishes to know nothing but Jesus Christ; and Him crucified!

Peter knew that, in "**the Son of God**" there is everything; As the Father has placed everything in His hands (John 3: 35)..., He is as everlasting and as great as the Father.

If I accept the faith that He is Christ the Son of God (Matthew 16: 16), although I should not enquire how He was born; I should not be ignorant as well of this fact.

Let us believe then, the way peter did, to be blessed like him, and be worthy of hearing the words: "***For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you); but My Father in heaven***" (Matthew 16: 17); As flesh and blood only receive the earthly things; whereas he, who utters the secrets of the Spirit, does not depend on the teachings of the flesh and blood, but on the divine proclamation.

If you depend on the flesh and blood for instructions, you would become, yourself, flesh and blood; whereas if you unite to the lord, you would become one Spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6: 17), who says: "*My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal (flesh and blood)*" (Genesis 6: 3).

God forbids that my listeners would be flesh and blood, but would be foreigners to their lusts, and each one of them would say: "*I will not be afraid what can mortal man (namely flesh and blood) do to me*" (Psalm 56: 4).

Whoever overcomes the body would become one of the pillars of the church; and if he does not reach up to Peter's level, he would, like him, enjoy the many gifts of God, who does not give us back what we forsook, but what are actually His.

We should wonder why did the multitudes think of Him as Elijah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist?!

They might have thought of Him as Elijah on account that the latter was taken up to heaven. But Christ was not taken up to heaven, like Elijah, but came from there; Elijah

avenged his enemies by the fire he requested from heaven (1 kings 18: 38); whereas Christ wished for the salvation of those who did Him wrong, and not their perdition.

They might have thought of Him as Jeremiah, who was consecrated from the womb (Jeremiah 1: 4); Yet Christ was not consecrated like Jeremiah, but He consecrates; Jeremiah started by his birth; while Christ is the Holiest of the holies.

They might have thought of Him as John the Baptist, on account that John knew and worshipped the Lord while he was still in his mother's womb; But Christ is the One worshipped; John baptized with water; while Christ baptized with the Spirit; John called for repentance; while Christ forgave sins¹].

Science and faith:

I believe that any rational person would see in science a main thing among everything good within the reach of our minds. I would not say that it is not only our sciences that are high and noble, because they despise beauty on the outside, to admire that of the mind; But also that science from the outside, despised by many unappreciative. Christians, who consider it so deceitful and dangerous, to alienate us from God... From that we should keep only what may help us meditate in the Truth, and avoid anything that may lead to evil, error and perdition².

❖ We should not ignorantly concentrate our interest on science as a whole, but we should recognize what is useful of it... And for fear of getting so involved in it, that we forget the knowledge of God, and plunge in vain research, it is necessary to have discernment in education, by which we can choose of it, the kind of knowledge, that is useful and avoid what is harmful³.

St. Basil the Great

Knowledge and philosophy:

In his work, 'Stromata', **St. Clement of Alexandria**, dealt with two main subjects: The relationship between Christianity and the Greek Philosophy, and that between faith and knowledge (the Gnostic). In more than one situation, and in some detail, the saint responded to the question that long preoccupied the minds of many Christian scholars of his time; namely: [How does Christianity look at the Greek (Hellenistic) philosophy? Does it consider it a danger on the Christian faith, or a help to it?

To establish a true, authentic, and practical Christian Gnosticism, St. Clement of Alexandria, continuously uses the name "Gnostic", meaning (a spiritual believer); not separating between knowledge (Gnosis) and spirituality. He believed that there is no contradiction or animosity between the constitution of the church, and the holy books, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other. His view of philosophy is summarized in the following points:

1- Philosophy is not a work of darkness; but, on every one of its aspect, the 'Logos' shines a ray of light⁴... In the beginning of his work 'Stromata', he criticized

¹ In *Luc* 9.

² الأب الياس كويتز المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 136.

³ الأب الياس كويتز المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 136.

⁴ *Stromata*, 1:13.

those who claim that philosophy is evil; and promised to clarify through his work, that on a certain aspect, it is 'a work of the divine ordinance'¹.

According to him, the goal of every philosopher in all philosophical schools is the same as of Christianity namely, the exalted life; Yet the difference is that philosophers enjoyed only some glimpses of the truth, whereas Christianity proclaimed the whole Truth in Christ² According to him, philosophy is of less value³, but is not without value⁴. He considers philosophers as kids, who remained as such, until the Lord Christ made men out of them.

2- Through this view, intending to introduce his own aspect of an identification of philosophy, he says: By philosophy, I do not mean, the , the Plotonic, the Epicurean, or the Aristotlic principles, but the truth said in each of them; in which righteousness is taught beside the pietistic knowledge; A free choice, which I call 'philosophy'; Whereas the human rationalism fabricated and counterfeited by men; this is not philosophy⁵.

It is as though, according to him, philosophy bears two aspects: The divine aspect, which is a gift of God, carrying a portion of the truth; and the human aspect, set by human mind, that counterfeits and corrupts the truth; against which the apostle Paul warned in his epistle to the (Colossians 2:8). He saw in the books of philosophy many contradictions⁶, contrary to the Holy Book.

As to the reason behind the existence of these two aspects of philosophy, is based on the principle that everything good comes from God⁷, that He introduced to us, not as a goal in itself, but as a seed thrown on the soil by the Logos, to produce either a good or a bad fruition, according to the kind of soil, whether it is good or stony⁸.

Through this view, we see him, sometimes defending philosophy on its true side, or attacking it on the impurities that came into it. He sometimes sees that philosophy bears an aspect of truth; some other time he sees it bearing a preliminary teaching for reaching it; and a third time, he sees it as neither right or wrong; and a fourth time, that it is required to discover the counterfeit truth; like a cashier who can spot the counterfeit currency, to designate the authentic one.

3- **St. Clement** believes that God's care never disregarded philosophy. According to him, as God provided the Hebrews with the law to guide them to the Lord Christ, so He used philosophy to lead the Greeks to the same goal. The St. used the words of the apostle Paul, he addressed to the Ahenians, to draw them to faith through their poets (see Acts 17: 22-28), as a living example to confirm his theory.

Through this view, some authors saw in St. Clement, a Platonic, a modern Platonic, or at least a defender of the Hellenistic philosophy. Fillinton says: [Whoever gives interest to Clement of Alexandria, defends, in direct or an indirect way, the secret of Hellenism in Christianity⁹].

¹ *Stromata*, 1:4.

² *W. Fairweather: Origen & Greek Patristic Theology, Edinburgh 1901, p. 15.*

³ *Stromata*, 1:98.

⁴ *Stromata*, 1:15.

⁵ *Stromata* 1:7.

⁶ *Stromata*, 1:7.3.

⁷ *Stromata*, 1:5:28.

⁸ *Stromata*, 1:7:37.

⁹ *Tollinton, Clement of Alexandria, London 1914, P IX.*

4- St. Clement confirmed by several examples, that the Greeks have borrowed much from the Old Testament¹. He said that Plato has adopted the view of Moses and other prophets; although he did not present them in a true way; and he also likened the Greek philosophy to the Mosaic Law. Yet he often confirmed that faith is the basis of, and greater than all knowledge²; and defended³ faith against the philosophers⁴.

5- Having been aware of the world with its two sides: the atheistic and the Christian; aware of both the classic Greek works, and the Christian theology; he believed that it is not the duty of the church to discourage the enthusiasm of the catechumens to continue their philosophic studies; Yet the church can give the philosophy a Christian touch, by its culture and teaching.

He made it clear⁵ that the Gnostic or the ideal Christian, uses all kinds of knowledge, and does not fear philosophy but makes use of it. Although the multitude fear philosophy like kids, lest it would lead them astray, but the Christian by faith can recognize the truth; can discern between the unchangeable truth and the vain views; and can be like the cashier, who through experience, can separate the authentic currency from the counterfeit one... A Gnostic therefore, would not be deceived by false words, and can say together with David, saying: “*A righteous man will never be shaken*” (Psalm 112 : 6), neither by the false words, nor by the wrong pleasures; will never be shaken from his inheritance, “*will have no fear or bad news*” (psalm 112: 6); will never be terrified by false claims; and will never be shaken by vain views spread around him.

In the same chapter, St. Clement clarifies that the Gnostic uses philosophy in a good way to recognize the truth partially appearing in it; while heretics use it in an evil way to lead people astray. And according to him, philosophy can also expose the deviated views of the sophisticated.

- ❖ God, the only and the true One, is the source of every beauty; whether the Hellenistic, or our own⁶.
- ❖ It is as though the Greek philosophy purifies the soul, and prepares it to receive faith, on which the Truth (Christ) builds the great establishment of knowledge⁷.
- ❖ Before the coming of the Lord, philosophy was necessary for the Greeks for righteousness; but now it became a way to godliness, being a kind of preparatory training for those seeking faith through proof... The Greek philosophy was given to them, directly and in a primitive way, until they were called by the Lord. And as the law led the Hebrews to Christ (Galatians 3: 24); so was philosophy, a preparation of the way for those talking about Christ⁸.

¹ *Stromata*, 2:5.

² *Stromata*, 2:4.

³ *Stromata*, 2:4:5.

⁴ *Stromata*, 2:2:8.

⁵ *Stromata*, 6:10.

⁶ Hans von Campenhausen, P 30, *Stromata* 1:28.

⁷ *Stromata* 7:3. ANF, vol 2, p. 528.

⁸ *Stromata* 1:5 (A.N. Frs, vol 2, P 305).

- ❖ After that, he condemns philosophy, not in a general way, but the Epicurean philosophy mentioned by the apostle Paul in the Book of Acts (17: 18), which denies the Almighty God, and deifies pleasure¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Beware, lest someone may corrupt you away from faith in Christ, by vain philosophy and faith, which disregards the ordinance of the divine care **“according to the people’s tradition”**; As the philosophy, according to the divine tradition, conforms to, and follows the ordinance of the divine care; which, if it disregards the appearance of the Savior and the ordinance of His salvation in time, we would be misled according to **“the corners of the world, and not according to Christ”**².
- ❖ St. Paul, as well, in his epistles, does not attack philosophy, but sees it as bringing man down to a level, to reach and achieve the worldly knowledge. According to him, man should not get down to the Hellenistic philosophy, which he symbolically calls: **“Corners of the present world”**; being still incomplete, and are mere preliminary principles to the Truth³.
- ❖ In case someone says that the philosophy discovered by the Greeks has come as a result of human understanding, I say that the Holy Book confirms that understanding is from God Himself. According to the Psalmist, Understanding is a free gift, and he provokes believers, saying that David, with all his abundant experience and knowledge: prays to God, saying: “Teach me gentility, wisdom, and knowledge, as I believe in Your commandments”⁴.
- ❖ The apostle, stating that it is, **“according to the corners of the world, and not according to Christ”**, confirms that the Hellenistic teaching is a preliminary teaching; whereas that of Christ is a comprehensive one⁵.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ **The scholar Tertullian** gave a clear and decisive answer, although extremely violent⁶, violent⁶, saying: [What fellowship is there between the philosopher and the Christian; between the vain-ally disciple of Greece, and the heaven -ally, enemy of vanity? Even the wisdom of Socrates has not reached anything of value, as there is no one who can claim to have true knowledge of God without Christ; or to know Christ without the Holy Spirit; Socrates himself admits, that a certain spirit of the underworld used to guide him and to cry out in his heart; Whereas Plato says: [While it is difficult for man to find the Maker of the universe together with His Father, any simple Christian knows it⁷].

Tertullian believes that the heretics have found their weapons in philosophy: Valentinus took his heresy after Plato; and Mercion took it after the, the Epicureans, and other philosophers. That is why, Tertullian often quotes the warning by the apostle Paul,

¹ *Stromata 1 :11.*

² *Stromata 1:11.*

³ *Stromata, 6:8.*

⁴ *Stromata, 6:8.*

⁵ *Stromata, 6:15.*

⁶ *Lebreton, History of the Primitive Church, London 1946, vol. 3, p. 745.*

⁷ *Apology 46.*

saying: “*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy*” (Colossians 2: 8).

So Tertullian firmly rejects any philosophic study, saying: [What fellowship is there between Athens and Jerusalem, between the Academy and the Church, or between the heretics and the Christians? Our teachings come from the court of Solomon, who instructed us to seek God with a complete simplicity of heart. It is bad for someone to set a, Platonic, or an argumentative Christianity. We, on the other hand, having known Jesus Christ, have no more curiosity, and would not seek anything other than the gospel. Having believed; what would be our need for anything else? The first and main factor in our faith is not to believe in anything but what we believe in¹.

St. Hypolete, although of a wider knowledge than Tertullian, yet he was not an admirer of the Hellenism or its philosophy, which he believed was a source of heresies.

The scholar Origen never used the expression “spirituality”, to mean (Christianity); But he used the expression ‘teleios’ (Pauline), after the apostle Paul; to mean (perfect); or ‘pneumatikos’, to mean (spiritual); He used the word ‘gnostikos’, only once to mean (spiritual) in a worn-out document, and in a mocking way against those holding fast to the so-called Gnosticism.

❖ I spent a long time in vanity; and wasted most of my youth searching for a certain kind of wisdom which is ignorance in the sight of God. And all of a sudden, like someone awakening from a deep sleep, I opened my eyes on the amazing truth of the Bible; Then, I came to realize the futility of the wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing (1 Corinthians 2: 6). I shed many tears over my miserable life, and prayed to get united to the teaching of the true knowledge.

St. Basil the Great

❖ **The mind that forgets the true knowledge would make war against people for the sake of things that are harmful to him, which he assumes to be of benefit.**

St. Mark the hermit

❖ Lest it is led astray, and falls into the deception of the pagan philosophy, the soul receives the better teaching, embracing the more perfect loyalty to the holy faith, taught by the apostle in well-recommended words².

St. Hilary, bishop of Poitier

❖ We should be particularly careful; lest, while striving to seek wisdom, which is only found in Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are stored – We should be careful, lest, in the name of Christ Himself, the heretics, or any other people with corrupt mind and love of this world, would deceive us³.

St. Augustine

Knowledge and pride:

❖ No one should boast that he knows, and that he has wide human knowledge; as it is well written: “*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in*

¹ Tertullian: *De Prescriptione* 7:9.13.

² *On the Trinity*, 1:13.

³ *Stromata* 1:11.

this, that he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth” (Jeremiah 9: 23, 24); so as not to lean upon ourselves, but upon the Lord who raises the dead. The apostle says: “Who saved from a death with such weight, so as not to lean upon the wisdom of men, but upon the power of God; because the spiritual judges everything, and is not judged by anything”. And also listen to his words, saying: “I say this, lest someone would deceive you by slimy words, or would creep to corrupt you”¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ It is well called by the apostle as “*opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge*” (1 Timothy 6: 20); as where there is no faith, there is no true knowledge².
- ❖ No arrogance will come from knowledge, but rather from ignorance; as he, who is aware of the godly teachings, would tend to be more modest; he, who knows the upright words, would always be upright; and he, [who knows what is useless to know, is unknowledgeable; and pride comes from lack of knowledge³].

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Grant me always to keep with (the angels) in the country to amaze and wonder in-knowledge beyond all knowledge, and all holders of knowledge⁴

The spiritual Elder – John El-Deliaty

Knowledge and judgment:

- ❖ It is only just, that he, who enjoys an abundant portion of knowledge, gets a harsher punishment, if he breaks the law; consequently, our punishment would be more, the wiser we are, and the higher authority we have. If you are richer, you would be asked to give more; and if you are wiser, or have more authority, you are committed to give more splendid works⁵.

St. John Chrysostom

Knowledge and meditation in the divine secrets:

- ❖ No tongue has the authority to utter anything about the nature of the divine secrets; It is only seen by the pure mind; which enjoys, and marvels at their existence; get pleased by their proclamation to him; and is taken away deep into them.

In God, it is swallowed, captivated by beholding His beauty; and united to His glory.

No one who entered into this, would lustily look to anything here!

No one who finds pleasure in these secrets, would enjoy the sweetness of anything on earth!

No one who enjoys looking at their beauty, would admire anything in the world!

No one who has done without them, would not consider wealth as trash!

¹ Sermon on the Mount, 25.

² In 1Tim. hom 20.

³ In 1 Tim. hom 17.

⁴ رسالة 51 (ملحق - صلاة 3).

⁵ In Rom. hom 5.

No one who enjoyed their company, would not hate and detest that of other people!

No one, in whose soul and bones, the love of Christ has set forth, could bear any more the filth of lust!

No one who enjoyed the company and secrets of angels, would not detest the company and troubles of the world!

No one, whose mind is captivated by the beauty of the Lord of all, would be also captivated by anything or any lust in this world!

No one, whose mind got connected to God and cares for Him, would also care for, or fear any other thing¹!

❖ Blessed are you, who, in the waves of light, fly with the wings of the Holy Spirit; while your mind is confined within its unfathomable depth²!

The spiritual Elder – John El-Deliaty

Knowledge of God who dwells in the heart:

❖ It is indeed upright for man to behold the infinite God; That will take away from him all ungodly thoughts, drive away the demons, illuminate the mind, and cleanse the heart.

Yet, to seek God's dwelling in him, would be much better. If everything around him is teeming with life, and he is devoid of it, what benefit would come to him from outside? And if he is full of life, how would death, which is outside of him, harm him³?

❖ Behold God within yourself; and notice how He is Light!

His nature is a glorified light, of infinite splendor; He reveals the light of His nature to everyone who loves Him; I mean His glory and not His nature; and transform the image of those who behold Him into that of His glory.

Look and behold Him within yourself; united to you, like fire with iron in a furnace; and like humidity in your body. When you behold Him, united to you as such, Your self would be captivated out of your mind, that would only behold Him⁴.

❖ Those who insolently tend to fathom the essence of His nature, that is of no beginning, would acquire perdition, woe, bitterness, and sighs, for themselves⁵!

Do not separate yourself from life!

Do not fall into the sea, lest you perish!

Correct your path; and acquire from Him the eternal life!

If you cannot know yourself, how could you fathom the essence of the nature of your Creator?!

O you hypocrite searcher! Bow down your pride, lest you fall into the deep, into which you have no right to go⁶!

¹ ميمر على الصلاة وعلى قوات الطبايع الروحانية وعلى معرفة الله.

² ميمر على الصلاة وعلى قوات الطبايع الروحانية وعلى معرفة الله.

³ رسالة 4:50.

⁴ رسالة 5:50، 6.

⁵ رسالة 7:50.

⁶ رسالة 16:50.

- ❖ He, who persistently looks into himself, will shortly acquire the purity to behold God. He, who beholds God within himself, would cleanse himself of filth; the devil would not be able to sow the seeds of lusts in his heart; and in case he does, they would soon be corrupt and would not take root! As God and lusts would never dwell in one and the same place¹!
- ❖ The mind, that seeks God, would become a mirror in which God could be seen!
To someone with a mind flaring with the desire to behold Him; He would not just show himself, but would hide Himself in him. And once He finds him striving and laboring to seek Him, and perpetually having Him in His mind, thirsty to behold Him; He would shine on him with His glorified beauty, hidden in him, and would comfort him.
That is him, who finds the kingdom that was already hidden in him!
That is the treasure hidden in the field; instantly found by him, who sells everything he posses to acquire it (Matthew 13: 44)².
- ❖ Blessed is he, who keeps looking at You, O my Paradise who exists in me!
O the Tree of life that ignites my heart longing for Him; and changes my countenance by the strength of His love!
Blessed is he, who perpetually seek Him in Himself; As from Him, streams of living water will flow (John 7: 38).
Blessed is he, who perpetually thinks about You; As his soul will always be drunk with Your sweetness!
Blessed is he, who perpetually looks at You within himself; As his heart will be illuminated to see the hidden things!
Blessed is he, who seeks You within himself; As his heart, body, and bones always kindle by Your purifying fire³!
- ❖ You comfort him always by your vision.
He sees you in what he eats; and sees you radiating in what he drinks!
When he cries, You shine in his tears!
Wherever he looks he sees you; and everywhere You flow on him more blessings⁴!
- ❖ Because Your vision could not be realized amid Your glittering light; they claim that You are cloud and mist, that “an illuminated cloud surrounds You” ,and that You make it difficult for Your loving subjects to look at Your hidden nature, more than they should⁵!
- ❖ You, O Goodness, are in all Your beloved; as they find You in the indescribable glory and splendor of Your beauty; in the power of Your nature; and in Your most exalted knowledge!

.18:50 رسالة¹

.19:50 رسالة²

.2:51 رسالة³

.5:51 رسالة⁴

.8:51 رسالة⁵

You are there with Your wholeness in all Your beloved; with everything in You; and in everyone of them!

You are with Your wholeness in everyone of them with no decrease; although no one can wholly possess you¹!

❖ Glory be to Him, who granted His own, His wisdom; revealing His beauty to please His beloved²!

❖ Meditate a little within yourself, to have that joyful ray shine on your face; especially when you prostrate yourself on your face; as there would never be time like this to behold Him, He, who beholds everyone; He, who makes Himself visible to His beloved; and flood on them His goodness³!

❖ Reveal what is yours to Him; to let Him reveal to you what is His⁴!

❖ Blessed is he, who can see that city from here; sets forth to the city of joy; to the city whose sun never sets⁵!

❖ Blessed is he, who listens and hears the secrets of the hidden Spirit, and keeps them to himself⁶!

❖ O my Lord and my life! My mind is captivated by talking to You; As I have no one else to talk to, but You!

What would I do? *“My soul thirsts for You, and my body longs for You”* (Psalm 63: 2).

By talking to You, I can ascend to You; and by thinking of You, I am granted the vision of Your face⁷.

❖ If you grieve, laboring to seek Him, You will rejoice by His presence!

If you suffer, with tears and affliction to see Him; You will forget your grief when He reveals His beauty within you!

Do not seek Him outside yourself, He who dwells inside you!. Who has ever seen a wise man, seek his paradise outside himself?!

How can you enjoy life outside yourself?!

To Whom do you minister? To whom do you pray? Before whom do you cry out?

To whom do you call: *“O Father, hasten to help me”*? Before whom do you shed your tears? Is it not

Before Him; by whom you live and move?!

What keeps you from feeling your paradise within yourself? Is it not because you have not mixed your works with Him?

As you sit, Behold His ray unite with you.

.10:51 رسالة¹

.1:27 رسالة²

.3:31 رسالة³

.11:39 رسالة⁴

.4:40 رسالة⁵

.3:45 رسالة⁶

.6:51 رسالة⁷

And as you stand, Be purified by the cloud of His glory.
And as you walk, Lift your eyes up from the earth; And walk along the pure light of the lord.

And as you sleep, be covered by the waves of his light.

And as you drink, Mix your drink with the face of the Lover of all.

With the bird, Fly in the purity of its air; and with the fish, Swim in the greatness of its depth; From the iron in the furnace, learn the secret of its union with the fire; And with the breath of your mouth, let your soul smell its Lover; And with the spirituals, Sanctify in heaven your inside, and there, Behold His dwelling place.

❖ Oh, how marvelous are Your secrets! And how great is he, who believes in them. I forgot myself in the praises of those saints, among whom I am not one!

I strive with no avail to take hold of the holy God! And to imagine how He looks like!

Thinking that I am full, I realize I am empty! That I have taken hold of Him, I realize I have not!...That I dwell in Him; I find Him dwelling in me!... That He is hidden from me, I realize that I am hidden in Him!

When I intend to seek Him, I behold Him within myself!

From whichever place..., and wherever I go, He never forsakes me.

Whenever I listen to Him, He talks to me.

And whenever I seek Him, He would never move away.

Praise is to You; While You are hidden from all, You incessantly shine on Your beloved!

Praise be to You; and Your mercy be on us, forever, Amen.

+My Lord and my God; If my right hand is incapable of painting Your secrets in portraits; Like a wise man, I intend to do it in writing!

I approach You and enjoy ascending Your holy mountain, to behold Your glorified beauty!

To behold Your exalted shining light, that amazes the beholders!

They call You a 'Sea', and 'the fountain of the whole world'; while Your greatness eclipses every other deep! They call You 'Fire', because You give and never decrease; You purify and never get defiled!

❖ I was told by someone that, at the beginning and end of his prayer, he forgets everything about himself, to marvel, and to enjoy the beauty of his Creator!

Let him who can understand, understand; And who does not, the Lord to grant him the comprehension!

How sweet You are! I adore You, O infant Jesus! Your beauty captivates the souls!

My soul came after you; as in You, it meditates, and to her, Your beauty shines!

You are good; as beloved as Your Father!

Your sweetness is only known to those who tasted it!

I smelled Your sweet aroma; and my heart was pleased; something that no one can interpret!

❖ Blessed is he, who sees You mixed with his drink; and his heart rejoices with Your love!

Blessed is he, who entered into You, beheld Your amazing face; and marveled at Your splendid beauty that springs within himself!

I got mad with my pen, and intended to break it, because of its inability to portray the amazing scene which I behold; and the streams of life that flow from the fountain of blessings!

Every talkative mind; once it enters into this city, it is committed to stop talking and moving, in amazement of Your secrets!

Because here, God reveals His beauty to His beloved!

Here, the soul sees herself, and beholds Christ who shines in her, and in whose face she rejoices!

Here, the Holy Trinity is secretly revealed!

❖ The pen got consumed by the heat of Your fire, O Jesus; My right hand stopped writing, when the ray of Your beauty shone in my eyes; and the earth and everything on it vanished from my sight!

My mind was amazed,... Flames of fire flared in my bones! And fountains of water flowed to cool down my flesh, lest it gets consumed!

❖ Praise be to You; The way You are amazing, so are Your secrets. Blessed are Your beloved, who bask all the time in Your beauty!

❖ Before I leave this body of mine, Grant me O Lord, Your beauty to eat; and the secrets hidden in the bosom of Your essence to drink in joy!

❖ Blessed are they, who got drunk with Your love, O Lord; as by that they enjoyed Your beauty. Taste, O brother, behold and taste the sweetness of our good Father!

❖ Those who have not experienced the pleasure of enjoying getting drunk with God, are actually poor and miserable!

God has granted them His love to get drunk with it, and pleasure in it; In Himself, And in them, He also rejoices.

When they behold Him shining within them selves, they get amazed by His beauty!

❖ Love is fire that flares in the heart, by Him who ministers with joy!

I often hear about someone, who, getting drunk with the love of Christ; and being unable to hold him

Before the divine fire flaring in his heart and before the joy filling it by praising God; could not help crying out:

[O Lord, my life got consumed by the fire of Your love; and I have no more patience!]

He also often cries out saying: [Blessed are they, who are drunk with Your love, O Lord; with Your unutterable beauty, O Father, my Father!]

❖ **Persist on praising the Lord**, and mix all your works with the mention of Him; By that you can behold His face; And that is the wage, got by everyone who secretly prays

to God. Enter into Your secret place, and pray to Your hidden God; His proclaimed wage will be His shining in your soul¹!

The spiritual elder – John El-Deliaty

¹ رسالة 51 (ملحق 13).

CHAPTER 12

THEORIES AND FACTS

In astonishment and bitterness, 'Job' confronts his friends, haughty with their human wisdom; who, instead of comforting him, they ridicule him; as though, in their sight, he became a laughingstock. Here, he cries out, saying, that the wisdom they claim to possess is not confined to them; He, as well, partakes of the human wisdom, granted to them by God; although he does not partake of the cruelty of their hearts. Nature itself testifies to God's exalted care and authority, better than they do; His wisdom surpasses every human thought; and no man can comprehend nor limit God's plan by his limited mind.

In chapters 12 to 14, 'Job' answers Zophar in some detail; And as usual. After arguing with his friends, he, humbly and with love, addresses God with some admonishment!

In the end of the first round, 'Job' firmly rebukes his friends for being overly proud of them, and accuses them of rejecting to confront the facts of life.

In this chapter, he proclaims that he is aware of the generally well-known answers (3); yet what he needs from his friends is love and compassion.

Job's friends clarified their view concerning God's policy; that, it is the wicked who suffer, and not the righteous; Whereas 'Job' proclaims that, contrary to what they think, it often happens that the wicked are the ones who become successful and secure (6).

'Job' proclaims that the wisdom they boast is not theirs alone; all those who have eyes could join the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, in seeing and acknowledging the works of God; and goes on saying that nature itself testifies to God, the Grantor of life (7 – 10).

Here, 'Job' does not deny the traditional wisdom (11 – 12); although he reveals that, it sometimes fails to interpret what dwell on us (13 – 25).

1- Misjudging 'Job'	1 – 5
2- The wicked would not necessarily perish in this world	6 – 11
3- God's wisdom and authority	12 – 25

1- MISJUDGING HIM:

"Then 'Job' replied: 'Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you'" (Job 12: 1, 2).

Here, 'Job' rebukes his friends for being unwise:

1- Their cruelty was devoid of wisdom; a rebuke addressed to everyone who, with no limits, and in convenient and non-convenient times, feels superior and looks down on his brethren, especially at the time of their suffering. *"The wise remain silent until the right moment, but a boasting fool misses the right moment"* (Sirach 20: 7).

2- They imagine that they are the only people with wisdom; and that their judgment is perfect and superior, by which everyone is measured and condemned. The Holy Book warning us against falling into such false claims of counting ourselves wise, in haughtiness and pride, says: *"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and shun evil"* (Proverb 3: 7); *"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him"* (proverb 26: 12); *"A rich man may be wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who ha discernment sees through him"* (Proverb 28: 11); and:

“Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches” (Jeremiah 9: 23).

- ❖ Be, as advised by the apostle, ignorant in this world, to become wise; do not insist on defending your view, and do not volunteer to judge an issue; but keep on showing humility with simplicity and faith. Just be careful to keep everything sanctified, wise and of benefit, whenever you proclaim the law of God; and seek the advice of your spiritual guide in these matters¹.

St. John Cassian

3- Because they assumed that wisdom will die with them; that all mankind without them would be counted as ignorant; and that after their sun sets, the whole world would fall into the darkness of ignorance.

It is really foolish to imagine that we are so indispensable, that our death would result in a great loss; As God is capable to set after us, those who are more efficient than us. The death of the wise and the good does not mean the death of wisdom and goodness!

4- Unbalanced behavior under the pretence of wisdom would turn even what is good into destruction and not into edification: *“Do not be overly righteous , nor be overly wise – why should you destroy yourself?”*(Ecclesiastes 7: 16).

5- Pope Gregory the Great and other fathers believe that Job’s friends represent the **heretics who depend upon their human wisdom, and boast their mental, material, and social possibilities, in haughtiness and arrogance, disregarding the spiritual ecclesiastical thought.**

“Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Corinthians 1: 20).

“Do not deceive yourselves. If anyone of you thinks he is wise by the standard of this age, he should become a fool so that he may become wise” I1 Corinthians 3: 18).

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (James 3: 13).

- ❖ ‘Job’ talks in astonishment, as though to say: Is the dignity of rational creation indeed connected to you alone? ... Do you know God’s wisdom, concerning the wicked and the righteous? ... Is it proper for men to know it? ... Do you know that God tests the righteous, confirming His longsuffering on the sinners (Sirach 2: 5, 11).

That is the reason why some prosper while others are tempted; as for some, longsuffering leads them to repentance (Ezekiel 33: 11); while for others, wrestling with temptation prepares them to get a crown (1 Corinthians 9: 25). If you understand this, you would no more judges the righteous who is going through temptation; and you would not count as righteous, the sinner who is prospering; But judge everyone according to his deeds. If you know this, it would not be befitting for you to utter in such a way in the judgment to come.

The wisdom of God, on the contrary accompanies the one who seeks it; as it conforms to training on the knowledge of God and His law. By that, man would clearly see two things: the glory of God, and the power of the law given to us.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ Institutes, 4:41.

- ❖ The wicked and the heretics never fear to instruct those who are better than them; believing that everyone else is inferior to them. The holy church, on the other hand, calls every haughty in thought, and every proud, to renew him with the spirit of reason, through connecting together in equality. ‘Job’, a member in this holy church, having seen his friends, arrogantly uttering such big words of teaching, answered them saying: *“Doubtless you are the people and wisdom will die with you”* (2). Whoever assumes that he exalts above all humans in reason; whose mind is puffed with pride and haughtiness; who despises everyone, and admires himself; and who foolishly imagines that he is the only one with wisdom, is actually confining himself in his narrow self!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Although the false apostles might have had a higher gift of eloquence than Paul; Yet that does not mean a thing, as long as the essence of preaching in him is well established; as their eloquence is nothing but a false appearance¹!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The devil invented the heresies and dissensions to corrupt faith and truth, and to destroy unity; and being unable to keep us on the new dark path of fallacy, he draws us into a new realm of deception!

He draws men away from the church herself; and with the assumption that they are approaching light, and getting away from the night of the world, he covers them with a new wave of darkness, while they are unaware of it!

And although they are not abiding to the teachings of the Bible, to the system and the law of Christ, they still claim that they are in the light through the deceptive ways of the enemy; about whom the apostle says: **that he may change himself into the likeness of an angel of light, and adorn his ministers like those of righteousness.**

They call night as day, death as salvation, despair as hope, betrayal as faithfulness, the antichrist as Christ; and suppress the truth by deception, through showing the truth in a false way.

That is what happens, O brethren, when we turn away from the fountain of truth; when we look away from the Head, and not keep the teaching that comes from heaven².

St. Cyprian

“But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things?” (Job 12: 3).

It is not with haughtiness that ‘Job’ says that to them; but he intends to keep them from falling into arrogance; as though the knowledge of divine secrets, especially those concerning God’s wisdom in caring for creation, and in His dealing with the wicked and the righteous, is confined to them alone; He is not inferior to them in knowledge; and there may probably be others with the same knowledge! His goal here is to suppress their pride, and not to boast his knowledge.

In the Septuagint version it came as: ***“I have a heart as yours” (3 LXX).***

- ❖ He says: I know, like you, how to think; and besides, ***“I have a (human) heart as yours”***. Yet, while you have darkened your hearts, I made mine fruitful with God’s law. Although I have a heart like yours, yet I can see Him, whom You cannot see. That is why, I do not marvel to hear you mock me!

¹ In 2 Cor. hom 23:3.

² The Unity of the Catholic Church, 3.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ **“But I have a mind as well as you: I am not inferior to you” (3).** Who could deny the extent of greatness of the righteous ‘Job’, and his experience that surpasses that of his friends? Now, to correct their haughtiness, he confirms that he is not inferior to them; yet, to keep himself from uttering the wrong thing, He refrains from saying that he is more exalted than them!

Pope Gregory the Great

How beautiful it is, for man to feel fellowship with humanity in enjoying the mind, the emotions, and the heart; Everyone according to God’s gift, for the glory of God and the edification of man and that of the congregation. But what separates one from another, is to sanctify of what God provided him by the work of the Holy Spirit of God, and to flare the flame of His gifts with faithfulness and diligence according to God’s will. This sanctification does not happen against our will; and is not enjoyed, except by the humble!

- ❖ God granted the rational nature the grace of the freedom of will ; and gave to man the ability to decide what he wants, in order that goodness may dwell in our life; not by force nor against our will, but according to our free choice. Our enjoyment of free will leads us to discover obvious facts in the nature of things. If man abuses this freedom of will, he, according to the words of the apostle, *“invents ways of doing evil”* (Romans 1: 30). Everyone of God is counted as a brother; whereas he, who refuses to partake of the good work, is acting with his complete free will¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ I pray to God to grant us the grace of humility that rids us of a multitude of ailments, and keeps us from several temptations².

Father Dorthoeos of Gazza

- ❖ Whoever is aware of the weakness of human nature, would gain the experience of God’s strength.

Father Maximus the Confessor

“I have become a laughing stock to my friends, though I called upon god and He answered me-- a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless” (Job 12: 4).

Instead of seriously supporting he, ‘Job’ found out that his friends are treating him with scorn, and are treading upon him, as though he became their laughingstock!

They came to comfort him and to give him their counsel; but their way of counseling turned into bitter criticism, that caused him more hurt. ‘Job’ could have endured that from gloating enemies, but not from dear friends. In this, ‘Job’ was a symbol of the Lord Christ, about whom it is said: *“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; If a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend”* (Psalm 55: 12, 13); and: *“If someone asks Him: ‘what are these wounds on Your body?’ He will answer: ‘The wounds I was given at the house of My friends’”* (Zechariah 13: 6).

What made his wounds worse, was that, beside being his friends, they were religious elders and rulers of the people, from whom, he hoped to pray for him to God, who would have listened to them; and of whom he hoped to hear words of comfort instead of those extremely painful rebukes. But that was always the portion

¹ نشيد الأناشيد للقديس غريغوريوس أسقف نيصص، تعريب الدكتور جورج نوار، عظة 2.

² تعريب الأرشيمندريت افرلم كريكوس: القديس دوروثاؤس: التعاليم الروحية، مقال 2.

of the prophets, the apostles, and all the righteous men of God, to become the laughingstock of even those who are close to them!

- ❖ The greater the love of God, the saints acquire, **the more they endure** for His sake¹!

St. Augustine

- ❖ Yes, “the righteous and the blameless would be a laughingstock”; not to everyone, but of the unrighteous (Wisdom 5: 3); not of the rational, but of the drunkards; not of elders, but of the kids; ridiculed by the sinner (Jeremiah 20: 7, 8); they “sowed in their tears and sufferings” (Psalm 126: 5-6). The sinner would never think of the coming fruits, and of that the righteous would cross over from tears to joy, from suffering to exalted honor, and that “the sorrows of the righteous are but for a limited time” (see 2 Corinthians 4: 17-18).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ While the wicked rebuke the righteous, they turn those whom they rebuke into witnesses against them. The moaning soul, confined in prayers, would hear the voice of the Most High; because the ridicule of his fellow creatures, would make the one whose innocence makes him foreigner to his fellow creatures, a (friend) of God.

It is the wisdom of the righteous that makes them seek, not the apparent, but the hidden; and that make them love the truth as it is, avoiding the vain haughtiness.

They practice the good works, not for the joy of bearing the evil pride; they do not avenge the harm done against them; **counting every insult for the sake of truth, a gain.**

Yet such simplicity of the righteous, makes them a laughingstock to the wicked of this world; those who count the goodness of purity as ignorance, and practicing all the laws of the truth, as weakness. As far as the divine hidden Judge is concerned, this man of innocence is seen as shining with virtues, and full of splendor, reflected by the worthiness of his life. This man, who does not feel comfortable when honored; ... does not feel depressed when despised; ... trains his body on chastity; ... rejoices when reviled; ... is compassionate from the heart toward the afflicted; ... rejoices with the success of others as though it is his own success; ... elaborately watches the expenses of the holy word in the heart; ... when tested, is found of no experience in giving a double response; ... **is a lamp giving light inside, and is mocked for not giving it outside;** ... To the inside, he glitters with the flame of love; while to the outside, he shines, yet with no splendor of vain glory; ... and, although he shines, he, who glitters with virtue, is counted as despised.

So was the young David, who was overlooked by his own father, when he was reluctant to introduce him together with his seven brothers to the prophet Samuel, to get the gift of anointment. And when he was asked by the prophet whether those were all the sons he has, he answered disrespectfully: “*There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep*” (1 Samuel 16: 11). And when he was brought and was chosen, he was rewarded by the words: “*The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart*” (1 Samuel 16: 7).

So was the prominent preacher St. Paul, when, underestimating the glory of his apostleship before the people, he says: “*As apostles of Christ we could have been*

¹ Patience, 17.

a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children” (see 1 Thessalonian 2: 6-7).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Men at ease have contempt for misfortune, as the fate of those whose feet are slipping” (Job 12: 5).

As though ‘Job’ says that the one whose feet slip; even though he used to be a shining lamp before, he is looked upon now as a quenched lamp that we tread upon with our feet. It embitters Job’s soul; to see those at ease and fulfilled, despise the tempted, the sufferers, and the hungry.

❖ **“In the appointed time, he would be ready to die by the strikes of a stranger, and would watch his house destroyed by the wicked” (5 LXX).**

What is meant by “*the appointed time*”? It is the time designated by God, who changes the hours and times, and moves everyone here and there, according to His will, God knows the limits of those under temptation, and to what extent they can endure it.

He appoints; the time when the righteous would die by the strikes of the enemies; namely, are abused by the wicked; He decides the means they would abuse them, and yet live their life at ease. For the righteous, on the other hand, He chooses for them how to persevere (James 5: 11); and to endure grief on earth.

God does not haphazardly allow the wicked to destroy the houses of the righteous, whom He would never forsake, nor allow for them to endure more than what they can. ... They will not be really harmed, if their present dwelling places and earthly tents are destroyed (2 Corinthians 5: 1-2).

That is then what we believe; that even if we are to experience some temporary destruction, yet we will obviously ultimately win, and receive the reward for our perseverance; And instead of our earthly dwelling, we shall inherit a heavenly dwelling place, where we would live among the angels and archangels.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Because the lamp despised on earth, will glitter in heaven, it is added: “*In the appointed time*”; The Psalmist says: “*I choose the appointed time; It is I who judge uprightly*” (Psalm 75: 2); The Truth proclaims in the gospel: “*The right time for Me has not yet come*” (John 7: 6); and Peter says: “*He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything*”(Acts 3: 21).

Pope Gregory the Great

St. Aphrahat, the Persian, tells us about how some wise man got offended because of the cruel persecution the Christians were enduring, without any interference of God to save them; And how he responded to him, using Some living examples from the Old Testament, to show that God allows for His beloved, to pass through affliction; Then to be glorified in the appointed time.

❖ It happened one day that someone, claimed to be wise among the Jews, asked me, saying: [Jesus, who is called your Teacher, proclaimed that if one of you has faith even as little as a mustard seed, and say to this mountain, to move from here and be cast in the sea, it would obey him (Matthew 17; 19; 21: 22); And, “*There is nothing impossible for you*”, It is obvious that, among your entire people, to whom this is written: there is not one single individual, to whose prayer God would listen and bring an end to this persecution you are facing¹!

¹ Demonstrations, 21: 1.

❖ Listening to his blasphemy against the Way, I got really confused! And being sure that he does not know the right interpretation of the words he quotes, I, in my turn, asked him, quoting from the law and the prophets, saying: Do you believe in God's words to Israel: "***When they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them***" (Leviticus 26: 44).

And, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior*" (Isaiah 43: 2-3). Do not you have among your entire people, one single righteous and good man, to pass through the sea, the rivers, and not be swept over by their waters, or to walk through the fire, and not be set ablaze by its flames?! I will reject your explanation, the same way you rejected mine, of the words you asked me about¹!

❖ **Jacob was persecuted**, and Esau was the persecutor; and yet, Jacob gained the blessings and the birth right; whereas Esau was denied both².

❖ **Joseph was persecuted by his brothers**; and yet, he was glorified; his brothers prostrated before him; and all his dreams and vision were realized.

Joseph, the persecuted, was a symbol of Jesus, the persecuted.

Joseph was given a multicolored robe by his father; and Jesus was clothed with a body from the Virgin Mary.

Joseph was beloved by his father more than his brothers; and Jesus was beloved by His Father.

Joseph saw visions, and dreamt dreams, that were all realized in Jesus.

Joseph was a shepherd together with his brothers; and Jesus is the Head Shepherd.

Joseph was sent by his father to visit his brothers, who, seeing him coming, they plotted to kill him.

And when Jesus was sent by God the Father to visit His brothers, they said: "*This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take His inheritance*" (Matthew 21: 38).

Joseph's brothers cast him in a pit; and Jesus' brothers cast Him down to dwell among the dead.

Joseph ascended from the pit; and Jesus resurrected from among the dead³.

❖ **Moses was also persecuted** like Jesus.

Moses, when born, was hidden lest his persecutors would kill him; and Jesus when born, was taken to Egypt lest Herod His persecutor would kill him.

Moses, was born in the days they were casting the newborn children in the river; and when Jesus was born, they killed the children of Bethlehem and its neighborhood.

To Moses God said: "*All the men who wanted to kill you are dead*" (Exodus 4: 19); and to Joseph, the carpenter, while he was in Egypt, was told by an angel: "*Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead*" (Matthew 2: 20).

Moses took his people away from the bondage of Pharaoh; and Jesus saved His people from that of the devil.

¹ Demonstrations, 21: 2.

² Demonstrations, 21: 9.

³ Demonstrations, 21: 9.

Moses was raised in the house of Pharaoh in Egypt; so was Jesus, when Joseph the carpenter took Him there.

Joshua the son of Nun was persecuted by the wicked peoples; and Jesus was persecuted by the ignorant people.

Joshua the son of Nun took the inheritance from his persecutors, and gave it to his people; and our Savior

Jesus took the inheritance from His persecutors and granted it to us – the Gentiles¹.

❖ **Joshua the son of Nun prayed** to God to hold the sun and the moon still, until he defeated the peoples who persecuted him; and our Savior Jesus caused the sun to set in the middle of the day, to put to shame the people who persecuted and crucified Him.

Joshua the son of Nun distributed the inheritance among his people; and our Savior Jesus promised to give the peoples the land of life².

❖ These memories, beloved brother, concerning Jesus, as well as the righteous, who were persecuted, I am writing to you, to put at ease the hearts of those who are persecuted today for the sake of Jesus; to whom He wrote, saying: *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.... Because you do not belong to this world, as I do not belong to this world, the world hates you”* (John 15: 19, 20; 17: 14)³.

St. (Mar) Aphrahat, the Persian

2- THE WICKED WOULD NOT NECESSARILY PERISH IN THIS WORLD:

“THE TENTS OF MARAUDERS ARE UNDISTURBED, AND THOSE WHO PROVOKE GOD ARE SECURE – THOSE WHO CARRY THEIR GOD IN THEIR HANDS” (JOB 12: 6).

We should not marvel when we see the wicked live in prosperity; seem successful and in need of nothing; and when we see them mock the believers under temptation, who suffer affliction. They are like weeds in wintertime, that mock the trees, when bared of leaves, and seem lifeless, as though fruitless, and only fit for use as fuel for fire! As everything has an appointed time by God, when springtime comes, the weeds will soon dry up, and probably replaced by other weeds; while the trees that looked dry before, will be laden with beautiful leaves and fruits. So ‘Job’ looked at his friends who made him their laughingstock; and told them that ‘Everything for God has its appointed time’.

Objecting to the principle adopted by his friends, that the prosperity of the wicked would never last long in this world, and that they would soon face setbacks, he confirms to them that God has His own wisdom in dealing with people; and may choose to postpone the reward or the punishment to the other world. That is why he says that although the marauders keep practicing blasphemy, violence, and persecution against others, they are still successful, and their tents are still undisturbed. He probably means by this the Sabeans and the Chaldeans who have marauded his possessions.

¹ Demonstrations, 21: 10.

² Demonstrations, 21: 11.

³ Demonstrations, 21:21.

It is not uncommon to see the thieves, arrogantly disregarding their relationship with God, take away the possessions of others through betrayal and force, not fearing any harm that would come on them.

- ❖ I wish no one would misunderstand the longsuffering of God, nor would fail to put the coming judgment into his consideration. I wish no one would assume that the Just Judge would ever let the deeds of the wicked go unpunished. I wish everyone would learn a lesson from the plagues that came over Pharaoh (Exodus 14: 4), over Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 5: 57); over Jesabel (2 Kings 9: 7-10), over the Amalekites (Baruch 3: 27-28); over the sons of Korah (Numbers 16: 310; over the group of Dathan (Numbers 26: 9-10); and over Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19: 24-25); etc. What came upon all those wicked peoples, who despised the longsuffering of God, make us meditate and fear the punishment they had.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

St. Augustine, to put our heart at ease, often tells us that, if the wheat is found mixed with the chaff in this world; Yet it would do the wheat no harm, nor cause it to lose its crown; because the time will eventually come when it will be separated from the wheat and burned with fire.

- ❖ This chaff would not cause those who are the wheat of the Lord to perish; Even though they are few if compared to the others, yet they are still a great multitude of God's elect, "*gathered from the four winds, from one end of heavens to the other*" (Matthew 24: 31); who will cry out to the Lord, saying: "*Help, Lord, for the godly are no more, the faithful have vanished from among men*" (Psalm 12: 1); And the Lord will answer them, saying: "*He, who stands firm to the end (when evil will be chained) will be saved*" (Matthew 24: 13)¹.

St. Augustine

It is not for us to judge, and to separate the wheat from the tares, nor the vessels that are for honor from those that are for . Yet, it is also befitting for us to rest assured that the wheat would never be neglected by God because of the tares; nor the vessels for honor would lose their dignity because those for ; as it is said by the apostles: "***God knows His own***".

- ❖ The wheat would not perish for the sake of the tares (See Matthew 3; 12); nor, for the sake of the bad fish in the net, no good fish would be taken in the baskets (Matthew 13; 48) ... He has predestined us before we were even born, and promised us, saying: "*For those God foreknew He also predestined, ... And those He predestined He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, he also glorified*" (Romans 8: 30)². He also says: [Even when the seeds are hidden among the chaff, they are still known by the owner of the field. Anyone who is a seed among the chaff should not fear, as the eyes of the One who winnows us would not be deceived³].

St. Augustine

***"Ask the beasts of the field, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you"* (Job 12; 7).**

'Job' reveals that what his three friends boasted as wisdom is nothing but natural knowledge, known by all creation, even by the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air.

¹ Ep. 93:33.

² On Ps. 89.

³ On Ps. 50.

- ❖ He says: Ask even those animals who cannot speak; Even though they may lack the language, yet they can tell by some natural way that they know their Creator, and are aware of their Maker and the Secret of their existence. Now, ask the beasts of the field: ‘By whose orders, Balaam’s donkey talked’ (Numbers 22; 26); and ask the birds of the air: Who ordered the ravens to feed Elijah?’ (1 Kings 17: 4-6).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ If you are in the night, watching the dazzling beauty of the stars, you can see the Artist who designed them and adorned the sky with these roses! And if in the early morning, watching the wonders of the day, you may, through the seen objects, reach the unseen ones.
- ❖ I wish that the splendor of these seen things, would lead us to comprehend the unseen One, who is above every earthly beauty; And that the magnificence of these limited sensed things would lift us up to realize the exaltation of the eternal, the limitless, whose might surpasses the possibilities of our brains and hearts¹.
- ❖ Did the day come to an end? Well! Give thanks to Him, who provided us with the sun to help us in our day’s work; and who provides us with the fire to illuminate the night, and to fulfill our other needs in life. I wish that the night would inspire us to pray!

When you look at the sky, and see the beauty of the stars; pray to the Lord of all the things seen, who “*in wisdom made them all*” (Psalm 104: 24).

And when you see all nature, deep in sleep; Once again, prostrate yourself before Him, who, even against our own will, relieves us from the burden of continuous labor; and, through a short period of rest, brings us back to our active self!

Do not let the whole night be dedicated to sleep; do not allow half your days to go without benefit, in lazy unconsciousness. But divide the night-time between sleep and prayers. And let your light sleep be training for piety; as our dreams during the night are reflections of our thoughts during the day².

St. Basil the Great

“*Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you*” (Job 12: 8).

All the irrational creatures testify how the big fish devour the small; and how the strong wild beasts feed on the weak; which would not happen, if it was not for the sin that came into being; but “*the wolf would live with the lamb*” (Isaiah 11: 6).

- ❖ “*Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you*” (8). Yet the earth would not tell you about the essence of Him, who formed and shaped them like a Potter; and not only the earth, but also the sun, the heavens, and even the heaven of heavens, would not be able to proclaim that!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ “*Let the fish of the sea inform you*” (8), who ordered the great fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 2: 1 etc.).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ There are migratory fish that migrate when the time come to reproduce, as though by a collective order, and a specific decree; some from a sea, and some from another, governed by a common law. We see them hastening like flood, through the Bosphorus toward the Black Sea! Who ordered them to move? Who is their

¹ Hexamaeron 1:11.

² Cf. Reg. Brev. 32.

leader? Where are the instruction declared in the public places, to fix the time of travel? And yet, you can tell for sure that there is a divine power that controls everything, and every detail. **Here we notice how the fish do not oppose the law of God; while we, humans would not keep His commandments!**

Do not despise the fish, on account of that they are mute, and are not able to talk. Have fear to be less rational than they are; when you do not keep the commandments of your Creator.

Listen to the fish, they may lack the ability to talk; Yet their behavior will tell you that maintaining their race is the force motivating them to start that exhaustive and long migrations. It may lack the comprehension, yet there is a natural law, deep in their instinct that motivate them to do it ... and that say to them: Come, let us go to the Black

Sea, where the sun is less intense, and the water conditions are more convenient to produce the young and raise them! And once they achieve their goal, they intend to reverse their course; as though they are saying: The Black Sea is a little shallow, prone to violent storms that turn its water turbid, and lacks the natural refuge against the wild currents; besides being too cold in winter. Having made use of its convenient summer conditions, the fish would hasten to return to the warmth of the deep waters, and to find rest in the quiet gulfs, away from the mighty winds of the north.

I have watched all that, and marveled at the comprehensive wisdom of God.

If the irrational animals submit to embedded instinct, by which they know how to manage their life; And if the fish know how to chose and what to avoid; What would we say, we who are honored with the rational nature, are taught the divine law, are called by the divine promises, and are fulfilled by the Holy Spirit? Should we manage our affairs with less wisdom than the irrational fish?!

Could fish manage to avoid certain things before they happen; while we, on the contrary, do not care, and waste our whole life in carnal pleasures?

Fish travel incredible distances in the sea, searching for the most convenient conditions for their life; while we live in such laziness and slothfulness! No one should give excuses of ignorance; as we possess a natural power of mind that tells us how to discern between what is good and what is bad¹!

St. Basil the Great

“Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?”
(Job 12: 9).

Every rational, or even irrational being, can realize that God is his Creator, and that He is the One who sustains him.

“In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind”
(Job 12: 10).

❖ Why do young ravens call Him? (Psalm 147: 9).

Why do lions seek their food from God?” (Psalm 104: 9).

If these creature put their Creator in their consideration; how much more is it befitting for us, whom He brought into existence?! Do not we know that “the Spirits of all men” are in God’s hand?! Who from the beginning, has breathed in them the breath of life (Genesis 2: 7); as demonstrated in the prophetic song of David, saying: “When You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust” (Psalm 104: 29).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ ترجمة الأب ج. عقيقي اليسوعي. Hexamaeeron 7:4

- ❖ The hand refers to the power ... He grants the soul the power to give life to the body; and on another aspect, He gives her the ability to gain the comprehension of eternity.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ No creature can refer its existence to itself. You alone do not owe Your existence to anyone. All of us, and all creation – did not exist before its creation. The cause of our existence is the will of God¹.
- ❖ Our existence is not a fruit of the worthiness of our works, but is a grace from our Creator².
- ❖ As to the rational creation; goodness in them, it is not there by nature, but is a good gift from their Creator ... The Creator granted them the mind, and gave them the freedom to act through a freedom of will; in order that any goodness in them would be counted as though it is their own³!
- ❖ No one, whether a Jew or a Gentile, is devoid of that law which is in mankind by nature. God granted man all the feelings and senses by which he could strive to stay and grow in virtue; and planted in him the gift of mind, by which he could realize what to do and what to avoid. He granted all that to everyone with no exception⁴.

The scholar Origen

“Does not the ear test words, as the tongue test food?” (Job 12: 11).

It is befitting for the ear not to believe everything it hears, but to discern between the truth and the vanity; the way the tongue discerns between the sweet and the bitter. If the ear and the tongue are committed to discern what they receive, whether by hearing or by tasting; Is it not befitting for man to embrace the spirit of discernment to separate the true teachings from the false ones (1 Corinthians 10: 15; 11: 13)?

- ❖ Here, he does not talk about the ear of the body, but that of the spirit. By the carnal ear we can hear the sound of words, whereas by the inner ears, we can discern the thoughts and the sense of words. The tongue as well, can taste the food, as far as the pleasure it gives; **whereas the (tongue) of the Spirit can discern its benefit.**

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ **The mind (nous) discerns the words** ... If God has given us the tongue to taste the food, He has also given us the mind to make our decisions, and the time to seek the understanding.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ There is only one judge to supervise what enters; **namely, the ability of the mind to discern.** But through befitting ways, the five senses are kept distinct, and through them, God performs wonders. The eye cannot hear; the ear cannot see, the tongue cannot smell, nor the nose can taste. Although all these work through the power of one mind; Yet no individual sense can practice but the one single job designated to it by the Creator. It is up to us to gather all these outer carnal arrangements, together inside in a spiritual way.

¹ In 1 Sam., Homily 2.

² Comm. in Ep. ad Rom. 4:5 [See Drewery].

³ De Principiis 2:9:2 [See Drewery].

⁴ Comm. in Ep. ad Rom. 3:6.

One wisdom dwells in someone less than in another ... Yet, while there is no differences between them, Through it we can practice a diversity of things: One man may be given a gift of wisdom, another a gift of knowledge, another a gift of tongues, and another a gift of healing

The righteous 'Job' condemns the lack of experience of his friends, and the rudeness of him, who is puffed up claiming that he has acquired the wisdom; as knowing something about God is something, while understanding what you know is something else.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **There is no single virtue that we can acquire on our own, unless we are helped by the divine grace.** In the Holy Book we see that 'discernment' is counted among the gifts of the Holy Spirit; As according to the apostle Paul: *"To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, ... and to another discerning of spirits ..."* (1 Corinthians 12: 8-10).

So you see that discernment is not an earthly gift, nor it is a simple matter, but is a great gift given by the divine grace. If man¹ does not zealously seek it, he will certainly become as though in the darkness of the night, he would not only fall into pits of vain lusts, but would err even in simple things.

Discernment instructs man how to walk along the royal path; How not to go to extremes in virtue; namely, neither to exaggerate, and to go boldly and rudely beyond the limits of moderation; nor to fall into slothfulness.

That is the discernment expressed in the Holy Book as the "eye" or the "lamp of the body", in the words of the Savior: *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness"* (Matthew 6: 22-23); because it discerns all the thoughts and works, sees everything, and watch what is going to happen.

If the eye of man is "evil"; namely, not supported by the voice of wisdom and knowledge, deceived by some faults and arrogance (in worship), our whole body would be full of darkness. Our minds and our works would be in the darkness of wickedness and disturbances; as according to the words of the Savior: *"If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matthew 6: 23).

Nobody can doubt that, when the judgment of things in the heart is wrong; namely, when the heart is full of ignorance, all our thoughts and works, which are the fruit of discernment and meditation, would be in the darkness of the great sin².

Father Moses

3- GOD'S WISDOM AND AUTHORITY:

"Is not wisdom with the aged and understanding with the length of days?"
(Job 12: 12).

No body can deny that some men enjoy wisdom gained through the experience of years and the length of days *"How attractive is wisdom of the aged, and understanding and counsel in the venerable"* (Sirach 25: 7).

Yet, despite having the wisdom and the understanding, they may not be able to put them to effect; But God, on the other hand, has the complete wisdom and might.

¹ الحديث في المناظرات عن الرهبان وقد استبدلت كلمة "راهب" بـ "إنسان".

² Cassian: Conferences, 1:1-2.

“Job’ probably intends to proclaim to them that they hastened to judge him, because they saw him fall into many temptations; It was befitting for them to wait for some time in true wisdom, to see what is beyond those temptations!

St. John Chrysostom says on Job’s tongue: [When we know so much, we probably assume that we know all! Yes I know that the wicked are punished; but you can see, that despite my righteousness, I am punished as well. Moreover, do you need much time to understand that there are many similar precedents to my situation? Do not you see in the Holy Book, how many people of the old, who have got such depth of experience, have gone through similar grief and afflictions? Hence the saying of someone: “*Be ready to listen to every godly discourse*” (Sirach 7: 35); and: “*Do not slight the discourse of the sages; ... Do not ignore the discourse of the aged, for them themselves learned from their parents*” (Sirach 8: 8-9). In case God intends to grant it to you, you are then in no need of time!

- ❖ “***Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding with the length of days***” (12). Because wisdom is acquired by men through study and experience; For God, this is not the case, as wisdom is in His Person; and He instructs its lessons.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ These words confirm the roots of wisdom. With the length of days and practice, wisdom will normally get stronger. But as there are many aged, who were not given the wisdom, it would be befitting to refer it to God, “***To whom belong wisdom and power, counsel and the understanding are His***”

Pope Gregory the Great

- “***To God belong wisdom and power, counsel and understanding are His***” (Job 12: 13).

God, who is alone the whole wisdom. Being the Almighty, beside being aware of everything, He is also capable of consummating His will. There is no comparison between the wisdom of the elders and that of God!

“*Give me the wisdom that sits by Your throne, and do not reject me from among Your servants*” (Wisdom 9: 4).

“*For even one who is perfect among human beings will be regarded as nothing without the wisdom that comes from You*” (Wisdom 9: 6).

“*With You is wisdom; She who knows Your work, and was present when You made the world; She understands what is pleasing in Your sight, and what is right according to Your commandments*” (Wisdom 9: 9).

- ❖ “***To Him belong wisdom and power, counsel and understanding are His***” (13). ‘Job’ did not talk without presenting a testimony by the seen creation to support his words, and to proclaim the wisdom of God and His great might.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The work of God the Father that covers all existence, is glorified and becomes very great, when every man makes progress, and reaches the highest grade of growth through the fellowship with Christ, who is the “Wisdom”, the “**Knowledge**”, and the “**Holiness**”.

This is realized when man is sanctified, purified, and reaches the highest level of perfection through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; to become more worthy of gaining the grace of wisdom and knowledge; that all the filth of uncleanness and ignorance are be taken away from him, to reach that perfection with purity; and the life he gained from God would be worthy of God, who intends for it to be pure and perfect. By that, the creature would be worthy of this (holy) life, and would become

(in the likeness of the Creator); because by this way intended for him by his Creator, man may gain from Him the power to exist eternally.

- ❖ God cares for the soul, (the center of the talents, the emotions, and the feelings), in every man, **to gain, amid the life of his body, prudence and knowledge, and a befitting level of cleverness;** so that his senses would be able to discern both good and evil (Hebrew 5; 14).

The scholar Origen

“If He tears down, no one can rebuild; if He shuts someone in, no one can open up” (Job 12: 14).

Whoever acquires God would enjoy His wisdom and power working in him; Whereas he, who resists God’s wisdom by his own human wisdom, would only get foolishness, and God would allow for his life his life to be ruined, and would not be rebuilt. Here, ‘Job’ takes us back to the time when the tower of Babel was built, when man leaned upon his wisdom and power, and thought that he can resist God. Those people assumed that they were capable of building a tower that can reach heaven, but they failed and got their energy scattered. We also have the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah to testify to the futility of resisting God.

God may “*shut in*” by allowing for an infirmity, a catastrophe, or even death, when man enters the grave and never comes out. When the wicked are shut in hell, which can bring them up from there?!

When man insists on shutting his heart on practicing sin, and would not open it up to receive God’s grace and support, Sin would remain a prisoner of his heart, reins on it, and guides it; As it happened with Pharaoh, who refused by his heart to listen to the voice of God through the plagues, He brought on him and his land.

Because, despite his deceitful promises, he persisted in his heart on violence and rejection of God’s work, the Lord said: “*I will harden Pharaoh’s heart*” (Exodus 7: 3); through letting him be a prisoner of his evil and wickedness.

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us the example of ‘Esau’ whose heart became “shut in” by his own will, and by his evil slothfulness, that led him to sell his birthright for a meal of stew, saying: “*I am about to die, what good is the birthright to me?*” (Genesis 25: 32). He despised his birthright, never repented, and shut his heart on his evil. His father intended to open that door up to give him his blessing before he dies (Genesis 27: 4), but God rejected that son who did not repent, and allowed for the father, against his own will, to give his blessing to the younger son. And when Esau burst out with a loud and bitter cry, from a soul that was neither humble nor contrite, his repentance was counted as naught, and failed to draw the grace of God to open up his heart.

- ❖ God the Almighty ruins the heart of man, when He forsakes it, and builds it when He fills it. **He ruins man’s soul by withdrawing from it;** and when He leaves the heart to itself, it ends up to nothing, and even to destruction. When it so happens that the listener’s heart is not filled with the grace of the Almighty, because of his sins; In vain, would be the preacher’s counsel; Every mouth for him would be as though mute, if God does not utter His voice inside the heart, inspiring the words that the ear hears. According to David: “*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builder’s labor in vain*” (Psalm 127: 1); and to Solomon: “*Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what He has made crooked?*” (Ecclesiastes 7: 13).

Although Cain has enjoyed hearing God’s advices, he could not change. Because of the sin inside his evil heart, God forsook him, after addressing his words to him to bear witness against him.

It is well said: **“If He shuts someone in, no one can open up” (14)**. When man practices sin in every way, what is he doing but making himself a prison for his conscience? Feeling iniquity deep in his soul, would probably apply pressure on him, even if no one accuses him; And being, by the allowance of God, forsaken in the blindness of his evil heart, he would be as though, has shut himself in, and will not find a place to escape, nor would be even worthy of finding such a place. It often happens that someone longs to forsake an evil habit; Yet, because he, for so long, is burdened down to earth, he shuts his evil habit in its prison, and would never be able to get out of himself.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ From Psalm 127: 1, we may learn that, not because it is God who builds, man may slothfully sit. He has to work as much as his human possibilities permit; then God would take away all obstacles, until the work is done with success. It is befitting for man, to, truly and faithfully, lean on God, for the consummation of his work, and not on any human; according to the words of the apostle Paul: *“I planted the seed; Apollo's watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow”* (1 Corinthians 3: 6-7). By the same way, we can say, that everything depends, not on man's will, or on his strife, but on the mercies of God¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ We cannot run along the way of God, except borne on the wings of the Spirit².
- ❖ By the help of God, we do the good we practice³.
- ❖ No one is stronger than him, who enjoys the heavenly help; and no one is weaker than him, who is deprived of it⁴.
- ❖ Let us become stronger than all, following the example of Paul, Peter, James, and John; as, without God's help, we shall not be able to resist the least seduction⁵!
- ❖ Let us fear nothing; as, in order to overcome the devil, we should know that our cleverness will not benefit us; and that everything is of the grace of God⁶.
- ❖ Those who are punished are for the sake of justice; and those who are rewarded, are for the sake of grace. Even if they practice a thousand good things, their enjoyment of the kingdom and heaven will be for the sake of those little good things, for the freedom of grace; to be raised to an un-measurable level⁷.

St. John Chrysostom

“If He holds back the waters, there is drought; if He lets them loose, they overwhelm the land” (Job 12: 15).

The rain is in God's hand; if He holds it back; the earth will dry up, and lose its fruition. And if He lets them too loose, the crops of the earth will be corrupted, and the buildings will collapse. Here, he is probably referring to the great flood in Noah's days that wiped out all life on earth.

¹ Commentary on Rom 9:16.

² In Mat, In Gen. PG 57: 30 ; 53: 228.

³ In Mat PG 57: 303.

⁴ In Paralyt. PG 51: 54.

⁵ In Mat PG 58: 720.

⁶ In Act PG 60: 124.

⁷ In Mat PG 58: 720.

- ❖ If He shuts heaven up, who will open it? And if He open the gates of the great flood, who will shut it up? Who can increase the rain, and who can hold it back from flowing enough; except the one who controls the universe with His measures and weights¹!?

St, Gregory the Nezenian

- ❖ + “*Waters*” may be understood as (knowledge for preaching); as it is written: “*The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a flowing brook*” (Proverbs 18: 4). When the words of preaching are held back, the hearts that would be flourished with hope in eternity, would dry up, and would remain in the barrenness of despair, because of their love of temporal things.

Or the term “*waters*” may refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the Truth in the gospel, saying: “*Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him*”, then adds: “*By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive*” (John 7: 38, 39). The Holy Spirit, if held back from the mind of the listener, his senses would instantly dry up, after being freshly green!

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great also says: [On his way to Damascus, provided with letters from the high priest against Christ, Paul got fulfilled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and his intention to shed blood was instantly transformed to readiness to receive the strikes and scourges for the sake of Christ, that he intended to bring on the Christians. He, who was before striving to deliver the saints of God to death, was rejoicing for the hope of presenting the sacrifice of his body, for the sake of the life of those saints. He, who was cold with cruelty, was transformed into the warmth of compassion. He, who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, became a humble and a compassionate preacher. He, who used to count slaying Christ in His disciples a great achievement, now holds Christ fast to become his life; and believes that “*to die is gain*” (Philippians 1: 21). “***When He lets waters loose, they overwhelm the land***” (15). This is what happened in Paul’s mind, in the moment he received the grace of the Holy Spirit; when the hardness of his stubbornness and cruelty was (overwhelmed) by gentleness and compassion!].

- ❖ The first water on earth brought forth life; So no wonder that that the water of Baptism brings forth life as well.
- ❖ As in the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the water (Genesis 1:2), the Spirit of the Holy One still hovers over the holy water, or rather over the water that receives holiness from Him, to recreate the one who is baptized. The water, that was the preliminary element of creation, got the secret of sanctification by the Spirit (through supplications) to receive the possibility to sanctify².

The scholar Tertullian

- ❖ The new creation is consummated through the water and Spirit, in the same way the world was created, when the Spirit of God hovered over the waters in the beginning³.

St. Clement of Alexandria

**“*To Him belong strength and prudence; the deceived and deceiver are His*”
(Job 12: 16).**

¹ Second Theological Oration, 28.

² De Baptismo 2.

³ Ecol. Proph 7.

To Him are the might and strength; and He is the source of wisdom and prudence. He cares for everyone, even for the simple who are deceived by others, and the wicked who deceive their brethren; using everything to realize His divine plan; as both the deceived and the deceiver are in His hands; and He is glorified in all; Although He never stand vanity and deceit. In the end, the believers will sing and praise, saying: *“Hallelujah! For our God Almighty reigns, let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory”* (Revelation 19: 6).

- ❖ In case anyone gets strength and authority, or received understanding and prudence, all that are from God; He who gives in abundance to those who ask for it; He would obviously take them back when He chooses to do so. For this we have the example of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom Daniel said: *“You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth”* (Daniel 4: 22). And when he became haughty and puffed up with pride, he did not only lose his kingdom and authority, but he lost knowledge and prudence as well; was driven out from among men, lived like wild animals, and ate grass like cattle (Daniel 4: 23, 24). Why did this happen to him?! That Daniel clearly explained to him, saying: *“Seven times will pass by for you, until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of men and gives them to anyone He wishes”* (Daniel 4: 25). Once Nebuchadnezzar realized that, he got back his spirit and his kingdom, when *“he praised the Most High, and honored and glorified Him who lives forever”* (Daniel 4: 34-37).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“He leads counselors away stripped, and makes fool of judges” (Job 12: 17).

It is only the individuals who are under the authority of the Almighty, but even the nations and peoples.

He often allows for the fools, who think of themselves as wise counselors, to fall in captivity, lose their honor, wealth, freedom, and even their humanity!

Even the judges, known for their exalted counsel, would sometimes become fools; as it happened to ‘Ahithophel’ (2 Samuel 16,17), who became like what his name indicates; namely, (the one with ignorance and foolishness). And as is said by Isaiah: *“The officials of Zoan have become fools; the leaders of Memphis are deceived, the cornerstones of her peoples have led Egypt astray”* (Isaiah 19: 13).

It often happens that the elders with long experience and wisdom lose their prudence. The factor of time that brought them over to wisdom, would, because of the weakness that comes with age, eventually bring them back to a condition almost similar to childhood.

- ❖ **He sometimes leads counselors to a foolish end;** when they do goodness for ulterior motive, and seek temporary reward! If the only-begotten Son of God, became Man, to preach the eternal truth; to be accordingly called: *“A wonderful Counselor”* (Isaiah 9: 6); we may also interpret ‘the counselors’ as the (preachers) who provide their listeners with the counsel of life. But when a counselor preaches the eternal truth to acquire temporary benefits, he will certainly ***“end up stripped”*** (17).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The thought of **“vain glory”** is the worst kind of thoughts!

It usually comes to those walking in the life of righteousness; when man, starting to glorify his strife, and to enjoy the commendation of others, imagines that the demons are terrified from him, on account of his ability to heal the infirm, and of the multitudes crowding around him to touch the fringe of his robe; He ultimately

imagines that the congregation will eventually approach to ordain him a priest; and that, when he shows some reluctance, they will shackle him and take him by force to ordain him!

After flaring in him such false hopes, the devil would create the chance for other attacks by the demon of pride, and even by the demon of adultery; against the one, who some moments ago looked at himself as a saint and a reverend priest¹!

The demon of pride often leads to a very sorrowful fall of the soul, when he counsels it to stop looking at God as its helper, to refer to itself everything good, and to start puffing itself before the brethren, counting them as ignorant, because they do not acknowledge his exalted status!

Pride would be then followed by anger, murmur, and protest that lead to frustration, loss of good judgment, and imagining the existence of several demons going around in the air²!

- ❖ It is hard to escape from the thought of vain glory; because anything you do to drive it away can lead to a new motive to it. Besides, demons do not always resist every sound thought, but sometimes encourage us to have them, with the intention to use them later to deceive us!

St. Oghris

“He looses the sash of kings, and ties a loincloth around their waist” (Job 12; 18).

God sometimes allow for those of authority like kings to lose every honor, through loosening their sashes, so that their swords would fall off their waists, and their crowns off their heads. Here, he probably refers to going down to the level of slaves, who were not allowed to have sashes around their waists.

“He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty” (Job 12: 19).

Having talked about the wise like counselors and judges, those of experience like elders, and those of authority like kings; Now he talks about those who think of themselves as righteous; namely, the priests; who, in their hypocrisy, assume that they are untouchable, on account of that they are God’s ministers, who work for His people. Yet God has no partiality, and may even allow for the captivation of His priests, and for letting they lose their honor, authority and wealth, which they used to cherish!

Finally he refers to the mighty who would soon become weak! It often happened that mighty men of war fall captive to weak men; and mighty armies are defeated before weaker ones! Thus, it is not befitting for anyone to lean upon his temporal power, nor upon his personal wisdom, understanding, authority, and social or religious status!

- ❖ The priest’s greatest asset is the righteousness of his subordinates. A good preacher has the right to say to his disciples: *“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you?”* (1 Thessalonians 2: 19). But, when the priests disregard the life of those on whom they are responsible, and have no fruition in their progress before the Lord; they become in disgrace, and would have no glory before the just Judge, whom they do not seek in the life of their flock, through their persistent preaching.

¹ إلى أناتوليس عن الأفكار الثمانية، 8.

² Praktikos 13,14.

He said well: ***“He overthrows the mighty”***. He justly forsakes their hearts, when they do not look forward to the inner reward; He casts them away, when they deceive themselves by rejoicing in the temporal glory instead of the eternal one.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The fault is not in the authority itself, but it is in the vain greed. Establishing authority is from God; and he, who uses it, would be an ambassador of God, being His minister for goodness (Romans 13: 4). Work in itself is no sin, but it would be the fault of the one who execute it ... We should discern between the good and the bad use of authority.

St. Ambrose

“He silences the lips of trusted advisers, and takes away the discernment of elders” (Job 12: 20).

Those of eloquence in speech, philosophy, and personal charisma, sometimes stand mute, with no word in their mouth, because they insulted the One who granted prudence, and the talent of word!

- ❖ When the priest does not practice the goodness he preaches; God will silence his lips, that he would not dare utter what he does not practice. It was said by the prophet: *“What right have you to recite My laws or take my covenant on your lips?”* (Psalm 50: 16); and: *“Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth”* (Psalm 119: 43). It is obvious that the Almighty gives the word of truth to those who practice it, and takes it away from those who do not.

The Truth says in the gospel: *“For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in In him”* (Matthew 12: 33, 34). St. John says: *“They are from the world, and therefore speak from the viewpoint the world”* (1 John 4: 5). And it is well said by ‘Job’: ***“He silences the lips of trusted advisers; and takes away the discernment of elders” (20).***

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“A bishop must be above reproach”*** (1 Timothy 3: 2; Titus 1: 7) ... As this phrase includes all virtues, it looks as though the apostle is asking for the impossible! As, if every sin or a vain word deserves reproach; who, in this whole world, would be with no sin or above reproach?! Yet, he, who is to be chosen as an overseer of the church, should be of a higher caliber than the sheep of his flock!

In order to be commended and described as a ‘good man’ a preacher is committed, beside the eloquence of speech, to be blameless in his behavior; As a teacher, whose words are not supported by his acts, would lose his effect on his listeners.

St. Eronemus

- ❖ ***“above reproach”*** ... includes all virtues. In case someone knows that he has a certain sin, it is not well for him to seek a certain job for which he is not well qualified. He would be in need of a counselor, rather than to give counsel. He, who takes over a guiding role, **should be of more splendor than any shining star; his life should be blameless**, that all would look up to him to follow his example.

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that this phrase applies to the Jews whose lips uttered the truth before the incarnation of the Word; as they believed that He would come, and even proclaimed His coming. Yet, their lips changed after He came, and denied Him. When He was already there among them, He, whose coming they

proclaimed, they cast away the teachings of their fathers, and did not walk according to what they prophesied.

“He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty” (Job 12: 21).

Having insulted their Creator, the nobles bring contempt upon themselves; *“He who pours contempt on nobles made them wanders in a trackless waste”* (Psalm 107: 40).

❖ Because the Jewish people lived according to the law, when no one of the entire Gentile world knew anything about the commandment of God, the former were called ‘the nobles of faith’, while the later fell in the pit of non-faith. Yet, when the Jews denied the secret of incarnation of our Lord, while the Gentile world believed in it, *“the nobles fell into contempt”*, while the others gained the freedom of the true faith. Having foreseen that a long time before it happened, the prophet Jeremiah said: *“The Lord is like an enemy, He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces, and destroyed her strongholds”* (Lamentations 2: 5).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ When God rejected Israel, He poured His grace upon the Gentiles. The call to the Gentiles to receive the grace of God by Jesus Christ, previously preached by the prophets, started by the fall of Israel¹.

❖ We, Christians, say that the Jews despite their previous enjoyment of the favor and love of God, more than any other people, Yet, that divine privileges have been transferred to us, once the Lord Jesus moved the authority working among the Jews to the believers of the Gentiles².

The scholar Origen

“He uncovers deep things out of darkness and brings the shadow of death to light” (Job 12: 22).

Having fallen into rebellion, death became a companion of the early man as close to him as his shadow and even closer; nothing terrified him like death. The apostle Paul called it *“the last enemy”* or the most violent enemy to confront man. But the death of the Lord Christ on the cross has destroyed the authority of death in its den; when, by death He destroyed the death, and granted us the power of the eternal life and the resurrection.

Because the Lord Christ wiped out the term ‘death’ from the dictionary of our thought, and replaced it with the expression “the shadow of death”, “the sleep”, or “the departure”; We sing saying, *“There will be no more death for Your servants, but departure”* ; And say, together with the apostle Paul: *“Where, O death is your sting? Where, O Hades, is your victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15: 55).

The lord turned death in the life of believers into a shadow without being, when He shone with His light on the graves and exposed the weakness of the shadow of death!

When the Lord uncovered the darkness, and the Sun of Righteousness shone on us, we realized that there is no place for us in the kingdom of darkness.

God exposes the plots designed in the darkness, and the evil done in secret. When the king of Aram thought that there

was a traitor among his men, he was told by one of his officers: *“Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of*

Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom” (2 Kings 6: 12).

¹ In Jer. hom. 3.

² Contra Cels. 5:50.

❖ **“He uncovers deep things out of darkness” (22).** What are the deep things? The hidden things, the thoughts not revealed in the splendor of the day. That is why ‘Job’ speaks about the darkness; And the Lord Christ Himself uses the same words to confirm Job’s statement, when He says to His disciples: *“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known”* (Matthew 10: 26); Then adds: *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roof”* (Matthew 10: 27).

“And brings the shadow of death to light” (22). The shadow of death is the sin. The same way the shadow reveals the body making the shadow, *“The sting of death is sin”* (1 Corinthians 10: 56); it is its distinguishing feature!

Anyway, by this shadow of death, God discloses His hidden mystery (Romans 16: 25; Colossians 1: 26) to mankind; and proclaims His righteousness (Psalm 98: 2; Romans 1: 17); And in the same way He reveals the sin (Ephesians 4: 22), and does not allow it to remain hidden. Once we know its ugliness, and how it corrupts the soul, we all tend to escape from it. That is why the Lord Christ said about the Jewish people: *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin”* (John 15: 22). They are now aware of its uncleanness and evil smell, compared to righteousness and beauty that was not known before.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **Pope Gregory the Great** sees in the shadow of death a reference to the cruelty of the law, that stated that every sinner is worthy of the death of the body. But once the Savior came, He took away the death of the body as a punishment of the sinner; and concentrated our attention on the activity of sin on our souls.

“He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and disperses them” (Job 12: 23).

God is the Controller of the whole history; He at times allowed some nations to grow and have authority, to realize a certain goal to chastise His people; As it happened to Babylon, that while being a small country, it defeated the mighty Assyria, replaced it, and captivated Judah. But once Babylon became haughty before God, it collapsed within moments, to be occupied by Mady and Persia; And after being a head, it became a tail, and even disappeared from existence.

❖ God does not lead the nations astray, but, being unwilling to return to faith in Him, He allows them to head by themselves to oblivion through their own evil ways; As to the dispersed nations, intending to say to God: “Disperse them”, ‘Job’, at the same time, wishes for them to hasten to light (see Isaiah 60: 3). That is why, when Simeon the elder carried the infant Jesus on his arms, he said: *“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many”* (Luke 2: 34).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; He sends them wandering through a trackless waste” (Job 12: 24).

Who are the leaders of the earth who lose their reason, but the children of Abraham, according to the flesh, who have spiritually withdrawn from their son hood to him through denying the Savior of the world, and rejecting the One in whose day their father Abraham rejoiced, many generations before His coming?

That denial turned their life into a barren wilderness, where their hearts are not fulfilled with the waters of the Holy Spirit that turns the wilderness into a divine paradise.

- ❖ By referring to the leaders “*of the earth*” (24), he means the Jewish people, whose leaders; namely, the priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees; according to the words of the apostle Paul “*Put their minds in the earthly things*”.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Having no more an altar, a temple, or priests; and consequently, no more sacrifice offerings, they feel that their sin is abiding in them, and that there is no way of getting forgiveness¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ The Samaritans and the Galileans believed in Christ to put the Jews to shame. Yet the Samaritans were in this concern, better than the Galileans; because they believed in Him through the words of the woman and His teachings; whereas the Galileans believed in Him through His miracle of turning the water into wine, that took place in Jerusalem².

St. John Chrysostom

“They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards” (Job 12: 25).

Those who were great leaders of people, with military might and awesome authority, soon lost everything, and became weak and humiliated, as is said by the Psalmist: “*Valiant men lie plundered, ...not one of the warriors can lift his hand*” (Psalm 76: 5); they became like “*wandering in a trackless waste*” (25), groping in darkness, and helplessly staggering like drunkards.

‘Job’ talks about the Almighty God, who has the whole history in His hands, and who can turn its events to the account of His Kingdom. No power can resist Him or stand before His face.

- ❖ Why? Because, according to the Lord Himself, “*they loved darkness instead of light*”. It is certain that those who practice evil would stagger like drunkards; and like drunkards, they become unable to discern something from another, or between evil and goodness!

Father Hecechiusof Jerusalem

- ❖ O, Jews, when you come to Jerusalem and find it desolate, and turned into dust and ashes, do not weep like children! Do not grieve! But seek for yourselves a city in heaven instead of that one on earth. Lift your eyes high up; there you will find the free Jerusalem, which is our mother (Galatians 4: 26).

Do not grieve for the absence of the temple here, and do not despair for having no priest; as there in heaven, you will find an altar and the priests of the coming goods in the order of Melchizedeck, in procession before God. It is the will of God’s love and mercy to take away from you the earthly inheritance, to give you the chance to seek the heavenly one³.

The scholar Origen

¹ In Num. Num. 10:2; Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church, p. 111.

² Homilies on St. John, 35:2.

³ In Jos. hom. 17:1.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 12

**YOU GRANTED ME THE WISDOM TO GLORIFY YOU
AND NOT TO SEARCH YOUR WORKS**

- ❖ Glory to You, O Grantor of the mind, the heart, and all the human talents.
I have no right to feel haughty over Your creation -- my fellow brethren.
With Your amazing wisdom, You distribute Your gifts among men.
Grant me a holy mind, and a heart to accommodate You.
Sanctify my whole being; Sanctify my mind and heart.
O my Lord, by Your Spirit, lift up my mind, to honor every fellow man.
Fulfill my heart, and let it be wide enough to accommodate everyone.
- ❖ O my Lord, how often my soul gets embittered by the ridicule of my beloved!
For them I have become a laughingstock!
Yet, when I look at You, and I see You wounded in the house of Your beloved;
My soul rejoices and glorifies You, because You allowed for me to partake of
Your passion!
I realize how through Your wisdom, You allowed for my beloved to wound me!
Now I receive those wounds as a crown of glory that I do not deserve!
Amid the bitterness of my soul, I seek Your comforting hand.
And I realize that every ridicule that dwells upon me is allowed by You.
By Your amazing love, You intend for me to partake of the ridicules You have
endured.
I see how the darkness cannot stand the light.
I see how the corruption assumes that it can destroy non-corruption.
I see how the fallen Satan wrongly assumes that he is one with authority.
Glory to You, who turns my sufferings into a joyful praise.
To see the advance payment of heaven proclaimed in my depths.
To realize, O lord, how amazing Your plan for me is.
Then I rejoice in the ridicule of my brethren.
As when they ridicule me; and I see myself in exalted glory by the heavenly
creatures.
Then, those temporary moment would surely soon pass.
And I would cross over through You, to the bosom of Your Father.
Then I would enjoy the fellowship of the heavenly glory.
Winter, with its snow would pass, and the spring of eternity with its splendor,
would dwell.
- ❖ My God, You granted humanity the wisdom and prudence to glorify You.
The whole creation, the seen and unseen, testify to Your wisdom, love, and care.
All testify to Your unsearchable wisdom., and glorify You.
- ❖ Grant me to prostrate myself at Your feet.
With all my heart I praise You, for what I know, and what I still do not know about
You.
Indeed, I stand confused before Your wisdom!
I see how the wicked and thieves, who think of themselves as kings and gods;
Live a prosperous and successful life !
While Your children moan, as though Your heavenly anger has dwelt upon them!
Who can fathom Your wisdom, O Almighty God?
- ❖ Behold, the whole nature preaches to me, saying:

‘Submit to your heavenly Father who loves you and cares for you’.
‘Your whole life is in His hands’.
‘For your sake, He brought us into existence. And behold, He is preparing for you a place in His divine bosom’.
‘Do not lean on your personal experience alone’
‘It is Your Creator, who grants you the wisdom’
‘And reveals to you the understanding of His secrets’
‘Submit to Him; Your humility will lift you up high’
‘Do not resist or struggle’
‘Can creation resist its Creator?’
‘Who gave you the mouth to speak, the ear to hear, and the hand to touch?’
‘Who granted you the heart, the mind, the wisdom, and the prudence?’
‘He loves you; all your life and your talents are gifts from Him’

❖ O my God, Who can support me, but You?
When kings, emperors, and rulers, felt haughty, they were filled with disgrace!
When great nations and peoples felt haughty, they fell before weak ones.
O my God, grant me the spirit of discernment, to walk like a son of Yours.
Glory to You, who loved me even before I ever existed.
Abolish my ignorance and foolishness; and grant me the wisdom You have.
Scatter my darkness; and grant me Your exalted light.
Bring my death to death; and grant me Your glorified resurrection.
Expose the devil and his hosts, and cast them beneath my feet.
When You grant me Yourself, I would need nothing!

CHAPTER 13

A DARING ADMONITION OR A DEFENDANT IN COURT

In the last chapter, 'Job' made it clear that his friend's wisdom is vain; As, even though it carried some truth, yet it is not something new. All what they uttered as wise men, who are proud of their counsel and rebukes to him, he knows for sure. Besides, their wisdom lost its being for it lacked love and discernment; for they do not know the limit where they should stop their ridicule, nor the right time to give their counsel. Now, in this chapter, 'Job' consummates his talk, to show how he is not inferior to them, as far as wisdom and experience are concerned.

'Job' accused them of the following:

1- They are worthless physicians; They talk well, but they fail to offer the proper medication.

2- Their silence would be of more benefit than their ashes-like words.

3- They are not genuinely jealous on the glory of God; but they hide behind the appearance of holy jealousy.

4- They show hidden partiality in looking at the outward appearance.

5- They lack the fear of God's excellence, or the dread of His majesty.

6- Their words destroyed him, and made him lose hope.

After presenting these charges, that led him to desire death, and delivering his spirit, he took his eyes away from them lest he would perish, and raised them toward God, to talk to Him and to admonish Him.

Daringly, amid his bitter sufferings, 'Job' defends himself. He says that, After he and his friends started by proclaiming the same facts (1-2): that God is Almighty and whole wisdom (1-2); his friends turned against him with some thoughts that are far from truth. They are "forgers of lies", "worthless physicians", "their platitudes are proverbs of ashes, and their defenses are defenses of clay". He demands from them to be silent, for it would be wiser of them to hide their ignorance and bad nature (4-5).

He tried to convince them that, while pretending to defend God, they did wrong toward His glory. They boasted that they were defending God, and took over themselves the task to justify Him, and to justify all what He did to 'Job'; despite the fact that God needs no advocates like them; and His truth does not need their lies, and wrong ways; as according to St. James: "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1: 20).

Trying to put fear in them of the judgment of God; 'Job', although daring in his talk, yet in his stand, he was more respectful and dignified than his friends. Then he demanded from them to leave him alone, for they can not solve his problem; which he intends to talk about directly to God (3). He has the right whether guilty or not, to defend himself before the court of God, rather than before human judges; For God is indeed more faithful than Job's friends. Here, we see 'Job' once again approaching God, being his only hope; he intends to talk to Him with daring, even if the price is his life itself (13-15).

He asks God not to punish him before hearing him; nor to show His exalted majesty, in a way that would make him unable to talk to him. 'Job' is pleased to defend himself, and to answer any accusation directed against him. And at the end of his talk, he confirms that he anticipates salvation, even in the abyss. Then he asks God to grant him two things:

to withdraw His hand far from him, and to stop frightening him with his terrors (20-21).

Here we notice that the portrait of stubbornness is replaced by a demand of patience and slowing down. 'Job' expresses his astonishment that God deals so cruelly, with a weak man whose life is full of misery, is as short as weeds that will soon wither, and is like a shadow that will soon disappear. A tree, after being cut off, may grow again, while man, once he is dead, would never do. 'Job' does not pretend to be without sin; He, actually admits that he is a sinner to a certain degree, since his young days; yet this does not warrant such horrible tribulations that have dwelt upon him. He wishes to know exactly what particular sin has warranted God's animosity against him! (24). Although he is nothing but an extremely weak man (28); he is condemned and kept under close watch, with his feet fastened in shackles" (27), before giving him the chance to defend Himself.

Daringly, 'Job' admonishes his three friends who ridiculed and accused him; and daringly, as well, he admonishes God for what He brought upon him!

1- He is not inferior to his friends	1 – 3
2- They are worthless physicians	4 – 8
3- God will judge them	9 – 12
4- A call to silence	13
5- An admonition to God	14 – 19
6- A screaming appeal to God to stop the chastisement	20 – 22
7- Why do You hide Your face from him?	23 – 28

1- HE IS NOT INFERIOR TO HIS FRIENDS:

"My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it" (Job 13: 1).

- ❖ Look how – even in his humility – the exalted things he proclaimed were symbolic. He says; *"My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it"*; He is obviously inspired by a prophetic spirit. Whom God finds holy, He chooses to see and hear His divine secrets.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ *"... and understood it" (1).* It would not be a prophetic vision, if it is seen and not understood. When Pharaoh saw a vision of the things that are to happen in Egypt; Not being a prophet, he did not understand what he saw; And when king Belshazzar saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the wall; Not being a prophet, he was not granted an understanding of what he saw.

Pope Gregory the Great

"What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you" (Job 13: 2).

'Job', although a humble man, yet he was committed to defend himself, and even to commend himself; like what the apostle Paul later did, when some Corinthians accused him of not being an apostle(see 1 Corinthians 9: 2).

Here, he confirms that he is not inferior to them; and that what they know, he knows as well. Amid those circumstances he passes through,, he needs no speeches or sermons, but love, care, and prayers to support him.

- ❖ I wish we do not strive in debate, yet slothful in prayers (on behalf of others). Let us, beloved brethren, pray to the Lord to grant the grace to us, as well as to our beloved brethren, and even to our enemies¹.

St. Augustine

“But I desire to speak to the Almighty, and to argue my case with God” (Job 13: 3).

Finding no comfort in his talk with his friends, he turned away from them, to speak to God. To be tried before God is better than before man; and arguing his case with God is easier than with friends. As David said to the prophet Gad: *“Let us fall into the hands of the lord, for His mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men”* (2 Samuel 24: 14; 1 Chronicles 21: 13).

- ❖ I, as well, although I know God’s infinite greatness, the limitless wisdom of the Creator, and His amazing power, yet *“I desire to speak to the Almighty”*; As I also know that His righteousness makes Him endure those who speak to Him without prejudging them as guilty. And in case He does not; knowing my limits being his servant, I will keep my mouth shut; According to His command, I will speak, and I will even dare to accuse Him!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ He says that he will keep on speaking to God, who knows the secrets of his mind. It is a greater honor to be tried before God, than to be tried before men.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ We speak with the Almighty when we seek His compassion; and debate (argue our case) before Him, when we unite with Him in His righteousness, and elaborately examine our deeds. Debating with God probably means that whoever keeps His commandments here on earth, will join Him as a judge on the day of judgment (see Matthew 19:28) ... That is why the Lord says through Isaiah: **“Encourage the oppressed; Defend the cause of the fatherless; Plead the case of the widow, Come now, let us reason together”** (Isaiah 1: 17, 18). (In another version: *“Let us argue it out”*).

Those who, on **hearing the words of God, completely deny the present world**, have indeed the right to reason with God on the day of judgment!. Which is realized by speaking with Him in prayer, and reasoning with Him in judging. A saint who attaches himself to God, and speaks with Him in prayer, will reason with Him later (on the day of judgment), when he joins the Almighty as a judge.

The holy churches, to which ‘Job’, as we previously said, bear some likeness, not only judge the wicked on the ultimate day of judgment, but even now, she keeps on judging everyone, whether walking in evil, or foolishly thinking!

Pope Gregory the Great

2- THEY ARE WORTHLESS PHYSICIANS:

“But you forgers of lies, you are all worthless physicians” (Job 13: 4).

‘Job’ complains against his friends, because they judged and condemned him according to their false reasoning, their lack of realization of God’s care, and His plans for humanity; and consequently, they became forgers of lies, and false accusations against him.

They came to him as physicians to treat his wounds; yet, being worthless physicians, they misdiagnosed his illness, and gave him a deadly treatment. They

¹ Gift of Perseverance 66.

turned from being learned physicians, to swindlers and imposters, who claimed to be knowledgeable, when, having lost love, they were actually complete ignorant of the divine truth.

Here, 'Job' rejects his friends as physicians to offer him healing; looking forward to the coming Messiah, being the heavenly Physician of both the souls and the bodies; and heals the eyes of our souls, to become capable of enjoying the vision of heavenly things.

How amazing is our heavenly Physician! Who declared Himself as a physician, while eating at the house of a tax collector, with many tax collectors and sinners around Him? He was not preaching them, nor rebuking them for their sins, but was just eating with them (Luke 5: 27-32). I do not think I shall ever find a physician who enters a hospital, invites all the patients to have a meal with him, and then leave without providing them with medications to heal their ailments!

Yet, the Lord has actually provided them with the needed medication, when He ate with them; He gave them the practical love; He was eating with those rejected by the society, whom everyone hates, and with whom everyone refuses to have anything to do, lest they get defiled! With those people, the Holy One stretched His hand and shared their meal; to let them know that their Savior is not far or isolated from them. That was the heavenly medication, given by the heavenly Physician. He is indeed a unique Physician, and it is indeed a unique medication!

It is also amazing that, at the same moment He declared Himself as a Physician, He also declared that His disciples are the 'wedding guests', or the 'friends of the Bridegroom'; As though the job of those working with Him, is to receive the secrets of the Bridegroom, then declare his Person, attributes, and possibilities to the bride – humanity, that receives faith in Him. It is as though the only job of those working with the Physician is to prepare for the joyful heavenly wedding!

The job of the minister of the Lord Christ, and that of every Christian, is to participate in the preparation for that wedding; ... not by rebukes, ridicules, and judgments, ... but by revealing the love of the Bridegroom, and His readiness to come down to his bride, and to open up the gates of heaven – His secret place – before her. The bride is prepared for her Groom, by revealing to her, the love of her Groom and His longing for her.

❖ You are worthless physician who renew the ailments, "*renew the evil*"; you, who do not heal the wounds by proper medications! You assume that you are defending God and that you are uttering pleasant words; and you actually are adding to the sufferings of those under trial; and are helping the enemy by flaring up the feeling of pain in those who are wounded!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ The heavenly Guide – the Logos – calling humanity to salvation, is called the 'Instructor', ... He is also called the Physician or the "Teacher" ... The sick soul is in need of someone to relieve her pains; then of another to provide her with prudence ... The 'Logos', wishing for our salvation, step by step, uses a superb way: He starts by giving peace, then follows up by correcting or mending, then ends by teaching or instructing¹.

❖ Who is He? In short, He is the Word of Truth; the Word of non-corruption; who renews man through bringing him back to the Truth. He is the 'Spur' that enhances

¹ Paedagogus 1:1.

man to salvation. He the One who Destroys perdition, and drives away death. He builds up God's temple in men, and makes them His dwelling place.

The sick needs a Savior.

The lost needs a Guide.

The blind needs someone to lead him to light.

The thirsty needs the living Fountain, from which man drinks and never gets thirsty again.

The dead needs Life.

The sheep need a Shepherd.

The children need a Teacher.

All mankind is in need of Jesus¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Blessed are they, who, in their need to the Son of God, have surpassed their need for Him as a Physician to heal their ailments, and as a Shepherd, or a redeemer; to the need for Him as the 'Wisdom', the 'Logos', or any of the other titles He presents to those who have the spiritual Passover, whom He prepares for the most exalted of graces.
- ❖ Within the deity of the divine Word, is the power, not only to help or to heal the sick, but also to proclaim the secrets to those pure in body and mind.
The Word is sent as a Physician to the sinners; and as a Teacher to those already pure and without sin.
- ❖ The light of the Word will scatter the darkness of the heretic teachings. The Word opens up the eyes of our souls, to discern between the light and the darkness, and to help us chose to abide in the light.
- ❖ Before him, who seeks healing, there is no other way but to follow Jesus.
- ❖ Come now to Jesus, the heavenly Physician.
Enter into the clinic that is His church.

Behold, there you will find several weak patients: a woman suffering from her chronic bleeding (Mark 5: 25; Leviticus 12); and a leper, living outside the camp because of his uncleanness (Mark 1: 40; Leviticus 13: 46).

They all seek to be healed from their infirmities, and to be purified of their uncleanness.

Jesus, the Physician is Himself the Word of God. He prepares the medications for His patients, not from herbs, but from His holy words.

If someone looks at these medications of words scattered sporadically among the pages of books, and is not aware of their power, he would probably disregard them, as cheap words that lack eloquence; Whereas he, who knows that the healing of the souls is with Christ, will definitely learn, listening to those books read in the church, how to gather useful herbs from the fields and the mountains; namely, from those powerful words; to have his ailing soul healed; not by their outer branches and their outer skin, but rather by the activity of their inner juice.

- ❖ There are other things hidden from our knowledge, and only known by the divine Physician of our souls. As far as our physical health is concerned, we are sometimes committed to use bitter and repulsive medications, to treat ailments, we

¹ Paed. 2:9.

brought upon ourselves through our wrong feeding and drinking practices. And it also even happens that the nature of our illness may need the use of painful and risky surgeries; Or it can go so far that it would be necessary to use some means of applying fire to the site of sickness, whether outside or inside! od, our divine Physician, likewise, in order to cleanse the ailments of our souls, that we brought upon ourselves through several sins, may use similar chastising ways to heal them, which may go far to the extent of applying the punishment by fire on those who lost the well being of their souls.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ First of all, in order to realize how God made Him humble, not for His own sake, but for yours; is humble for your own sake!

Confess your weakness, and be ready to lie patiently before the divine Physician.

Once you realize His sacrifice by humiliating Himself, you will be raised up together with Him.

He would not increase, but when you make progress, it would be as though He got exalted together with you.

Look at the tree; how it sends its root downward in the soil, in order to grow upwards in the air. Growing upward should be preceded by going downward in humility! *“May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; and I pray that you, being rooted and established in love ... you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3: 17, 19) ¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ We notice that the Holy Book does not introduce the Lord to us under one name, nor under the names only pertaining to His Godhead, or those referring to His greatness; but sometimes it uses the natural features of His Person; as saying for instance: *“the name which is above every name”* (Philippians 2: 9); *‘the Son’, “the true Son’, God, the only-begotten Son”, “God’s Power, Wisdom, and Word”*. And some other times, on account of the multitude of the ways by which His grace reaches us, which, by His goodness, He grants to His seekers, according to His Wisdom’s many features, the Holy Book calls Him by many other names, as for instance: *“the Shepherd”, the King”, “the Physician”, “The Groom”, “the Way”, “the Door”, “the Fountain”, “the Bread”, “the Ax”, and “the Rock”*. These names do not refer to His nature, but to the multitude of His activities, as mercy from Him to every one of His creatures, and a response to the need of whoever asks Him².

St. Basil the great

- ❖ +There is only one Physician, who, at the same time, is both body and Spirit (Man and God); Born (gennetos) and unborn; God has become Man; A true life in death (a mortal body); has been mortal (in body), then became immortal (by resurrection); From Mary and from God – Jesus Christ our Lord³.

St Agnatius the Theophorus

- ❖ Therefore, let us worship Him, being God of believers by His incarnation; a there is no benefit in calling Him a Man and not God; And where would be our salvation if we refrain from confessing His Humanity together with His Godhead? Let us then

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 67:18.

² On the Holy Spirit, 8:17.

³ Eph. 7:2.

confess His being both a King and a Physician; As Jesus the King, having become a Physician, became clothed with the linen of our humanity, and healed the sick. The perfect Teacher of the infants (Romans 2: 20), has become Himself one, to give wisdom to the ignorant. The Bread of heaven came down to earth to feed the hungry¹.

- ❖ “Jesus” means (Savior), which in Greek means (Healer); being the Physician of both the souls and the bodies, and the Healer of the Spirits; He opened the eyes of the man born blind; Led the minds to light; Healed the seen lames; led the sinners on the way to repentance; and said to the paralytic: *‘Sin no more’*, and then added *‘Arise and walk’*: As the body was paralyzed because the sin of the soul, he ministered first to the soul, that the healing would then extend to the body.

Therefore, if any of you is suffering in his soul from his sins, he will find Him the Physician. And in case he is with little faith, let him say to Him: *‘Help my unbelief’* (Mark 9: 24).

And if he is suffering from physical ailments, let him not be unbelieving, but let him approach, as Jesus heals these ailments. Let him know that Jesus is Christ².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ The divine Physician has several medications to give healing: He bandages the wounds by firm commandments; gives warmth by forgiving the sins; and stabs the heart when he sets him on His own donkey (Luke 10: 34); Meditate in how He brings us up in Himself, having borne our grief, and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53: 4). The shepherd has likewise laid the lost sheep on His shoulders (Luke 15: 5).

St. Ambrose

“If you would be altogether silent! For you that would be wisdom” (Job 13: 5).

They have come to give wise counsel; Yet proved that they themselves need wisdom and counseling. They need the wisdom of being altogether silent; their silence would be better than their vain words *“Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue”* (Proverbs 17: 28).

- ❖ The wise is not only him, who speaks well, gives useful counsel, and proclaims what is of benefit for everyone, But it is also him who bridles his whole body (James 3: 2) ... ; who says together with David: *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who works iniquity”* (Psalm 141: 3, 4).

Let us separate ourselves completely from those who assume that they are defending God, not through intending to glorify Him, but through defaming the one who dedicates himself to righteousness ... As man is in need of fleeing from the friendship of the deceitful, of turning his face away from their commendation. Men of goodness, on the other hand, accept their rebuke, and respectfully acknowledge their defamation against them; as all things will ultimately work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8: 28); and they will soon be worthy of being commended by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

‘Job’, after he lost all his possessions, speaks as though with an abundance.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ مقال 12 : .1

² مقال 10 : .13

- ❖ Like, when no one can know who are behind a closed door; Generally if the ignorant holds his peace, namely, commits himself to silence, he would not be known whether he is wise or foolish! That is why the righteous ‘Job’, seeing how his friends are pretend what they are not, he advises them to hold their peace; namely to keep their silence, to spare themselves of being exposed; according to the wise words of Solomon: *“Even the fool is counted wise when he holds his peace”* (Proverb 17: 28).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“Set a guard, O Lord over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips”* (Psalm 143: 3). He does not say: ‘over the wall of my lips’; but says: “over the door of my lips”, as a door may open or close; the door of the lips may open to confess sin, and close after its forgiveness; it is a door for protection, and not for destruction¹.

St. Augustine

“Hear now my argument; listen to the plea of my lips” (Job 13: 6).

He calls on them to listen rather than to utter vain talk. Although they did not interrupt him, yet they did not care for what he said, nor listened to the cries of his bitter soul. They assumed that they are defending God and uttering the truth; Yet, without the practical love, they are far from knowing God, nor realizing the truth.

“Will you speak wickedly for God? And speak deceitfully for Him?” (Job 13: 7).

‘Job’ ridicules them for their assumption that God needs them to defend Him, or to reveal His justice. It is as though he says to them: ‘Who are you, O weak and of no love, to defend the divine Truth, who never separate from Love?’

Through their claim of defending the divine justice, they uttered deceit; presented vain accusations against ‘Job’, and counted him as wicked; They fell into lies, cruelty, oppression, and defamation; And in justifying all that as being ***“for God’s sake”***; they did not realize that: *“The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God”* (James 1: 20).

They justified their evil behavior against ‘Job’, as being for the sake of the exalted goal, to defend God! Does the good goal ever justify the evil way?! They are, as though saying: *“Let us do evil that good may come!”* (Romans 3: 8). God rebuking those who praise God while hating their brethren says: *“Your brothers who hate you and exclude you because of my name, have said, ‘Let the Lord is glorified, that we may see your joy!’ Yet they will be put to shame”* (Isaiah 66: 5).

Whoever has a fellowship with God the Truth, would never practice **lies and deceit**; God does not stand deceit. The Psalmist often puts the deceitful on the same level as the bloodthirsty, as the goal of both is the perdition of the souls of others, their possessions, or their honor. The deceitful actually destroys his own soul, and denies him the eternal glory and beatitude.

“You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men, the Lord abhors” (Psalm 5: 6)

“Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Psalm 32: 2).

“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies” (Psalm 34: 13).“

“But You, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust You” (Psalm 55: 23).

¹ St. Augustine: On Ps. 141.

“No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence” (Ps 101: 7).

“What shall be given to you? And what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior sharp arrows, with glowing coals” (Psalm 120: 3)

“The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are His delights” (Proverbs 11: 1)

“The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward” (Proverbs 11: 18).

“A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies” (Proverbs 12: 17).

“There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace” (Proverbs 12: 20).

“The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception” (Proverbs 14: 8)

“A truthful witness saves life, but a false witness is deceitful” (Proverbs 14: 25).

“The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please Him” (Proverbs 20: 23).

“The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable – how much more so when brought with evil intent!” (Proverbs 21: 27).

“He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself” (Proverbs 26: 24).

“For a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will leave foolish thoughts behind” (Wisdom of Solomon 1: 5).

“Do not invite everyone into your home, for many are the tricks of the crafty” (Sirach 11: 29).

❖ As though ‘Job’ says to his friends: [Despite your awesome words, you talk and utter deceit before God! Do you think that God do not listen to what you say? Deceit is behind your debate. Although your words may sound befitting, yet your intention is not well; as it does not seek correction, mending or progress, but destruction. You are not debating a totally ignorant man!]

St. John Chrysostom

❖ **Is God in need of your lies, and of your deceptive talk for His sake?** The Truth would not be realized by the help of vanity ... The heretics, likewise, utter deceit for His sake, when they deceive the feeble-minded, and foolishly lead their concepts about God astray.

Pope Gregory the Great

In a commentary on psalm 55: 23: *“But You, O God, will bring the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days”*, **St. Augustine** comparing between the bloodthirsty murderers and the deceitful heretics, says: [Whereas the bloodthirsty are apparent killers who shed the blood of bodies, but they do not kill the souls; the heretics, on the other hand, kill the souls and shed their unseen blood; They are bloodthirsty and deceitful as well¹!]

And in a commentary on psalm 120: 3-40: *“What shall be given to you? And what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior sharp arrows with glowing coals”*; responding to these questions by the Psalmist, he believes that opposing those with deceitful tongues should not be only by mere words; It needs the

¹ St. Augustine: On Ps. 55.

words of God, the divine Warrior's sharp arrows; beside presenting living examples of righteous persons, who were sinners and like lifeless desolate wilderness, then returned to God and flared like glowing coals. You often hear someone saying in wonder: [I know that this man has been a deceitful drunkard and a steady customer of nightclubs; How could he now minister to God?!] Do not marvel! He became a live glowing coal! Rejoice that he is now living, he, on whom you grieved as being dead¹!

“Will you show partiality toward Him? Will you plead the case for God?”
(Job 13: 8).

God needs no one to defend Him. **How could those who hate their brother's minister to God?** In their zeal for God, the Judge of men, they insult Him by occupying His chair of authority. Being the only One to know the soul of man, his strength, tendencies, talents, biological form, energies, and the circumstances surrounding him, He is the One to judge or justify. We may know of someone who committed a certain obvious sin, that needs no investigation; yet, can we judge him for the sake of one sin or a few sins, that he committed at a certain time, without knowing his depths or circumstances?!

❖ **“Are you representing God? Will you plead His case?!”** When the fools see the works of the wise, they, forgetting their own shortcomings, would often see them all worthy of blame. On the other hand, when the righteous rebuke the deeds of the wicked, they would do that while always confessing their own weaknesses, and their worthiness of blame. As they realize that searching for the sins of men is the work of God alone, Even if they tend strongly to oppose the evil deeds of others on the outside, they actually commiserate with them on the inside; it is obvious that Job's friends rebuked his deeds, as though they have never done anything to warrant blame!

It is well said: ***“Are you representing God? Will you plead His case?!”*** One puts on God's face, when he claims His authority to judge! And pleads His case, when he rebuke others for their weaknesses, disregarding his own inner shortcomings!

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ An elder once said: [According to the apostle, ‘no one knows what is inside man, but his own spirit’. We often get to know that many people have repented, and we are not aware of them. As man may repent at the last moment of his life, and his repentance is accepted by God, We should therefore refrain from judging anyone; **and leave the judgment to God. How can anyone dare to interfere into what belongs to God alone?**

The Garden of monks

❖ Don't judge your brother, to be yourself, worthy of forgiveness. You may probably see him perpetually doing wrong; Yet you cannot tell how his end will be! The robber who was crucified together with Jesus has been a murderer and bloodthirsty; while Judas, on the other hand, was a close disciple of Christ, and His treasurer; Yet in no time they changed: the robber entered into paradise, and the disciple hanged himself and perished!

St. Anastasius

❖ The job of the servants in the wedding of the king's son (Matthew 22), was just to bring over both the good and bad people to the banquet. They did not judge the guests, nor honored the good more than the bad. They also did not find out the one who was not clothed with the proper attire for the wedding; **it was the king**

¹ St. Augustine: On Ps. 120.

himself, the master of the house, who discovered his presence and drove him away.

St. Augustine

- ❖ If you happen to know someone who has sinned, then saw him the next day; Do not look at him as a sinner; because you do not know, whether or not, in the meantime, he might have done something good; or that, after his fall, he prostrated himself before the Lord with bitter tears, and He forgave him!

St. (Mar) Ephram, the Syrian

3- GOD WILL JUDGE THEM:

“Will it be well when he searches you out? Can you deceive him as you might deceive a man?” (job13: 9)

It would be better for them, if God searches their hearts, and reveal to them their hate for their brethren, and for the Truth; rather than to pretend to defend God, and to deceive Him as they deceive men.

- ❖ Every deceitful man is an enemy of God; **as while he pretends to defend God**, he is actually opposing the Truth. Yet nothing escapes the eyes of God, who judges according to the mind and the heart, more than the outer appearances, by which he may seem as though serving God.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ How could they oppose the Truth, except through their vain pride. While haughtily evaluating themselves as great and righteous, they would pass over like thin air¹!

St. Augustine

- ❖ In case someone objects to the presence of heretics now, Let him remember that, so was the case from the beginning; as Satan perpetually kept setting vanity opposite the Truth. At the beginning, God promised the good things; and so did Satan. God set the paradise, and Satan deceived Adam and Eve, saying: **“You will be like God!” (Genesis 3: 5)**. Having been unable to present action, he offered promises that were nothing more than vain words; which is always the way of the deceitful!

Afterwards, came Abel, and with him Cain;
The sons of Seth, and with them the daughters of men;
Ham, and with him Japheth;
Abraham, (and in his days) there was Pharaoh;
Jacob, and with him Esau;
Moses and Aaron, and with them the two magicians;
The prophets, and with them the false prophets;
The apostles, and with them the false apostles;
The Christ; and against Him will come the antichrist.

That was what happened before, and what is still going on. In short, as there was never a time, when vanity was not there opposing the Truth; so, do not worry²!

St. John Chrysostom

“He would surely rebuke you, if you secretly show partiality” (Job 13: 10).

In rebuking ‘Job’ with such hateful spirit, they have shown partiality, even secretly; and would not be worthy of being commended in the sight of God, but rather to be harshly rebuked; as God detests hate under the pretence of defending His glory and kingdom. By partiality, he probably means that after having been honoring ‘Job’

¹ On Ps. 37.

² In 2 Tim. hom 8.

in excess at the time when he was rich; now, with no apparent cause, their behavior completely changed when he became poor, and lost his social status and his authority as a king or ruler. The Holy Book warned us against partiality.

“Now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. judge carefully, for, with the lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery” (2 Chronicles 19: 7).

“These are also saying of the wise: ‘To show partiality in judging is not good” (Proverbs 24: 23).

“To show partiality is not good – yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread” (Proverbs 28: 21)

“For God shows no partiality” (Romans 2: 11).

“And masters, do the same to them, stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality” (Ephesians 6: 9).

“For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and no partiality” (Colossians 3: 25).

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality” (1 Timothy 5: 21).

“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favoritism” (James 2: 1).

“Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your life as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Peter 1: 17).

Pope Gregory the Great says that God is the One who searches the secrets of the hearts, and nothing is hidden from Him (1 Corinthians 4: 5). It may happen, under the pretence of defending the Truth, that some may blame a righteous person, and show partiality toward those who stand against him, and take the side of those blaspheming God, who claim that they defend God, when they bear no faithfulness in their actions; They are just like the demons who said to the Lord Christ: *“You are the Son of God”* (Mark 3: 11); not to seek His glory, but in fear of what would happen to them.

❖ What is the benefit that would come to us by giving honor (partiality) to the rich; and by extending favor to those whom we expect to pay us back?! We should rather think more of the weak and the needy, because of whom we hope for the reward from the Lord Jesus, who, in the parable of the wedding banquet (Luke 14: 12-13), presented to us a general portrait of the virtue of giving more to those who have nothing to pay us back¹.

❖ If the Kingdom of God is for the poor, who would be richer than them?!

St. Ambrose

❖ All are equal in the sight of God; Yet, everyone’s grade is evaluated according to his faith, and not according to his wealth.

St. Augustine

❖ People often rebuke me, saying: [You always come against the rich, who, in their turn come against the poor.

Well, I may come against the rich; **Or rather against those who abuse their wealth!** I do not attack their persons, but their greed. Wealth and abundance are something, while greed is something else.

¹ للمؤلف: الحب الرعوي، الإسكندرية، 1965.

Are you rich? Well, I can not keep you from being rich. Are you greedy? Then I warn you! I shall never hold my peace! Are you against me because of this? I am ready to shed my blood, to keep you from doing wrong. I do not harbor any hate, or make war against you; but I wish only for the benefit of those who listen to me.

The rich, like the poor, all of them are my children; One womb (the font of baptism) labored to deliver them. If you intend to insult the poor, I am warning you, that the poor, in this case will not lose as much as you will do. All his loss would be in his money and possessions; whereas for you -- the rich, your loss would be in your Spirit¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Would not His majesty terrify you? Would not the dread of Him fall on you?” (Job 13: 11).

‘Job’ warns them against their unfitting behavior; as while assuming that they defend God, they will fall under His wrath; and under the terror of His majesty.

❖ Now, the righteous realize the dread of God, before His wrath is brought upon them. They fear Him while He is calm (toward them); so as not to be committed to feel His anger. On the other hand, the wicked would be, and will always be terrified when they are stricken with His divine rod, that wakes them up from their deep sleep, and make them worry, anticipating His revenge; according to the words of the prophet: *“The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror”* (Isaiah 28: 19). Once they start to fall under the strikes of revenge, because of disregarding the commandments of God, they will start to understand what they hear; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“Whenever God slew them, they would seek Him”* (Psalm 78: 34)

Pope Gregory the Great

“Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay” (Job 13: 12).

Job’s friends boasting that they are defenders of God, His justice, and ordinations, their talks were like ashes, of no value; would disappear with the wind; and their thoughts and human wisdom would flee from their bodies of dust. They are not storing wisdom for themselves, but piles of mud that the children of God would like to get rid of.

He likens their talks to dust; because they are set on mortal earthly thoughts, and not on eternal heavenly wisdom. They resort to strongholds of human logic, which can protect them only for moments.

❖ **“(Their memory) is like ashes”**.... All thoughts of those who conform themselves according to the present conditions are earthly; as with all what they do, they will leave behind them, only a temporary memory of themselves in this world. Some may strive in war, others build huge monuments, or write books that bear their experience in the present world. They labor and wrestle to set for themselves a memory of their names. But as life quickly rushes toward the end, nothing will abide in it, when nature itself hastens to collapse!

According to the words of the psalmist: *“The ungodly are ... like the chaff which the wind drives away”* (Psalm 1: 4). The memory of the fools is indeed compared to the chaff that the wind drives away. The more man labors to gain glory for his name, he would actually be placing his chaff-like memory in the way of the

¹ عن مقالتين عن أتروبيوس، طبعتا تحت اسم "الكنيسة تحبك"، سنة 1968، ص 35، 36.

rushing wind of mortality. On the contrary: “*The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance*” (Psalm 112: 6). With the same circumstances, printing his works on the eyes of God alone, he will have his name remembered in the eternal world.

- ❖ “*And your necks will sink in mud*” ... Necks would sink in mud when every haughty goes down to death, and his body that was up, breaks down in corruption. Let us meditate in how death and corruption work on the corpses of the rich as they are laid down in their graves.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- A CALL TO SILENCE:

“*Keep silent and let me speak then let come to me what may*” (job13: 13)

The many temptations that ‘Job’ suffered are easier on him compared to those caused by the words of his friends. His temptations would not condemn him, but would rather justify him; whereas the impact of their wicked words, lies, and hate, are more serious than any tribulation or catastrophe.

It is befitting for them, being so fond of useless debates, to keep silent; and let ‘Job’ speak, to reveal to them what they really are; even if he speaks while sitting on a pile of trash, clothed by a garment of worms.

‘Job’ does not care for what may come over him, “*let come to me what may*”! Whatever their interpretation of his tribulations would be, and however terrible, how they think about him; All that would not keep him from presenting the testimony of his conscience with uprightness and integrity.

- ❖ “*Keep silent and let me speak my mind*” (13). He wants to show that, having spoken with such carnal realization, they should keep silent, to let him speak up his mind; As though he obviously says: [As for me, I am not speaking in a carnal, but a spiritual way; as I hear with a spiritual realization, things that I present by the ministry of the body].

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Once you encounter someone so fond of debating, and he starts debating with you on things that are only matters of fact; You would better cut him short, and leave him quickly; as his mind is transformed into a rock!

Like adding water would spoil and corrupt the best kinds of wine; so are the idiotic debates that corrupt those of good behavior and nature¹.

St. Anthony the Great

5- AN ADMONITION TO GOD:

“*why do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?*” (job13: 14)

‘Job’ probably wishes to show his intention to testify to the truth under all circumstances; not only while being torn apart by his tribulations, but even if he has to tear his flesh apart by his teeth, or to put his life on his hands to deliver to death. All that would never keep him from revealing his innocence in the Lord, and how his friends have misinterpreted the events that dwelt upon him.

- ❖ He probably means to say: [Why should I intend to condemn myself so cruelly before humans? Or to reveal what goes on in my heart; if that would not be for the edification of my neighbor; whether through condemning my evil, or showing off my goodness?

¹ الفيلوكاليا: 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 44.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If I express myself that way. I would then be like those who may find comfort in devouring their own selves; or like those who bite their own flesh, to enjoy a kind of relief of their pains!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Speaking with anger, and trying to calm himself down, he so says that he would take his flesh in his teeth!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the ‘teeth’ here, refer to the inner senses that chew what preoccupy the mind, to present them to the memory; About which it is well said: *“Whoever eats sour grapes – his own teeth will be set on edge”* (Jeremiah 31:30). What are the sour grapes but the sin? A sour grape is a fruit before its time. He, who desires to enjoy the pleasures of the present life, would be like him who hastens to eat a fruit before its time, and sets his teeth on edge; Meaning, that, while feeding on the pleasures of the present life, and rejoicing in the outer things, he would be unable to realize the spiritual things; and his senses would get blunt concerning the inner issues. While feeding on sins, the soul would be unable to feed on the bread of righteousness. And when the teeth get attached to the habit of feeding on sour grapes, they would become unable to chew the good and ripe fruits to enjoy what is inside.

‘Job’, while intending to take the outer issues (his flesh) by the spiritual concept, chews them by the teeth of his Spirit, to enjoy the spiritual pleasures that his friends reject; because they seek the glory of the world and the pleasures of the body. They oppose him and seek his perdition, because, being carnal, they could not stand the spiritual.

“Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him” (Job 13: 15).

‘Job’ intends to hold fast to his own way, and would never forsake the comfort he finds in walking uprightly with God, whatever intense are his tribulations, even to death; As though he is saying together with Hezekiah: *“Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes”* (2 Kings 20: 3). Even if my tribulations go so far to my death, In order to be justified before Him, I will keep on trusting Him, and on being full of hope in Him. I am His friend, and He is mine, I will never forsake him, even if He seems as though He is my enemy!

- ❖ ***“Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him” (15)*** ... Being patient under temptations, is what differentiate between the righteous and the evil mind. Amid afflictions, the first, by knowing that the glory of God the Almighty would never be shaken by worldly events would never collapse together with that of the outer glory, but would rather be stronger when he loses the temporal goods.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows”* (2 Corinthians 1: 5). He makes our souls more exalted, counting our sufferings as His own. So how much joy would we have when we have fellowship with Christ, and when we suffer for His sake! By faith we realize the new birth and the resurrection. Whoever believe in Jesus, the truly risen, are committed to present themselves to sufferings. And whoever have fellowship in His sufferings, will also rise together with Him. *“That I may know Him and the*

power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3: 10)¹.

- ❖ A loving man, perpetually connected to God, would not be harmed by waves, however strong they are, But, on the contrary, he would come stronger out of them. A weak man, on the other hand, would fall, even with no affliction².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If with more sufferings with Christ, there would be more comforts by Him, Let us then welcome His encouraging sufferings to flow over into our lives, if we indeed seek the abundant comfort by which all those who grieve are comforted. These comforts are however, not the same for all; because if they are, it would not be written: *“For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our Comfort overflows”*. Those who have fellowship in the sufferings will also have it in comfort, according to their fellowship in the sufferings of Christ³.

The scholar Origen

“Indeed this will turn out for my deliverance, for a hypocrite would not come before Him” (Job 13: 16).

Here, he does not mean temporary deliverance, as his hope in being delivered from his temptations in this world, and in his return to what he used to be, has almost gone; but he hopes for his eternal deliverance when he encounters God and sees Him face to face. The secret of his trust in his eternal deliverance, knows that his relationship with God is devoid of hypocrisy or diversion; As God would never connect to hypocrites, nor would allow them to stand before Him to enjoy His glory.

- ❖ ***“For a hypocrite would not come (stand) before Him” (16) ...*** We have to take into consideration that we may come before God in two ways:

The first way is to take our souls into account, concerning our transgressions here; condemn them before Him, and punish them by crying; As, whenever we realize the power of our Creator, we would be as though are standing before Him; Elijah, the man of God said it well: *“As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand...”* (1 Kings 17: 1).

The second way is to come before God, when we prepare ourselves here in this world, to stand before His throne on the day of the ultimate judgment. The hypocrite, on that day, will also come before the divine Judge; But having closed his eyes to his sins, and not lamented them here,, he is as though refusing to stand before the Lord ... And having corrupted his mind by the words of commendation addressed to him, he does not realize that he is opposing his inner judge, and does not fear His firmness; ... His eyes do not take God’s firmness into account, amid his desire for the admiration of peoples’ eyes.

- ❖ ***“But I rebuke my ways before Him; He would be my deliverance” (15).*** The apostle Paul says: *“If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment”* (1 Corinthians 11: 31). God would be our deliverance, as much as we rebuke our sins with the fear of God.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ للمؤلف: القيم الروحية لعيد النيروز، ص 18.

² العناية الإلهية، ترجمة عابدة حنا، ص 12.

³ Exhortation to Martyrdom, 42.

❖ I will condemn myself, so as not to be condemned by Him, who will later on, judge the living and the dead¹.

St. Augustine

❖ Therefore, mediate into yourself, until you come to confront God².

St. Basil the Great

❖ Let it be your main concern, not to deceive yourself.

St. Melito, Bishop of Sardes

❖ Hypocrisy is detested by God and by men; It does not warrant a reward, nor lead to the deliverance of the soul, but rather to its perdition.

If someone manage to escape by hypocrisy, lest he would be exposed; this would be just temporary, then it would bring on him disgrace; just like when an ugly woman takes away her outer make-up!

Hypocrisy is therefore foreign to the saints; as nothing of what we do or say would escape the eyes of the Holy Trinity; according to the words: *“There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known”* (Luke 12: 2). Thus, if what we do or say will ultimately be revealed on the Day of Judgment; hypocrisy is therefore of no benefit; and it would be befitting for us to be justified as true worshippers who minister to God with truth and faithfulness³.

St. Cyril the Great

“Listen carefully to my words; let your ears take in what I say” (Job 13: 17).

Again, he calls on them to stop accusing him, and to listen to him, in order to enjoy together with him the encounter of God through faithfulness, purity, and love.

St. Gregory the Great believes that ‘Job’ repeats the word *“listen”*; as he wants them to listen to him, not only by their outer ears, but also by their inner ears, to comprehend the depths of his words in a spiritual way.

“Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated” (Job 13: 18).

He does not need their testimony; having prepared his case well, with a faithful conscience and a pure heart; With God’s grace, he knows he will be vindicated.

❖ *“Being so near to my judgment, I know I will be found righteous”* That is the judgment about which is said in another book: *“Your righteousness will be revealed as the light, and your judgment as mid day”*. Yet he did not say: “I am actually so”, but: “I am almost ...”; If the judgment he means is not so now, it will be so on the ultimate day, when those who faithfully pray, saying: *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* (Matthew 6: 12); through this forgiveness of others, are found righteous; when the sins they have committed here will be wiped out, through the works of love they have practiced⁴.

St. Augustine

❖ *“here I am close to my Judge”*. It is more befitting for the adversary to mute his tongue, and to let the Judge alone speak.

¹ Ep. 209:10.

² راجع الأب الياس كويتز المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 256. تعريب الدكتور نجيب حجار.

³ In Luc Ser 86.

⁴ On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness, 24.

- ❖ *“I know I will be found righteous”*; Having consummated the whole law, and kept all the commandments; and having cleansed all my hidden transgressions, and those I have willfully committed, by prayers and tears. Although the enemy intends to hide my righteousness through pushing my friends to accuse me; yet even in that, I will be found righteous, as long as my patience holds on, and I show courage before temptations up to the end.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, even what ‘Job’ said about himself bears humility; as God Himself has testified that there is no one like him on earth; although God’s testimony is not to be compared to what ‘Job’ said about himself during his debate with his friends who accused him. He refused to describe himself as greater than others, but found it enough to justify himself against the accusations of his friends.

“Who is there that will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die”
(Job 13: 19).

Being sure of the great mercies of God toward His faithful believers, he does not care for their contention; and does not fear God’s chastisement; but he trustingly delivers his Spirit in His divine hands and seeks eternal comfort.

Here, ‘Job’ presents to us a living portrait of the Christian who enjoys a true vision of the work of the cross in his life; how it has set him free of the devil, his adversary, how it exposed his enemy, and brought him under his feet, to fear him no more, but rather mocks him.

- ❖ Being sure that there is no possibility for any one to blame him on his outer behavior, he feels that he can boldly look in the eyes of any accuser!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Finding themselves being destroyed by the same way they intended to destroy us, the evil spirits fall in grief Yet their defeat does not mean that they would leave us in peace, and would never come back!

When we see them fail in their struggle against us, we say together with David: *“Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life. Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor who wish me evil”* (Psalm 40: 14); and say together with Jeremiah: *“Let them be ashamed who persecute me. But do not let me be put to shame; Let them be dismayed, but do not let me be dismayed. Bring on them the day of doom, and destroy them with double destruction”* (Jeremiah 17: 18); As no one can doubt, that when we overcome them, they will get double destruction¹.

Father Serinus

- ❖ If you say that the power of the adversary is overwhelming, and that evil has a full authority over man; By this you are accusing God of oppression, **when He judges the people for being submitted to such a strong and a mighty adversary! This is like when a grown-up man fights a little kid, and then you punish the kid for being overcome by such a strong man; which is greatly unjust²!**

St. Makaryos the Great

- ❖ The thoughts of the devil are mere mental imaging of some evil thing (or work) ; and what gives him the power to reign over us, or even to come near our mind, is

¹ Cassian: Conf., 7: 21.

² عظة 3:6.

the weakness of our faith. Because, after having received the commandment to throw away from ourselves all confusions, “to keep our hearts with all diligence” (Proverbs 4: 23), and to seek the kingdom of God which is in us; Once the mind forsakes the heart, and the goal which we seek; We give the fantasies of the devil a wide range, and the mind would become slothful enough to receive any evil counsel.

To such an extent, the devil has got no authority to control our thoughts; Or else he would mercilessly put into our minds every kind of evil thoughts, and would never allow us to do any good! His ability is merely confined to present false counsel at the start of every thought, to test to which direction our heart leans: whether to his counsel or to that of God; which are contradictories.

St. Mark the hermit

6- A SCREAMING APPEAL TO GOD TO STOP THE CHASTISEMENT:

“Only two things do not do to me , then I will not hide myself from your face” (job13: 20).

Despite what came over ‘Job’, and despite his confession in more than one situation, that he is a sinner, Yet he has no intention to hide from God’s face like Adam his father; but he wishes to be always in His presence; *“Why do you hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?”* (Job 13: 24).

Job desired two things by which he longs to stand in the presence of God; Not out of fear of His judgment, but as a Creator who loves His believers; And not to hide from His face, as did our early parents who assumed that the shades of the fig trees would hide them from their Creator! Now, what are these two things? They are referred to in the following verse (21).

❖ God Himself says through the prophet: *“I am a God near at hand, and not a God afar off”* (Jeremiah 23: 23 LXX)¹.

Father Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

❖ Wherever you are, God will come to you, if He finds in your heart a place to dwell in.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

❖ The holy Trinity is close to every thing; but not every thing is close to Him.

St. Dionesius the Areopagan

❖ Let the living God be present all the time in your mind which is created according to His image – invisible and imperceptible – and yet, by its will the whole body moves.

St. Melito, Bishop of sardes

“Withdraw Your hand far from me, and let not the dread terrify me” (Job 13: 21).

‘He is in need of two things; *“He then will not hide his face from Him”* (20). These two things ‘Job’ needs from God could be:

1- *“Withdraw Your hand far from me”*: He is probably asking God, not to take away the temptation from him, but to make his sufferings more endurable. All what preoccupy him is, not to boast before his friends that he is not as evil as they claim him to be; as much as to be able to stand in more peace in the presence of God, to speak to him.

¹ Comment. on Ps. 139.

2- 'Job' is aware of God's dread; **which is a cause of joy and rejoices to the faithful believer, and not a cause of terror to him.**

❖ About this David says: *"Remove Your strokes from me, I am worn down by the blows of Your hand"* (Psalm 39: 10) ... You are the incorruptible, while I am the corruptible (Romans 1: 23). You are the Master, and I am the servant. I am just like a wrestler trainee, or a new recruited soldier. You speak and I respond; If I do dare to object, it would be to gain wisdom, and to learn through talking and listening.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, in these two requests: to withdraw His hand far from him, and not to let His dread terrify him, there is a prophecy about longing to the era of grace, **when no strokes of divine wrath for breaking the law, would dwell on the believers, and when the believers no more worship God out of fear like in the Old times, but through love.** [Righteousness could not be consummated through fear; According to St. John the beloved: *"The perfect love drives fear away"*; And St. Paul presents comfort to the children of adoption, saying: *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'"* (Romans 8: 15).

That is why, by the voice of humanity, longing for taking away the cruelty of the stroke of the law, and out of a fervent desire to advance from fear to love, 'Job' prays to God, saying: ***"Withdraw Your hand far from me, and let not Your dread terrify me"***.... Take away from me the cruelty of the stroke; and lift up from me the burden of terror; ... I know that I would never be withdrawn from the firmness of Your hand; ... But, when the grace of love shines on me, pour on me the spirit of peace ... Because whoever serves You, not out of love, but out of fear, would never be justified before You].

"Then call and I will answer; or let me speak, then You respond to me" (Job 13: 22).

By these two things, he would become in the presence of God, and enter with Him into an enjoyable debate: God speaks, and 'Job' answers; and 'Job' speaks, and God responds. This is the mutual love between God and His believers; the amazing favor that would be ours when we stand before the throne of the divine grace.

❖ God's call to us lies in appreciating us with love and choosing us. And we respond through our submission in obedience to His love by our good deeds. Whoever runs in haste, longing for the eternal world, would search his deeds, and be particular on testing his soul, lest there would be in him what is against the face of his Creator.

Pope Gregory the Great

7- WHY DO YOU HIDE YOUR FACE FROM ME?

"HOW MANY ARE MY INIQUITIES AND SINS? MAKE ME KNOW MY TRANSGRESSION AND MY SIN?" (JOB 13:23).

Now, standing in the presence of God, 'Job' inquires from Him about his iniquities and sins; then he would confess them and ask for forgiveness with the spirit of humility, and with no fear of being exposed before himself.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that there is difference between sins and iniquities; the first surpass the measure of the second. When we are commanded to offer a sacrifice according to the law, it would primarily be for a sin, and could be for an iniquity as well. A sin is only realized by action, whereas an iniquity is usually committed by thought alone.

"Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?" (Job 13: 24).

'Job' confesses that he is a sinner; yet with a spirit of humility and repentance, he requests from his divine Savior not to hide His face from him, and not to regard him as His enemy. Despite all his weaknesses and sins, he will never stop asking, to enjoy fellowship with God, his Creator.

❖ ***“Why do you hide Your face from me? And regard me as Your enemy?” (24).***

Man, after enjoying the light of inner meditation in paradise, having gotten pleased with himself, he lost the light of His Creator, and escaped from His face to the trees of paradise. After committing his sin, he feared seeing Him, whom he loved before. Notice that punishment was brought on him after his sin; Yet after the punishment, having realized the results of his disobedience, he got back to love; And the face that he feared while in sin, having been awakened to a sound understanding, he started to search for it anew through the punishment, in order to escape from the darkness of the condition of blindness that came upon him; and he started to retreat in terror from that loneliness that kept him from seeing his Creator.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Will You frighten a windblown leaf? And will You pursue dry chaff?” (Job 13: 25).

'Job' greatly belittles himself before God and before his own eyes, counting himself like a windblown leaf and dry chaff!

And wonders: Is it befitting to God's dignity to crush someone who has no strength to resist?!

“You sweep them away; they are like a dream; like grass that, in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers” (Psalm 90: 5).

“Though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever” (Ps 92: 7).

“My days are like evening shadow; I wither away like grass” (102: 11).

“As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field” (Psalm 103: 15).

“Let them be like the grass on the housetops that withers before it grows up” (Psalm 129: 6).

“Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants of the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the housetops, scorched before it grows up” (Isaiah 37: 27).

“For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flowers fall, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits” (James 1: 11).

“Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away” (1 Peter 1: 24).

❖ ***“Will You frighten a windblown leaf? And will you pursue dry chaff?” (25).***

What is man but a leaf that fell from a tree in paradise?

What would he be, who is played by the wind of temptation; and who is blown up by the storms of his lusts, but a tree leaf?

Man's mind is aroused by several storms, when he suffers from temptations. He is easily aroused by anger, and when anger goes away, it would be followed by vain joy! He would be spiked by the spur of lust; sometimes lifted up by pride, then brought down to what is lower than dust, by growing fear. It was well expressed by

the prophet Isaiah, saying: “*We all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away*” (Isaiah 64: 6).

- ❖ As what we say may pass away, but what we write may stay; It is said about God, as His strikes on us stay for a long time, that He, not only speaks, but He writes bitter things. It was once said to man: “*You are dust, and to dust you will return*”; ... Angels often appeared and gave commandments to men; ... Moses designated the sins by firm ways; ... Then came the only-begotten Son of the Father to save us; Death was swallowed by His death; and He proclaimed to us the eternal life, that He demonstrated in Himself. Yet the verdict that was issued in paradise concerning the death of our body, remained unchanged since the beginning of the human race, and will remain until the end of the world; “*What man can live and not see death?*” (Psalm 89: 48); and “*You, Yourself, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence, when once You are angry?*” (Psalm 76: 7). Once He got angry when man sinned in paradise; the verdict of death on our body was well established.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Their years are of no value: “*In the morning they are like grass which flourishes and grows up; And in the evening it withers*” (Psalm 90: 5)... So are all the things that did not exist before; When they come, they soon disappear; they only come to pass away! ... To fall into death, and to wither in the dust. That is the body with all its abominable lusts¹!
- ❖ Those who do not think aright in their hearts look at the wicked as they are as fresh as green grass; and follow their lead, not knowing that their flourishing is only temporary, then they will soon wither and perish².
- ❖ Do not count yourself among those whose days are like a shadow that lengthens; and wither away like grass (Psalm 102: 11); as a result of Your just judgment. Because the grass, once it got dampened with the blood of the Savior, will flourish again: “*You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come*” (Psalm 102: 13)³.
- ❖ “*As for man, his days are like grass*” (Psalm 103: 15). When man realizes that he is like grass that flourish only for a short time, and once the sun becomes hot, it will wither and die, he should not boast!

All the exaltation of the human race regarding dignities, authorities, riches, pride, great families etc. are only temporary like the flowers of the weeds; the days of your life may seem long in your eyes, but in the sight of God, they are not. God’s account is not like yours. He sent us His Word who lasts forever ... Do not marvel that you will partake of His eternity; ... If He has already partaken of the grass that is yours; Namely, has adopted from you what is lowly, Will he not grant you what is exalted⁴?!

St. Augustine

“***For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth***” (Job 13: 26).

In his talk to his friends, when he compares himself with humanity, he confirms that he is righteous and not as wicked as his friends claim him to be. But

¹ St. Augustine: On Ps. 90.

² St. Augustine: On Ps. 92.

³ St. Augustine: On Ps. 102.

⁴ St. Augustine: On Ps. 103.

when he speaks to the holy God, he confesses the iniquities of his youth; and pleads with Him to tell him why He lets him “*decay like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten*” (Job 13: 28).

He says to God: [If you make a record of my sins and transgressions, they are too bitter to justify myself of them. Yet,

as they are iniquities of my youth, which I know and do not deny, I plead to Your love, O the Forgiver of sins and iniquities!

David beseeches God, saying: “*Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; According to Your mercy, remember me, for Your goodness sake, O Lord*” (Psalm 25: 7). And the robber, who was crucified on the right hand of Jesus, did not as well, deny his crimes and sins, but asked the Lord to remember him when His Kingdom comes; He carried his soul over to paradise, justified in the worthiness of the precious blood.

So, when we ask God to remember us, He responds saying: “*I am He, who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; And I will not remember Your sins*” (Isaiah 43: 25).

St. Paul tells his disciple Timothy: “*Flee also your youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*” (2 Timothy 2: 22).

❖ “Why do You write down bitter things against me, and remember the iniquities of my youth?” (26)

He honestly and truthfully counts that stage of his life (youth) as the cause of his troubles.

Childhood is characterized by innocence; early manhood by eagerness to earn a good reputation, and feeling shame for any transgression; and old age by wisdom. But, because youth is the only stage that bears the feature of weakness, zeal for committing sin, and a disregard of those who give counsel, David asks God to forgive him for all the transgressions he committed in that stage of his life (Psalm 25: 7)¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ God said to Adam: “*Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it will bring forth for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food, until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you will return*” (Genesis 3: 17-19). All mankind were so judged; and in the same way, God puts on everyone the sin of Adam’s youth; as he was still a young man when he did it. That is why, it is not only him, but all of us, his seed, are banned from eating from the tree of life, in paradise (Genesis 2: 3).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ “*Do not remember the sins and transgressions of my youth; According to Your mercy, remember me, for Your goodness sake, O Lord*” (Psalm 25: 7). Remember me, not according to the wrath I deserve, but according to Your mercy that befits You; ... Not according to my worthiness, but to Your goodness, O Lord².

St. Augustine

“*You put my feet in the stocks, and watch closely all my paths by putting marks on the soles of my feet*” (Job 13: 27).

¹ The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 7:21.

² St. Augustine: On Ps. 25.

I was chastised on account of the weaknesses and the iniquities of my youth; ... I became helplessly motionless, like a prisoner whose feet were put in the stocks; ... I will never escape from the strokes of Your chastisements. ... You are aware of all my paths, and chasten me even for my hidden thoughts and my faulty looks. ... You write down everything I committed, and which I would never deny, on the soles of my feet.

❖ **“You put my feet in the stocks” (27)**; having been banned by God who **“closely watches our paths”**, from walking to enjoy the benefits of paradise. Because of the sin of disobedience committed by Adam, God condemned all the human, his seed. Yet, being beneficent and benevolent (Wisdom 7: 23), God closely **“watches our paths”**: If they are wicked, they are referred to us, being according to the likeness of our old father Adam, and we would fall under the chastisement that dwelt on him; But if they are good, they would be according to the likeness of the new Adam, and through Him, and we shall be saved from the curse, and granted an annulment of our great tribulation.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **“You put my feet in the stocks”**; meaning that You have searched my whole being, and struck my whole body, from head to feet. Again speaking about the seriousness of his tribulation, he is mocking the lowliness of his own human nature.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ **“Closely watching all my paths, You put marks on the soles of my feet” (27)**. The footmarks may probably mean the numerous faulty practices committed by us, and seen by our brethren, to become bad example for them. Diverting from the right path, and leaving our footmarks to those who follow us, we would become an offense to the conscience of others.

While all these things are elaborately searched and weighed by the Almighty God; how can man, who is limited by the weakness of his body, have the authority to confront them and keep straight the line of thought of his heart? That is why he says: Who am I? I **“decay like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten!” (28)**. because rot in him originates from no other source, but from himself, so temptation destroys his body as moth does to a garment. Man embodies the chance to bring the temptation forth, like moth that destroys the garment originates from the garment itself.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Man decays like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten” (Job 13: 28).

‘Job’ confesses that, because of his sins, he goes from decay to decay, but although his garment (body) was eaten by the moth of sin, Yet his soul is saved, and his body is granted an eternal glory, when the corruptible is clothed with the incorruptible, and the spiritual body occupies that of dust.

❖ You can choose to be a slave of lusts; and you can also choose to set yourself free of their yoke; God has created you with this authority.

Whoever overcomes his body lusts, will be crowned with non-corruption; as, if there were no lusts, there would be no virtues; and subsequently, God would not grant crowns to those worthy of them¹!

¹ الفيلوكاليا: 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 67.

- ❖ Whoever understands what the body is prone to corruption, and short-lived; will also understand that the soul is heavenly and eternal, a breath from God, and is bound to the body, until it gets exalted toward the likeness of God ¹.

St. Anthony the Great

¹ الفيلوكاليا: 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 124.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 13

***I WOULD RATHER FALL INTO YOUR HAND, O MY GOD
THAN TO FALL INTO THE HAND OF MAN***

- ❖ Falling into Your hand, O God is better than falling into that of man!
Man thinks that he has authority, and is unique in his knowledge!
He thinks that he alone, has knowledge and wisdom!
He judges his brother as though he is an ignorant slave!
He does not realize that he is equal to him!
- ❖ I would rather be judged by You; as You listen to me!
You alone, is the unique heavenly Physician.
You present Yourself, both as a Physician and as the medication!
Your medication is love, compassion, and being close to me!
You never wound nor insult anyone!
- ❖ When man judges his brother, he thinks of himself as righteous!
Under the pretence of defending You, and testifying to the truth!
He judges and condemns with partiality!
He claims to have holy zeal, while his heart is full of deceit!
He has no fear of Your majesty, nor is terrified by Your glory!
He utters deceit; as though You cannot search his heart!
Yet his words are like chaff that will soon be scattered by wind.
And his strongholds are of mud, unable to protect him.
I wish he heads my counsel, and keep silent to listen.
As his silence would be more eloquent than his words!
- ❖ Men indeed came against me.
And the temptation became extremely burdensome.
Yet, by Your grace, I shall remain faithful to You even to death!
I hope for nothing but to be justified before You by Your precious blood!
I confess to You my sins and iniquities.
Remember me, but not my sins!
When I stand before You, O Merciful God, I shall have comfort.
- ❖ Let me behold You; I seek Your support in my affliction.
You raise the rod of chastisement at Your discretion, O Benevolent God.
When you flare my heart with Your love, I bear the fear of slaves no more!
When Your face appears before me,
You take away my animosity, and grant me the spirit of son hood.
- ❖ All my being is corrupted.
I became like a moth-eaten garment.
I shall not justify myself; This corruption is the fruit of my sins.
Yet, Your blood will clean my corruption.
Instead of corruption, I will enjoy non-corruption.
And instead of death, I will enjoy the joy of Your resurrection working in me.

CHAPTER 14

OUR LIFE IS TEMPORARY

This chapter begins by bitter screams and pessimistic look toward man's life, being of few days, and perpetually burdened with incessant troubles and afflictions; likened by 'Job' to the flowers of weeds that soon fade away under the heat of the sun of temptations, and a shadow that does not continue. 'Job' seems as though crying out to God to lift his hand up from him, to have rest from burden these temptations; and seems as well, as though he has no hope to live anew after his death. But if you look carefully into his words, you will find them full of hope in the Lord, as a Savior of mankind, who alone, can turn them around from sin to the true righteousness, and grand those the resurrection and the new life, after heaven and earth come to an end. You will find 'Job' looking at life as a temporary sleep that would be followed by awakening.

This chapter therefore presents two actual aspects: bitterness of him, on whom bitter temptations dwell; and the glory he anticipates.

Some believe that some of Job's words, that look as though carrying great despair, were only because he put himself in the position of weakness; then, proclaiming his hope in the work of God, he became like his coming Lord, who: "*being Himself tempted, can help those under temptations*".

'Job' finding out that talking to his friends was without benefit, he raised his heart up to God, to speak with Him concerning man's life on earth, of which he draws a painful portrait, as of such short duration to earn the care of God; who, will not subsequently care for his punishment.

If no one can make man clean (4), Why then, does not let him enjoy pleasures, as much as he can acquire, even if he noting more than a hired hand? (5-6).

'Job' comparing a cut-down tree to a dead man, says that the first can sprout again; whereas man cannot [10-12; see also 10: 21-22).

If this is not the end: the abyss or the condition of death; and God will summon him again to confront him face to face; he would be able to endure the present sufferings, and would joyfully go to encounter God, feeling that He would take away his sins forever (13-17).

Yet the light of hope would soon scatter, to appear again (in chapter 19). Man is not like a living tree, but as a mountain that God make makes it fall and crumble away!

1- Man's life on earth	1 – 5
2- Death and the crossing over from suffering	6 – 15
3- Getting prepared for death	16 – 22

1- MAN'S LIFE ON EARTH:

"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble (wrath)" (Job 14: 1).

In this, 'Job' joins his friend 'Elphaz' in looking at man as born for labor and suffering; according to the words of the wise 'Solomon': "*All his days, his work is pain and grief, even at night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity*" (Ecclesiastes 2: 23). If man concentrates on what dwells upon him he would look at life with a bitter eye; Whereas if he lifts up his heart to God, he would find it a divine gift, and would realize

God's plan behind the troubles that dwell upon him, and his soul would rejoice with the spirit of hope.

When 'Job' look into himself, as well as into every man else, he would find nothing to boast about: he is born of woman; namely of a weak human seed. **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that 'woman' here refers to spiritual weakness. Man, born from a woman in weakness, would have his life of few days, whatever is the duration of his life, full of labor and sufferings; with rarely one single day without affliction.

❖ Man's condition is indeed miserable! Although he is committed to present an account of his sin.

Yet he cannot avoid it. It goes back to the beginning of childhood itself, before man acquires the ability to know right from wrong. He is indeed miserable.

His life is but a few days, seduction is sweet; tribulations are doubling; frustration is a daily routine; and even in moments of pleasure, there is perpetual bitterness¹!

St. Ambrose

St. Augustine, commenting on the expression "*full of wrath*" (14; 1), says that God's wrath comes from His mercy and love, that led to the incarnation of the only-begotten Son in the fullness of days, to renew us and to take away every burden of sin, whether the serious sin inherited along the generations, or that we practice².

❖ The human race fell under just judgment, and all men became the children of wrath, of which it was written: "*For all our days have passed away in Your wrath*" (Psalm 90: 9); and of which 'Job' says: "*Man born of woman is of few days, and full of wrath*" (14: 1). And on this wrath, the Lord Jesus also says: "*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*" (John 3: 36 – a talk by St. John the Baptist, and not by the Lord Christ). ... As every man is born with this wrath, the apostle Paul says: "*We were by nature children of wrath, just as the others*" (Ephesians 2: 3) ³.

St. Augustine

❖ "*Man born of woman is of few days*"; because God commanded that he return to dust (Genesis 3: 19); and, as being "*full of wrath*", that started according to 'Job' at the moment he disobeyed the commandment he got from God (Genesis 2: 17; 3: 6).

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ Notice the accuracy of the expression: "*You are treasuring up for yourself wrath*" (**Romans 2: 5**); namely, that the judgment is not coming from the Judge, but is a result of the work of the sinner himself. He does not say: "*God treasures up for you ...*", but "*You treasure for yourself...*". He tries hard to draw you along; yet if you persist on your stubbornness, "*you would treasure up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*". But do not think that God's wrath is just a strong reaction; but it is justice; a "*revelation*"; by which every man gets what he deserves⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 7:22.*

² *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 124:5.*

³ *Enchiridion, 33.*

⁴ *In Rom. hom 5.*

- ❖ Whenever we read about God’s wrath and anger; we should not understand the word according to the human emotion; but with a meaning that is befitting to God who is beyond such kinds of indecent emotions; We should realize from this that He is Judge and the Avenger against all those oppressive things that are committed in this world.

And according to the logic and meaning of these terms, we should fear Him, being the fearful Avenger on all our works, and should fear to do anything against His will. As the human nature is used to fear those known for their with fiery tempers, and be terrified from doing wrong against them.

The avenging wrath is usually feared by those tortured by the accusations of their conscience; Yet the tendency of the judge toward them are governed by justice, impartiality, and respect of the law he applies; And whatever are his compassion and fairness, he would always be described otherwise by those whom he justly condemned¹.

St. John Cassian

St. Gregory of Nyssa believes that ‘Job’ calls that man ‘the mortal’.

- ❖ *“The (mortal) man born of woman, of few days and full of wrath”* (1) That being called by the Holy Book in the history of creation as “man”, is called by ‘Job’ the ‘mortal’, and by heathen authors ‘a human being’, and by others ‘an uttering speaker’².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

“He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue” (Job 13: 2).

‘Job’ describes the life of man by two symbols:

1- **The flowers of the field**, or the weeds, that appears for a short time, then soon withers and falls under the heat of the sun (Isaiah 40: 7; James 1: 11; 1 Peter 1: 24).

2- **The shadow**, with no existence, and according to Bildad: *“Our days on earth are a shadow”* (Job 8: 9).

- ❖ *“He comes forth like a flower and fades away”* (2). Man in paradise has flourished like a flower, and even gave names to all animals (Genesis 2: 20). But he fell when he was deceived by the serpent (Genesis 3: 4-5; 2 Corinthians 11: 3); after which he *“fled like a shadow”* from the face of God, when he found out that he became naked, and hid himself behind the trees in paradise, when God called his name, saying: *“Adam, where are you?”* (Genesis 3: 7-9). Once he was driven out of paradise, he lost every help, got corrupted and completely perished with no hope.

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Life in the body is like a flower of weeds; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes”* (Psalm 103: 15); and of Isaiah: *“All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field”* (Isaiah 40: 6). As man appears all of a sudden, he, day after day, and a moment after another, retreats to death *“He flees like a shadow, and does not continue”* (Job 14: 2). Why is man’ life likened to a shadow, and not to the sun; except that, according to the voice of the Truth: *“Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold”* (Matthew 24: 12).

¹ Cassian: *De institutis caenoboum*, 8:2-4.

² Answer to Eunomius’ *Second Book*.

It is well said: **“He does not continue”** (2). He moves from the early childhood to childhood; then to youth; to manhood; to old age; then ultimately to death. We cannot have here a perpetual citizenship; We came to pass by; and with the same ways by which we live, we pass day after day from this life!

Before his rebellion, the early man was not able to realize this fact of going forth from this life; But after his rebellion, man placed himself on a kind of his sloping temporary condition. Having eaten the forbidden fruit, he, on the spot, failed to “continue”!

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great believes that this submission to outer change also goes hand in hand with an inner change; striving to do better works. His mind is perpetually in a condition of change; unless man is committed to self-control, to avoid sloping into a worse condition.

[Having forsaken Him who is perpetually set, the mind lost his continuation on its condition; striving to practice better things, it is committed to face opposing currents. But if he is slothful in striving to ascend, he would be pushed downward to a worse condition.

As ascension needs a greater effort than descent, the Lord instructs us to strive to enter through the narrow gate (Luke 13: 24). In case there is no strife from a flaring heart, the soul would slide to lower places].

“And do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me to judgment with Yourself?” (Job 14: 3).

‘Job’ stands astonished, that God, who knows that man’s life is just like a shadow that does not continue, but would soon vanishes; makes it a point to bring ‘Job’ to judgment!

The Psalmist David cries out saying: *“Lord, what is man, that you take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow”* (Psalm 144: 3-4); and again he says: *“What is man that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You visit him?”* (Psalm 8: 4).

In great humility, David believing that he is not worthy of God getting mindful of his transgressions, nor bringing him to judgment, says to God: *“Do not enter into judgment with Your servant”* (Psalm 143: 2).

❖ Who could be justified in the eyes of God, or could boast of his righteousness and the purity of his heart, if an infant of one day is not considered pure of sin¹!

St. Ambrose

❖ **“Do You open Your eyes on such a one, and brought him to judgment with Yourself?” (3).** this does not concern only Adam before his rebellion! God so cared for him not to sin, and not to be cast away from paradise, that he commanded him, saying: *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die”* (Genesis 2: 16, 17).

He likewise cared for us, by providing us with the written law; then added to it the prophets (Matthew 11: 13); beside providing us with **the grace of the gospel** (Acts 20:

¹ *Death is Good, 11: 49.*

24), through which He referred to us, how we can receive the preliminary honor, how to avoid the threat of hell (Luke 12: 5); and how to seek paradise (Mk 13: 33).

He then brought man to judgment, to receive the reward according to his works (Matthew 16: 27).

Realizing all that, we are committed to pass through our life in a sound way; knowing that everyone would either punished or crowned according to his works. Those who follow Adam's lead, having not headed the lesson for their chastisement, would fall under punishment. Whereas those who keep the commandments (Matthew 5: 19), would be found worthy of getting a double reward from the just Judge (Matthew 5: 12); Being supported by the grace given to us through the new Adam (Romans 15: 15), that would be the way by which we can enjoy the happiness in the kingdom and the glory of God, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit.

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one” (Job 14: 4).

In great humility, 'Job' considers his life like a withered weed, or like a vanishing shadow; and at the same time he sees his life unclean, and wonders who can bring purity out of it! And like David who cries out, saying: *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51: 5), no one can purify or sanctify man except his Creator; as the procedure of purification is like recreation. : *Create in me a clean heart. O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”* (Psalm 51: 10).

'Job' believes that man carries the corruption of sin since the time he was conceived (see Psalm 51: 10). It is as though 'Job' says to God that, being a sinner, because all humanity got corrupted since the fall of the early parents, All need Your purification and sanctification; No one could be justified before You.

❖ Despite the fact that God's ministers and friends, avoid the kind of sins that are for death; and practice numerous good deeds; yet we do not believe that they are without less serious sins; as God truly says: *“There is no infant of one day old on earth, without sin”*. Besides, the blessed St. John the evangelist, who is undoubtedly not less worthy than 'Job', proclaims: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 8). And the wise Solomon says: *“A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again”* (Proverbs 24: 16) ¹.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

❖ **Who can purify something of an unclean seed?** Only the One pure in Himself!

Man who exists in a corrupt body, has a built-in corruption that he draws from the nature of his birth, having been conceived through an unclean carnal pleasure; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51: 5) ... *Man is tempted against his will; whereas he, who can control the emotions of his secret temptation, and overcome the uncleanness of his thoughts, should not refer this purity to himself; as nobody can make him, who was conceived in iniquity ,pure, except the One who is pure in Himself.*

The meaning here, is that the righteous 'Job', looking forward to the incarnation of the Savior, believes that it is that Man alone in the world who is to be conceived with

¹ *Sermons, 91:4.*

no iniquity, with no seed of man or woman, but from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary; the only one truly pure in His body, for he does not come according to carnal pleasure.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ I quoted the following phrase from the book of 'Job': "*In Your sight, no one is pure, even if he is an infant one day old on earth*¹"; to which is added: "*We are all guilty because of Adam's disobedience*"; a point of view also proclaimed by the book of Nineveh, that clearly states that the little children of Nineveh were committed to fast together with the whole people. No man is without sin², even if his life on earth is just one day, or he lived long years. If the stars of heaven are not pure in God does sight, how much more would it be for those who submitted to the sin of Adam's disobedience³?!

St. Augustine

❖ **Who can be purified of uncleanness? No one, even he is one day old on earth.** No one can boast and say: "I am pure?" except Christ "*who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth*" (1 Peter 2: 22).

An infant one day old, in whom there is no uncleanness, for he "*does not know how to refuse the evil and choose the good*" (Isaiah 7: 15), yet he carries the corruption of the old Adam (1 Corinthians 15: 42), that we all carry. But the grace of the new Adam, has taken away from us the old Adam, has also saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3: 5).

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

***"Man's days are determined; You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed"* (Job 14: 5).**

Looking at his life, 'Job' finds out that even his age is predetermined by God, who has full authority and might; he could never be able to exceed its limits; according to the words of the prophet Moses who says: "*Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*" (Psalm 90: 12).

God is the One to "*kill and bring back to life*" (2 Kings 5: 7). Nothing can happen haphazardly; man's life is known to God, and his days are limited by Him.

❖ ***"You have decreed the number of his days, and set limits he cannot exceed"* (5).** For all mankind, it is limited by the Creator, not only by years and months, but even by days and hours; and never could be exceeded. Do not you know that many may be saved from deadly illness, while others, in excellent health, may be suddenly taken away from life?! Some fall down from very high places, and are not harmed, while others are taken away by death with a step amiss! And some may abandon a sinking ship, clinging on a floating piece of wood, and reach the shore safe and sound; while others may meet death in a sunken ship close to a harbor!

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ I know that the human soul is spiritual and not carnal; is provided with mind and thought; is not of the same essence as God, but created after the life of God, which is alone a blessed life; and is eternal. It is indeed not indebted for being clothed in a

¹ Jerome against Jovinian, Book 2.

² Jerome on Jonah, ch .3.

³ Letter 166 to Jerome (A Treatise on the Origin of Human Soul, ch 3:6.)

body, to works it has done before that, but, being in man, it is never without sin, even in an infant one day old. As all those of the seed of Adam, is born without sin, it is necessary even for infants to be born anew in Christ through the grace of renewal. All this I know concerning the soul¹.

St. Jerome

- ❖ No sermon can cover the swarm of sins of the soul and the free will: “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts*” (Mark 7: 21; Matthew 15: 19); then a list of the thoughts that defile us are added.

So, if I swarm of sins are surrounding us on all sides, through the senses and the inner movements of the soul; Who then can boast that his heart is pure? (Proverbs 20: 9 LXX; Job 14: 4 LXX).

A blemish that may come to the purity of the soul is the carnal pleasure that mixes with human life by various ways through the soul and the body, by thoughts, senses, voluntary movements and body behavior.

Therefore, who can claim that his soul is free of such blemish?

How can anyone be free of the strike of haughtiness, or treaded under the feet of pride?

Whose feet never ran to evil?

Who was never corrupted by his eyes wandering toward corruption, or by his ears getting out of control?

Who was never preoccupied with some taste of pleasure; and who was never moved by vain emotions²?

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ “*No one is without a blemish, even if he is one day old on this earth*”. David moans, saying: “*I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*” (Psalm 51: 5); And the apostle Paul proclaims: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood*” (Romans 3: 23-25). That is why the remission of sin is granted to those who believe; according to the words of the Lord Himself: “*For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sin*” (Matthew 26: 28)³.

St. Basil the Great

The scholar Origen uses this phrase (see Acts 2: 38), to confirm that everyone, including infants⁴, should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin. When have infants committed those sins?! Or how can we explain the cleansing by baptistery in the case of little infants, except by the interpretation we have already talked about: “*No one is without sin even if he is one day old on earth*” (Job 14: 4-5)? Through the sacrament of baptism this blemish by birth is taken away; as “*Unless man is born from water and Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven*”⁵.

¹ Letter 144: 9.

² The Lord's Prayer. Sermon 5.

³ Concerning Baptism, Book 1, chapter 2.

⁴ Cf Homilies on Leviticus, homily 8: 3: 5.

⁵ Homilies on the Gospel of Luke 14:4-5.

- ❖ According to the Holy Book (Job 14: 4-5), **everyone entering this world is said to bear a certain corruption**. This truly happens in the mother's womb (Job 3: 11). Assuming a body from the parental seed, he is said to be "corrupted in his father and mother". Do not you know that the male newborn infant, once he is 40 days of age, had to be presented to the altar to be cleansed (Leviticus 12: 2; Wisdom 8: 20).? As though he got corrupted when conceived through the paternal seed, or the maternal womb.

Only my Lord Jesus Christ came to this world pure, and was not corrupted in His mother; He is about whom Solomon said before long time: "*Being good, I entered an undefiled body*"¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ "*No one is pure of sin, even if he is one day old on this earth*". Not one of the apostles or saints dare to say 'We are saints, or dared to say: "*I will walk*", but said: "*I may walk*"; promising that he may do it in the future, and not claiming to have done it in the past! "*That I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living*" (Psalm 116: 9). This present land is the land of the dead; the other land is the land of the living².
- ❖ Take hold of the Savior's feet; cleanse them with your tears; and dry them up with your hair. When you do that, you may reach His head. When you descend into the fountain of life together with the Savior; You may then learn to pour the oil over the Savior's head. If "*the head of every man is Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11: 3), your head should be anointed; following your baptism, you should be anointed³.

St. Jerome

- ❖ "*In iniquity I was conceived*" (Psalm 51: 5). Was David born in adultery, being the son of the righteous man Jesse and his wife?! Was it not the iniquity inherited from Adam; and the bond of death planted in the soul together with the iniquity itself?!

No man was born, without the worthiness of punishment being brought forth together with him! As testified by the righteous 'Job' (14: 4-5)⁴.

St. Augustine

- ❖ There are those who intend to make excuses for their sins, referring to the statement by "job", that there is no one without sin, even if he is one day old on earth (14: 4-5). I very much doubt that they understand the meaning of what they utter. Here we shall try to respond to them in a concise manner, saying: [To be without sin, according to the Holy Book, has two meanings: either that man has never sinned, or that he stopped sinning.

If they say that no one is without sin, we shall say 'Yes'; We have all sinned one time or another, even if we stopped sinning later on!

But if they deny that someone after sinning can practice virtues, and would not sin again; In that they are wrong! Because this is quite possible to happen; and he can be described as 'without sin'.

¹ *Homilies on Leviticus, homily 12: 4: 1.*

² *On Ps., homily 39.*

³ *On Mark, homily 84.*

⁴ *On Ps. 51 (50).*

Our Lord Jesus Christ “*has presented to Himself a radiant church without stains or wrinkles*” (Ephesians 5: 27); Not because members of that church were always without sin , but because they later freed themselves from it. The Holy Book adds: “*or wrinkles*”; not that member of that church was never with the wrinkles of the old self (Ephesians 4: 22; Colossians 3: 9); but because they stopped being as such¹!

The scholar Origen

❖ This can also apply to the Spirit; as we sometimes try to make progress in gaining benefits in virtue and some other talents provided to us; but sometimes we are not able to do so ... Nobody can achieve the level he wishes to; but God the Almighty, who is able to discern what is inside us, puts limits even to the spiritual benefit themselves. Likewise, concerning things that man tries to, yet fails to master, he cannot even boast being a master of things under his own authority!

That is the reason that great preacher who was caught up to the third heaven, caught up to paradise (2 Corinthians 12), after gaining that proclamation, was not given the authority to rest in peace with no temptation. But because the Almighty God, has put limitations for man that he cannot surpass, raised him up to realize high things, then brought him down to submit to weaknesses. That was meant to keep him from having pride in him, but to be committed to humility; and commit to his limitations, in order to live in peace.

Pope Gregory the Great

In the Septuagint version it came as: “*No one without blemish (uncleanness)*”; on which the scholar **Origen comments**, saying: [It is not said: “*No one is without (sin), but without (uncleanness)*”; as every soul clothed by human flesh, has her own uncleanness; except Jesus, who took up a human body by His own will for the sake of our salvation (having taken in it our uncleanness)! Let us listen to Zechariah the prophet, saying: “*Joshua (the high priest) was clothed with filthy garment*” (Zechariah 3: 3); he says this to respond to those who deny that our Lord took up a real body, and who claim that His body was of spiritual heavenly nature².

The scholar Origen, in commenting on this same phrase, says that not one of the saints ever celebrates his birthday; On the contrary, in the Old Testament, we read how Pharaoh celebrated his birthday by killing and hanging his head baker (Genesis 40: 20-22); And how Herod celebrated his birthday by beheading St. John the Baptist³.

2- DEATH AND THE CROSSING OVER FROM SUFFERING:

“*Look away from him that he may rest, till like a hired man he finishes his day*” (Job 14: 6).

As his anguish became unbearable, which ‘Job’ counted as allowed by God, he asks him to lift up His hand from him that he may rest from what dwelt upon him. As the Psalmist says: “*Look away from me, that I may regain strength, before I go away and am no more*” (Psalm 39: 13).

As though he says to God: My best days are full of labor and misery; allow me to breathe and have rest from the continuous anguish. The hired hand looks forward with

¹ Homilies on Luke, homily. 2: 2.

² Homilies on Luke, homily. 14: 4.

³ Cf Homilies on Leviticus, homily 8: 3: 2.

hope toward the end of his day of work to have rest from labor. So, count my days like those of the hired hand; let there be labor in them, but let there also be periods of rest.

❖ ***“Look away (temporarily) from him that he may rest, till he, like a hired man, rejoices for the end of his day” (6).*** By *“Look away from him”* he means, take away the ferocity of the strike. But who can rest if God gets away from him; As God alone is the rest and comfort?! And the further man goes away from him, the further the rest goes.

The further away the hired man is from the end of his day’s work, the further away would be the wage for his labor. That is why every saint in this life, would grieve more when he sees that the day of his departure from this life is far away, would grieve that he is far from the eternal blessing.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease” (Job 14: 7).

‘Job’ looks at his life on earth, as one life which, if passes away, it would never come back; while a tree, if it is cut down, and its root is left in the soil, would sprout new shoots, as though it is planted anew. The humidity of the soil and the rain of heaven would work on the stump of the cut down tree, to live again; whereas man, once he is buried in his grave, would never come back to this world.

‘Job’ believes that life for trees is better than for man; as when a tree is cut down, a new one can sprout out of her stump! When Isaiah prophesied about the reform of the cities of Judah that were devastated, he gave the following analogy: *“As a terebinth tree or as an oak whose stump remains; when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump”* (Isaiah 6: 13). The house of Jesse – namely Israel – is cut down, as you cut down a great terebinth tree; Yet God, with His great mercy allows the stem of that oak tree to sprout anew and produce a new splendid shoot; the Savior Messiah, of the tribe of Judah: *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him ...”* (Isaiah 11: 1).

Pope Gregory the Great provides us with a prophetic interpretation, as he sees in these phrases a prophecy about the death and the resurrection of the Lord Christ.

❖ He could have died because of His sufferings; but, by the glory of His resurrection, he came back again to the green life. His sprouting shoots are His believers, who, by His resurrection, would multiply, spread, and grow. His stump may look as though it has grown old in the soil, as preaching Him for the non-believers among the Jews, has been something like an insult. ***“His stump dried up in the dust”***, as the hearts of His opponents were so held fast by their lack of faith, for Him to become as though “despised and cast away”; He could have died by the body; but, “by the scent of water, He sprouted again” by the power of God. And His body after His death rose from the dead *“whom God raised from the dead”* (Acts 3: 15) ... “and sprouted leaves like a new plant”. The weakness of the disciples; who, at the time of His death, their fear and denial made them ‘dry’; but, by the glory of His resurrection, they became alive again by faith. Compared to that tree, what would every man be but dust?!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If there is hope for a seen tree to live again after it is cut down, as long as its stem is intact, How much more would it be for a rational tree? As there is an ax for this tree, there is an ax as well for the rational tree (Luke 3: 9).

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

“Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground...” (Job 14: 8).

- ❖ What is the root of the righteous but the holy preaching, being his source to which he holds fast? And what is the earth or the dust but the sinner? To whom the Creator’s voice said: ***“You are dust, and to dust you will return”***? The root of the righteous may look as though grown old in the earth, and his stump as though has died in the ground’ ... As according to the words of the wisdom: ***“In the eyes of the foolish, they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster”*** (Wisdom 3: 2).

Whereas he, whose root has grown old in the earth, and whose stump died in the ground; By the scent of water will bud again, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, according to his conduct, and because of the shoot of virtue in the hearts of the chosen ones. Water sometimes refers to the irrigation by the Holy Spirit; as it is written: ***“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink; He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”*** (John 7: 37; 4: 14).

“And bring forth branches (leaves) like a (new) plant” (9); branches after the cut down tree; as the righteous may die by the body; yet, according to his passion, the hearts of many will set forth; and by his straightforward faith, the green truth will bud, ***“like a new plant”***. All what the righteous does here is ‘a second plant’, as the ‘first plant’ does not lie in the practice of goodness, but lies in the prior knowledge of the Creator. While all what the chosen ones do, look as though seen for the first time, it is rather settled down in them, then comes out. It is well said: ***“It brings forth branches (leaves) like a new plant” (9)***; namely, the green appears by the practical execution of what is actually there, according to the prior knowledge of the Creator.

St. Gregory the Great

“Yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a (new) plant” (Job 14: 9).

If water gives life to the root of a dead plant to bud anew, the Holy Spirit gives new life to the believer in the water of baptism; gives her the resurrection, the resurrection of the soul from her death, that the body would enjoy the resurrection, as well, in the day of the Lord; for the soul to partake of the eternal life with body.

In the water of baptism, the Holy Spirit brings us forth to burial and resurrection together with Christ; to come out baptism as members of the body of Christ, raised from the dead, that never gets old, but incessantly and perpetually grows, enjoying the new life. By that, our union with the Lord Christ is realized, to enjoy the sons hip to God, becoming through the only-begotten Son, sons together with Him by adoption; namely, not by nature, but through free grace.

That is what the apostle Paul meant by saying: ***“Not by work of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”*** (Titus 3: 5); and the apostle Peter, saying: ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus***

Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1: 3-4). This is also what the Lord Christ Himself meant in His talk to Nicodemus, saying: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven” (John 3: 5); which Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel could not understand, as he still did not realize that Jesus, with whom he was talking, embraces to Himself, those who believe in Him, in baptism by the Holy Spirit; to grant them His resurrected life, as the gift of the new spiritual birth.

- ❖ Was it possible for the rod of the righteous Moses to be transformed into a serpent, and not possible for the bodies of the pious to live and rise again?! Was it possible for the former to do it against nature; and not possible for the later to live again, according to nature?!

Aaron’s rod, although dead, sprouted without smelling the scent of water (see Job 14: 9); although being under a roof, yet it produced flowers and fruits, as though it was in the fields. Was it possible for Aaron’s rod to rise from the dead and not possible for Aaron himself to do as well?!

Was it possible for God to do miracles with the wood to guarantee priesthood for him, and would not do it for Aaron himself¹!?

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ *“At the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a (new) plant” (9); that by the washing of regeneration (Titus 3: 5), at the time of the resurrection from the dead. Having hope in the resurrection, through the grace of baptism, we gain a harvest as a new plant, being planted in the new Adam (1 Corinthians 15: 45), and would, no more, be connected to the old Adam. But in case we grow old through slothfulness; if death gets attached to us through sin; let us have the scent of water through weeping like David and Peter and others (2 Samuel 12: 21; Matthew 26: 75); as the scent of baptism is called by some² ‘the scent of compunction’.*

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Having seen the fall of human nature, the eternally indivisible and unutterable Holy Trinity; and having, at the same time, created water from non-existence, , he set for man the quick cure to be consummated in the water. That is why, the Holy Spirit, having been carried on the water, appeared as granting it sanctification ... and connecting it to the procedure of giving birth. It is thus befitting for us to combine the two facts together; and to know that, at the very moment Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down and settled on the waters of the River Jordan³.

St. Dedymus of Alexandria

- ❖ Behold those born from God; from that material womb; from the water of baptism.
- ❖ We have two births: one earthly and the other heavenly.
The first from the body, while the second from the Spirit.
The first originating after a mortal principle; whereas the second, after an eternal one.

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 18:12.*

² *St. Gregory Nazainzus: Oration 39: 17.*

³ *PG 39:692.*

The first by a man and a woman; whereas the second by God and the church.

The first makes us children of the body; whereas the second makes us children of the Spirit.

The first makes us children of death; whereas the second makes us children of the resurrection.

The first makes us the children of this age; whereas the second makes us the children of God.

The first makes us the children of curse and wrath; whereas the second makes us the children of blessing and love.

The first shackles us with the chains of the original sin; whereas the second loosens us from the bonds of all sins¹.

St. Augustine

“But man dies and is laid away; Indeed he breathes his last; and where is he?”
(Job 14: 10).

When man dies, his body rots and fades away, transforms into dust; while his Spirit sets forth, and would never return to the body in this world.

Although it may seem from certain words by ‘Job’ in this book, as though he does not believe in resurrection; Yet here, he calls death ‘lying down’, and the resurrection ‘awakening’ from sleep; which confirms his living belief in resurrection from the dead.

❖ ***“When man dies and is laid away; ... Ask: where is he?”*** (10). No one with no sin, except the One who came to the world with no sin; whereas all of us, bound to iniquity, die through losing righteousness.

In paradise, we were given a robe of innocence; then lost it and became naked; that nakedness of the prodigal son, that was covered by his father who said as he saw him coming back: *“Bring out the (first) robe and put it on him”* (Luke 15: 22) The (first) robe is the robe of innocence, that man truly received when he was created, then lost when he was deceived by the serpent.

About that nakedness it was said: *“Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walks naked and they see his shame”* (Revelation 16: 15). We keep our garments when we keep the commandments of innocence in our hearts; and once we lose it, we appear naked with iniquity before the Judge. With compunction we are covered, and we regain the innocence that we have lost.

It was well said: ***“Ask: where is he?”***; As the sinner would not stand there, where he was created ... By his own will he lost his home, and against it he is brought back from captivity in which he rejoices. Therefore, where is he, in whom there is no love of God; where is his true being?!

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Prophets have always grieved on our miserable condition, in which man finds no comfort in his life, and would lose everything through the sudden and inevitable death, from which, as they are told by the Holy Spirit, he will not rise for a long time, until He comes, who would not sew what is old on what is new, or binds a new material to an old one (Matthew 9: 16); but as He says: *“I will make all things new”* (Revelation 21: 5); because He is the resurrection (John 11: 25); *“the firstborn from the dead”*

¹ In Joan. hom 19.

(Colossians 1: 18; Revelation 21: 5); in whom we truly receive the privilege of the coming resurrection; But up till now, He is the only One perpetually resurrected¹.

St. Ambrose

“As water disappears from the sea or a riverbed becomes parched and dries up...” (Job 14: 11).

- ❖ Man’s mind is like the sea, and his thoughts are like waves of the sea. Sometimes, like the sea it is swept by anger, and sometimes, by grace, it calms down; and can go from hate to bitterness. But once man dies, ***“water disappears from the sea; and the riverbed becomes parched and dries up”***; the soul retreats, leaving the body empty, without life, like a parched and dried up riverbed!

Pope Gregory the Great

“So man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep” (Job 14: 12).

The word ***‘death’*** is taken away from the dictionary of the church that practices it no more. No one among her true members is dead, all are alive; she is the Lord’s secret living body; and as long as the Head is living, all members are living.

She is one living church; a body for one living Head; knows no dissension, but all, along the generations, bind in one unity that is beyond the limit of time.

We do not believe in two churches: one for the living, and one for the dead; but in one church, some of her members, having consummated their strife, departed to paradise, waiting for us, their fellow servants to consummate our strife and cross over to join them; for all to get the reward on the Day of Judgment.

We are one church, some of whose members have consummated their strife, and have overcome; some are still striving; and the rest are to come in the future generations. All are one living church; regardless of the physical encounter in this world.

By this faith concept, we do not look at those who departed as dead, but who slept to be eventually awakened! That is concerning their bodies; but their souls would never sleep. The souls of those departed would find rest after the strife, the labor, and the suffering, they went through, but they would never become separated from us; as our bond is not carnal; We love them, and they love us; we give them the beatitude for the sake of their strife; and they pray for us.

- ❖ ***“So man lies down, and does not rise, till the heavens are no more” (12)***; which probably means, till heaven becomes new; as it is written: ***“It will be new heaven and new earth”*** (Isaiah 65: 17 LXX); the old will either go away or will change.

Listen to the Psalmist saying: In the beginning, O Lord created the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. They shall perish, and you stay, all Ksoub wear, garment change them solved. We, as well, can weave the garment; as what is old will fade away, whereas what is new will be (taken by force); ***“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it”*** (Matthew 11: 12).

The Jewish Synagogue passed away by few, whereas the church is laid hold by thousands. The meaning would probably also be that heaven now may seem fading away, mingling with clouds, mist and night darkness, that will be followed by the rising of a

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 7:25.*

golden red-colored day; as according to St. John: “*There will be no night there; They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light*” (Revelation 22: 5)¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ “*Man, who lies down (in death) does not arise himself; As long as heaven is still there, his members do not come back together, and he will not wake up from his sleep*”.

By calling death (lie down), ‘Job’ provides us an obvious hope for resurrection. Yet he says that we shall not wake ourselves up, as long as the seen heaven is still there, and did not pass away. This is a testimony that “*the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken*” (Matthew 24: 29); “*And the Son of Man will send His angels with a great sound of trumpet*” (Matthew 24: 30-31; 1 Corinthians 15: 25; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16); to wake us up from death, as though from sleep. Those words were said by the Lord, as He was telling them about His second coming, when the sign of His cross will appear in heaven.

Concerning us, I wish we would carefully listen to the words: “come back together”. He proclaims how, when the heavens pass away (Matthew 24: 34), we shall have our resurrection; our members, now separate and scattered on earth, and returned to the dust, will, by the breath of God, “come back together” and go back to life (Ezekiel 37: 10). The Creator will not give us another body, but it will be on all aspects, our actual bodies; though not of the same nature, but will rise in non-corruption and non-mortality; as according to the words of the apostle Paul: “*This corruptible must put on in corruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*” (1 Corinthians 15: 53).

Thinking about this, and contemplating in the glory of the future and of the eternal life, as well as about the lowly present life, “job’ holding fast to the idea of transformation from this life, soon to fade away; and to hope in the coming life, we hear him say: “I wish somebody keeps me away from hell!”

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ “*So man lies down, and does not rise*”. That is very difficult to imagine! Why should we labor and strife, if we do not get the reward of resurrection?!

How is it said: “*does not rise*”, when it is written that “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*” (1 Corinthians 15: 51) ”; and also: “*If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*” (1 Corinthians 15: 19); and the Truth Himself says: “*The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation*” (John 5: 28, 29). But the last phrase, saying: “*... they do not rise, till the heavens are no more, they will not awake, nor be roused from their sleep*”, indicates that, unless the world comes to an end, mankind would not wake up to life from the sleep of death.

Moreover, let us notice, that, after previously calling man dead, **he refers to him now as not dead, but falling asleep**; and that he would not wake up again from his sleep, until the heavens disintegrate; These phrases only mean that, drawing an analogy to the tree that sprouts again to life, a sinner is referred to as dead; namely devoid of a righteous life. But when he speaks about the death of the body, he prefers calling it here, falling

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, Book 1, 7:24.*

asleep, rather than calling it death. **This actually gives us hope in resurrection**; as man wakes up from sleep, from the death of the body, in just a moment, through a mere nod from his Creator.

Because, while the word **‘death’** terrifies those with weak minds, and that of **‘falling asleep’** does not, Paul instructs his disciples, saying: *“I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen **asleep**, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”* (1 Thessalonian 4: 13-14).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Oh that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!” (Job 14: 13).

‘Job’ longs to the grave, as a place where he would hide temporarily from the wrath of God; which has a different goal from when he sought death and grave (Job 7: 9-10; 18-21). He refers what is dwelling upon him to God’s wrath; knowing that the righteous is always blessed, and tribulation would never dwell upon him like the wicked.

Amid his bitter suffering, he longs for death; knowing that, although this entails his going down to the pit, yet it would be temporarily, anticipating the work of the divine salvation, when wrath goes away, and he would enjoy the glorious resurrection.

If ‘Job’ moans, looking at human life as weaker than that of a tree; Yet, amid his sufferings, he longs to die, believing that death is to be hidden in the grave, whose keys are in God’s hands, to open and let His children in, then to bring them out on His great day.

Looking at the bodies of believers in the grave, he sees certain indications of wrath; until the body rise and enjoy glory; Bodies when all traces of wrath completely come to an end; and the authority of death is rooted out.

Bodies are brought into the graves, up to the appointment of the time to heed to the new eternal life; the same way ‘Noah’ and his family entered into the ark, and were shut in by God, not only to keep them from perdition, but also to bring them over to the new world. It is as though the days in the grave are better than the present ones.

St. Ambrose believes that in this phrase (Job 14: 13-17), there is an indication that God spoke to ‘Job’, who knew by the Holy Spirit, that the Son of God, will not only come to earth, but will descend to the pit to raise the dead; and that what actually took place in His days, were a testimony to the present things, and a model for the future ones¹.

❖ What a magnificent phrase that strengthens us concerning the resurrection!

How this phrase seems in harmony with the words said by the Lord in the gospel: ***“Then they will begin to say to the mountains: ‘Fall on us’, and to the hills, ‘Cover us”*** (Luke 23: 30); as the wrath of God will come at the end of the world. That is why the righteous ‘Job’ prefers to rise on the day of judgment, rather than in the time of God’s wrath, which would be terrifying, even for the righteous.

“You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!” (Job 14: 13). From this we understand that ‘Job’, as it came in, prophesies that he would be among those whom the Lord will raise at the time of His passion, as is obvious from what came at the end of

¹ cf. *The Prayer of Job and David*, 1:; 8: 26.

the book (Job 42: 17 LXX); and according to the Septuagint version. Yet he does not stop wailing; and the more he realizes that resurrection is waiting for him, the more he longs to escape from this life, in which he is delivered in the hands of his adversaries, and falls under the authority of the wicked¹.

St. Ambrose

Before the coming of the Intercessor between God and men, every person, even though his life is pure and justified, has undoubtedly went down to the prison of Hades. Man, who fell by his own work, became unable by his work to return to the comfort of paradise; as it is stated that, following the sin of the first Adam, a flaming sword, flashing back and forth was placed at the entrance of paradise.

❖ ***“That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past” (13)***; The wrath of the Almighty produces power every day, by which those who lead an unbecoming life, are swallowed through appropriate punishments.

We should know that the term “wrath” or “anger” is unbecoming to the divine Being, whose nature is devoid of worry; as it is said to Him: *“Although You are sovereign in strength, You judge with mildness, and with great forbearance You govern us”* (Wisdom 12: 18). But as the souls of the righteous were to be, one day, liberated from Hades, by the coming of the Intercessor; the righteous ‘Job’, prophesying that future coming of our Savior to Hades, pleads to God, saying: ***“Appoint me a set time and remember me” (13)***; Yet he adds: ***“If a man dies, shall he live again?” (14)***.

Amid His passion, our Lord uttered with the voice of the weak, saying: *“O My Father, If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”* (Matthew 26: 39). To chase away the fear of men, He took their fear over Himself!

But He demonstrated power by obedience, adding: *“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”*. This teaches us that in our weakness, we should pray to be spared of what we fear; yet, to confirm that we are ready to submit to the will of our Creator, even though it may be against our will.

According to this example, it is sometimes befitting for the strong among us, to adopt words of weakness, so that by their strong preaching, they would make the hearts of the weak even stronger. The blessed ‘Job’, when he uttered words that might show some doubt, saying: ***“If a man dies, shall he live again?”***, he promptly added other words that confirm his strong faith, saying: ***“All the days of my hard service, I will wait, till my change comes” (Job 14: 14)***.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ In a message from St. John Chrysostom to a young widow of a Governor, he wrote saying: **This death is not death, but it is a kind of immigration and change from a bad to a better situation; from the earth to heaven; from being among men to being among angels and archangels; and even to be with God, the Lord of the angels and archangels.**

As much as you grieve, on account that God took away a man who was good and respectful, you should rejoice that he departed to some place more dignified and secure; **and that he got away from the serious afflictions of the present life, to one of perfect tranquility.**

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David 1: 8: 26- 27.*

If we are so sure that heaven is much better than earth, how can we mourn those who departed from this world to the other one?!

If your husband was leading a disgraceful life that does not please God, you would have reason to mourn and weep; not only after his departure, but even while he was still living here! But having been a friend of God, we should rejoice for his life, as well as for his departure!

In this concern, you should recall the words of the blessed St. Paul, saying: “*I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*” (Philippians 1: 23)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service, I will wait, till my change comes” (Job 14: 14).

God takes no pleasure in the death of man, but in that he returns to him and live. That is what makes ‘Job’ endure the burden of his strife, until his present days are changed into the new eternal life.

Job’s friends, miserable comforters as they were (Job 16: 1), tried to convince him that, in order to return to what he was, he should confess his hidden hypocrisy and wickedness, and present a true repentance to God! ‘Job’, on the other hand, found comfort in counting himself as dead, and would not return anew to life on this earth. Although he asks: “*If a man dies, shall he live again?*”, Yet, not led to slothfulness nor despair, he adds: “*All my days of my hard service, I will wait, till my change comes*”.

What kind of change is ‘Job’ waiting for? It is what the apostle Paul meant by saying: “*who will transform our lowly body*” (Philippians 3: 21). This is the change: Instead of the very dry bones scattered all over the valley, his life would be transformed into an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37: 10). The soul with all its energies, and the body with all its possibilities, partaking of the glory of the Lord Christ, would turn into a great and glorified army for the Lord; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*My flesh also will rest in hope*” (Psalm 16: 9). That is the joyful change, when the corruptible would be clothed with the incorruptible, and the mortal with immortality.

To Job’s question: “*If a man dies, shall he live again?*”, came the positive answer from Jesus, the Lord of glory, and what came in the books of the New Testament (John 11: 23-26; 1 Corinthians 15: 3).

❖ “*If a man surely dies, shall he live again, having already completed the days of his life? ... I anticipate existing again!*” In this ‘Job’ calls resurrection (a new existence). He earned commendation, not on account of his words, but of his actual works and intentions, while overwhelmed by sickness and sores. While being utterly naked, and laying on a heap of trash, he had more splendor than anyone clothed in gold, and lying on a bed covered with gold and precious stones. God was personally speaking to him, angels were surrounding him, and all creation was proclaiming the glory of the wrestler, who conquered his opponents without lifting a finger!

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

❖ “*For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all*” (Romans 6: 10). He died by flesh, to put an end to sin; while holding on His unfading life as God².

¹ Letter to a Young Widow, 3.

² تفسير رومية 10:6 (ترجمة مار سويريوس اسحق سكا، 1997).

Son of Salibi

- ❖ Being the Philanthropic One, He welcomed death, without which the world would have perished in sins¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ He was buried alone, Yet He raised all; He descended alone, to lift us all; He carried the sins of the whole world alone, to purify all in His person; As according to the apostle: *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”* (James 4: 8). Christ, who needed no purification, was purified for our sake.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Be crucified and dead together with Christ, to be raised, glorified, and reign together with Him.

St. Gregory, the Theologian

“You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands” (Job 14: 15).

God in His Justice rejects transgression, and does stand iniquity; Yet, ordaining for salvation, He longs for man, the work of His hands.

Amid his anguish, ‘Job’ cries out to God, as though He does not hear him. But when it is the time for resurrection, God will call on ‘Job’, and he will answer Him. He will encounter God, who desires the work of His hands; as ‘Job’ bears the reflection of the glory of God.

- ❖ ***“You shall call, and I will answer You”*** ... As long as we submit to corruption, we cannot answer God; as the corruptible is far from incorruptible. But, concerning the ‘change’ spoken of by ‘Job’, it is written: *“When He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3: 2). Then, we shall answer God who calls, when we rise in non-corruption. But, because the creature cannot be qualified for this on his own, but this is to be only realized by the gift of God the Almighty; namely to change into the exalted glory of non-corruption; he added: ***“You will (stretch Your right hand) to the work of Your hands”***. As though he clearly says: [That is why, Your corruptible creature could be held in non-corruption, raised by Your authority, and kept by the grace of Your care. The human creature, although has inherited in himself the possibility to collapse to a level lower, but he gains by the right hand of his Creator, that of being raised to a higher one.

Who can appreciate the generosity of the divine mercy, to bring man, after his sin, to such a high level?! Although God takes in consideration the evil things we do, Yet with His mercy and compassion He forgives it; So ‘Job’ adds: ***“For now You number my steps; But do not watch over my sin” (16).***

Pope Gregory the Great

3- GETTING PREPARED FOR DEATH:

“For now You number my steps, But do not watch over my sin” (Job 14: 16).

The wise Solomon says: *“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and examines all his paths”* (Proverbs 5: 21).

¹ Cat. Lect. 13.

❖ **“You number my steps; not a single one will escape Your eyes” (16).** He says: I want to be saved, not for being the work of Your hands, not of being righteous in any way; nor do I seek justice from You, or ask You to forget my iniquities; as it is not possible for any transgression to escape Your eyes.

St. John Chrysostom

“My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You cover over my iniquity” (Job 14: 17).

The Lord says: *“Have I not kept them in reserve and sealed this in my vaults?”* (Deuteronomy 32: 34).

This is concerning the anticipated Day of Judgment. But now, so it seems to ‘Job’ that God numbers his steps and keeps his transgressions sealed in a bag; the way the documents of prosecution against a suspect are kept. ‘Job’ feels as though God is watching over every one of his behavior, and register every single sin he commits.

❖ **“It is as though You seal all my transgressions in a bag; but You cover up my iniquities” (17).** As everything we do, if we do not cleanse it with regret, would be kept in the secrecy of God’s judgments, until the day comes for them to be moved from the bag of secrecy to the publicity of condemnation. The Lord said to the prophet Moses: *“Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults? It is Mine to avenge; I will repay”* (Deuteronomy 32: 34). But, if we are crushed here by the strike of chastisement for the evil things we do, then grieve on them in regret, “He will cover”... and “heal” our iniquities; so that He would not leave anything without punishment, to be kept for punishment on the day of judgment.

That was how He acted with ‘Saul of Tarsus’ who persecuted Him, when He cast him down to the ground; namely, “covered’ and ‘healed’ him; and said to Ananias about him: *“He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel”* Acts 9: 15).

Pope Gregory the Great

“But as a mountain falls and crumbles away, And as a rock is moved from its place ...” (Job 14: 18).

If the three friends blamed ‘Job’, because, instead of repenting and returning to God, according to them, he accused God of injustice; ‘Job’, on the other hand, makes it clear, that if he is showing weakness and seems to be losing his hope; it is because of the burden of his strike; he is like a mountain that crumbles, like a rock that moves from its place under pressure, and like stones worn away by the persistent drops of rain, and washed away by torrents. He likens himself here to a mountain, a rock, and stones; Yet the temptation is extremely violent!

“As water wears away stones, and as torrents wash away the soil of the earth ...” (Job 14: 19).

Amid his sufferings, ‘Job’ struggles between his inability to endure pain, and his hope for enjoying the eternal reward. Although he reveals his hope for changing even his body, yet he fears that his hope would be shaken during the long duration of affliction. Watching some mountains crumble with time, some rocks move from their place, and stones worn away under persistent drops of rain, and washed away by torrents like the soil of the earth, he cries out with fear that his perseverance would not endure!

❖ **There are two kinds of temptations** that man may face:

A kind that all of a sudden and unexpectedly crosses over man's mind, to strike him with vertigo, and knocks him down to the ground.

And another kind that proceeds in his mind a bit by bit; and by seemingly good suggestions, and through consistent nagging, it would corrupt the resistance of the soul, and its power of righteousness.

With the sudden impact of the first kind of temptation, it may cast the righteous man down to the ground, ***“a mountains may fall and crumble away, and a rock may move from its place” (18)***; namely, that the mind, the center of righteousness, would suddenly be moved to sin.

On another aspect, concerning the other kind of temptation that pours itself quietly in the heart of man, to exhaust and corrupt his solid abidance, it is said: ***“Water wears away stones”***. This way, the consistent smooth flirtation of lust would absorb the abidance of the soul; and the slow creeping of bad habits, would break down the resistance of the strong and standing fast minds. **The way the soil of the earth are slowly worn away**, so are the evil habits would quietly **and persistently swallow even the strong mind of man**.

Let us remember how David, that high mountain of a man, who could, with the spirit of prophecy, contemplate in the great secrets of God, collapsed under a sudden fall; when he coveted another man's wife, and killed her man on the expense of his army! The mind that used to dwell among the heavenly secrets was knocked down by a sudden strike of temptation, and descended into such a horrible deep pit of evil.

Let us likewise see how ***“water wears away stones, and torrents wash away the soil of the earth”***, slowly and consistently, in the case of the wise Solomon, who, through his feminine relationships, went down to the extent of building temples for the idols; he, who has previously built the great temple of the Lord!

The righteous 'Job' puts before his eyes, both kinds of temptations, while contemplating in the falls of his fellows in creation; namely the mountains, the rocks, the stones, and the soil of the earth! As from understanding what happens to them, he could find a key to his own meditations.

Pope Gregory the Great

“You prevail forever against him, and he passes on; You change his countenance and send him away” (Job 14: 20).

'Job', without any hope, seeks the divine involvement before the dwelling of the hour of his death. At the moments of death, man's countenance undergo so much change, because of sickness and frailty that makes him lose his past beauty and splendor, that his own family members consider his burial far better for him; which made Abraham say: ***“Sell me some property for a burial site here, so I can bury my dead”*** (Genesis 23: 4).

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem says that is reason why David says: ***“Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck”*** (Psalm 69: 1). For as our parents Adam and Eve fell into the sin of disobedience, they were driven out of paradise, and a verdict was issued against them, saying: ***“You are dust, and to dust you will return”***; and the ground started to produce for them thorns and thistles; What hope remained for Adam after such a curse?! That is why 'Job' goes on to say: ***“You have forever rejected him, and sent him away”***.

“His sons come to honor, and he does not know it. They are brought low, and he does not perceive it” (Job 14: 21).

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem believes that, ‘Job’ looks at Adam, his father, cross over to Hades, not any more aware of what happened to his children; namely, to humanity, that is his seed; *“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”* (Matthew 16: 26).

❖ If the Lord’s mission in the body has not taken place, the Savior would not have been impelled to death as a price; and would not have destroyed the authority of death by His power. If the body that submitted to death was different from the body that was taken over by the Lord, the works of death would not be brought to naught; the passions of the incarnate God would be without benefit; and we, who had died in Adam, would not be able to live in Christ¹.

St. Basil the Great

❖ We know Him as the firstborn of those who have reposed; the firstborn of the dead. With no argument, He is of the same features and nature of the rest of the fruits ... That is why, as the firstborn of death was in Adam, the Firstborn of resurrection is in Christ².

St. Ambrose

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, this is the situation of those souls who did not enjoy salvation; Whereas those souls of the righteous; namely the holy souls, seeing the splendor of the Almighty God within them, would never imagine, not for a single moment, that there is anything they do not know of. The carnal people, who concentrate all their care on their children (namely, on temporal things), they, as proclaimed by ‘Job’, would not be aware, any more, of the issues they care for with their whole heart: ***“whether their children are honored or brought low, they do not perceive!”***.

“But his flesh will be in pain over it, and his soul will mourn over it” (Job 14: 22).

Despite his amazing longing for death, to escape from his vicious anguish, he fears the horrible hour of death just the same; It is as though his soul seems to mourn the body it would leave back!

❖ ***“His soul will mourn over it”***. Everyone intending to rejoice for his own soul, will eventually, for the same reason, be in woe, being away from the true source of joy; as the true joy for the soul is the Creator. It is thus more befitting for man to stay in eternal grief within himself, for forsaking his Creator, and searching for joy in his own soul.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹Letters, 261, to the Citizens of Sozopolis.

²On His Brother Satyrus, 2:91.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 14
BY YOU ALONE, I CAN CHALLENGE DEATH

- ❖ Amid the successive afflictions that surround me,
In weakness, I cry out to You:
I, who is born of a woman, is all weak.
My life is full of trouble.
How can I endure all these temptations?
My life is like the grass of the field; the sun of temptations has almost burned me.
My life, like a shadow, flees away; but where can I go?
My days, You have determined; You have appointed the number of my days, which I cannot pass!
Grant me rest at the last moments of my life.
- ❖ In my weakness, my eyes are too weak to see the resurrection.
I envy the trees that, if cut down, their roots can bud again.
When I see my life passing with no return!
I think that the trees practice life better than me.
In my foolishness, I covet the water that makes the stump of a tree sprout again!
And do not recognize the living water, Your amazing Holy Spirit,
Who sets out of me, a son of God, to enjoy an eternal life.
I get excited to see a tree planted on the bank of running river;
That if cut down, their roots would produce a new stump;
And would not realize that You have planted me on the streams of the Holy Spirit.
Where, even if the devil with all his hosts and plots, are set against me,
They would not be able to destroy my glorified eternity.
- ❖ Aaron's rod would not need all the water of the world, to make it sprout and produce flowers!
Grant me, not to thirst for the water of this world.
But to seek the water of the Spirit, the Grantor of righteousness and holiness.
- ❖ Seeing a river that became perched and dried up;
I assume that I will lie down, never to rise again.
But I know now that I shall not rise, till the heavens are no more.
When Your word will wake me up.
I know that I was temporarily hiding, to have some rest from temptations.
Then there You come, my Intercessor, and my change;
You call me to resurrection, and I will be roused from my sleep.
You call me to the eternal life, and corruption would flee from me.
I would then realize Your longing for the work of Your hands.
And I would enjoy Your eternal love amid Your exalted glories.
The steady mountain may crumble away;
The rock may be moved of its place;
And the stones may be worn away by the consistent drops of rain;
But Your grace would always lift me up from corruption to non-corruption.

CHAPTER 15

START OF THE SECOND ROUND OF TEMPTATIONS

A SERIOUS TALK

The first round that came to an end could be summarized as follows:

- ❖ Eliphaz: God is pure ‘Job’: Yet He is tormenting me.
- ❖ Bildad: God ordains things well ‘Job’: Yet He does not allow me to stand before Him.
- ❖ Zophar: God is the whole Wisdom ‘Job’; but I wish to appeal my case to Him.

‘Job’ assumed that he has put his three friends in their right place; If he has not convinced them, he managed to mute them. Yet we find here a second round in which each of them confirms his accusations, violently charging Job’s position. Here, Eliphaz the Temanite starts his second talk with a vicious attack, saying:

[You pretend to be a wise man; and yet your talk proves otherwise; Your way of thinking completely destroys your fear of God; And your lack of reverence to God testifies against you (1-6). Do you have the wisdom of Adam, who was directly created by God; and who, with some exception, could be knowledgeable; or are you like the angels who were created before the world? (7). You consented that man is not completely pure (14: 4). And yet, you assume that the Holy God, before whom the angels and the heavens are belittled, should put Himself in your hands, to hear your criticism of His ordinances! Your sins are indeed like food and drink (12-16)].

The wise (and also ‘Job’) have inherited a tradition, that the wicked would fall under temptations; would be cut off in the climax of his glory (as was the case with ‘Job’); and would lose every hope (as is also the case with ‘Job’).

Eliphaz ridicules ‘Job’ who counts himself as a man with wisdom (7-11); As, is he the first man who was born?! Why does he consider his friends as not worthy of respect (11)? He rebukes ‘Job’ for opposing God, and for accusing God of violence, and challenging Him to give him a just trial (12-16). Then he ends his talk by quoting strong allegoric words, that, according to the laws of nature, a tribulation is a proof of a prior sin. And, according to him, as the wicked must be miserable; and subsequently, the miserable must be wicked, ‘Job’ has to be wicked, and not very wise, as he thinks of himself. He accuses him of being foolish, ridiculous, and not pious!

Although Eliphaz’ rebukes might look reasonable, Yet, they do not apply in the case of ‘Job’.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1- Accusing ‘Job’ of self-righteousness. | [1-13]. |
| 2- A need for abasing oneself before God. | [14-16]. |
| 3- Judgment of the wicked. | [17-35]. |

1- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS:

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: ‘Should the wise answer with empty knowledge, and fill their bellies with the hot east wind? Should they argue with unprofitable talk, or in words with which they can do no good?’” (Job 15: 1-3).

Eliphaz starts the second round by accusing ‘Job’ that he was deceitful; that he gained a great reputation as a man of wisdom, although he had no true wisdom; that his knowledge was false, vain and shallow, and that he fills the air with words of no value, if not destructive!

Here he means by ‘belly’, the inner depths, hearts, and minds; as, according to the book of proverbs: “*The words of a tale-teller is like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body*” (Proverbs 18: 8)

He accuses him, of pretending to be wise, while his depths are full of hot east wind; a kind of wind well known among the inhabitants of the eastern parts of the Mediterranean: stormy, dry, and hot; destructive to fields (Isaiah 27: 8); like the one called ‘Euroclydon’ by the Greeks (Acts 27: 14).

It is befitting for someone, thought to be wise, to be more aware, lest he believes the commendation of men. He should be silent more often, to enjoy the wisdom of God’s Spirit dwelling in him; and not that of the world, or its vain wind; and in particular, the violent and useless east wind!

Such was the way Job’s friends thought of that righteous man; which was not something strange; as the heretics have kept accusing the church of Christ of carrying useless teachings like a destructive east wind!

- ❖ We often said that the righteous ‘Job’ bears a symbol of the holy catholic church; and that his friends bear the likeness of the heretics, who pretend to defend the Lord, find chances to say foolish things, utter vile words against the good people; and everything the believers think offend them, and counted as words in the wind!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ He, who cries out to God with the voice of true humility and genuine faith, is a lamb; whereas he, who utters blasphemies against the truth, and bears animosity against God, is a wolf!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ They corrupt the teachings of God, and proclaim themselves as wicked interpreters of the good word of preaching; disrupt the faith of many, through taking them away from faith, under the pretence of knowledge ..., deceiving and destroying the simple souls by attractive and vain words¹.

St. Erinaeos

It is befitting for us to benefit from the accusations of Eliphaz against the righteous ‘Job’; which are, although baseless, yet they often apply to us.

Let us cry out to our God to bestow on us the light of divine knowledge, to shine in our depths with the heavenly light, to let our conduct become a living testimony to our words, and our thoughts to be in harmony with our words and behavior.

When the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, blows on us, the dry and the field destructive wind of the wicked enemy, would not be able to approach us. The Spirit of God would turn our wilderness into a joyful paradise; and there would be nothing in us for the enemy to destroy.

“Yes, you are doing away with the fear of God, and hindering piety before God” (Job 15: 4).

¹ *Adv. Haer. 1: 1.*

Some Jewish scholars believe that Eliphaz here means: [If God has created the ungodly; He has brought the law, by which man can submit the ungodly²].

After charging 'Job' as someone who pretended to be wise, when his depths are filled with wind, destructive to souls -- the fields of God, Eliphaz is now charging him, as being a religious man whose worship of God, according to him and to his other two friends, is a vain worship, on account of that it is devoid of piety and fear of God. This is indeed a horrible charge that makes his worship unacceptable to God. If the head of wisdom is the fear of God, he, who has no fear of God, is ignorant and foolish; and his worship would be unacceptable, whatever attractive formalities it may bear.

- ❖ The fear of God exhorts the soul to keep His commandments, through which the soul's mansion is established.
- ❖ Therefore, I wish we all fear God, and establish mansions for ourselves, for without a mansion, we would face serious problems in the time of winter, the season of rain and cold wind!

Father Dorotheos

- ❖ In case someone wishes for God's love, **let His fear be in his heart; as fear brings forth crying, which in turn will bring forth strength.** If all that are consummated in the soul, it would start to bring forth fruition in every thing. And when God sees these fruits in the soul, He will smell their nice fragrance like sweet incense, and He and His angels will rejoice, and keep it in all its paths until it safely reaches its ultimate place of rest.

When the devil sees how the Almighty Guard watching over the soul, he will be afraid to approach it or attack it because of this great power!

Therefore, acquire this power to terrify the demons before you, to have all your affairs easy going, and rejoice in the divine work; because God's love is sweeter than honey.

Many monks and holy virgins did not experience that divine sweetness, nor acquire that divine power, on the vain assumption that they have already got them, despite their lack of strife. He, who strives, will certainly get them through the divine mercies; because God does not look at the outer appearance, but looks at the heart.

Whoever intends to acquire God's light and power, is committed to despise the vain dignities and uncleanness of this world, to hate the lusts of the body, to purify his heart of all the vile thoughts, and to present to God persistent fasts and tears, day and night, as pure fervent prayers.

Be keen on acquiring that power, to have a great daring before God, who would grant you everything you ask for³.

St. Anthony the Great

The fear of God is the steering wheel granted by the Holy Spirit to our souls, who alone can bring us over from glory to glory, and grant us grace over grace, through our fellowship with the God of Glory, Jesus Christ. The fear of God would bring us into the royal path, keep us from diverting toward sin, or self-righteousness, keep us from the every strike, until we reach the bosom of the holy heavenly Father.

² *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, P. 194.

³ *Epistle 6.*

“For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you adopt the tongue of the crafty”
(Job 15: 5).

According to Eliphaz, Job’s defense of himself is an unjustifiable iniquity.

- ❖ He proclaims that ‘Job’ is a ‘sinner by words’ because of his insolence before God. Yet, it is not for the sake of the truth that Eliphaz is forging accusations against him, nor he is speaking with such zeal for God’s sake; but for his own sake and for that of his friends, having seen themselves so publicly rebuked.

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

- ❖ ***“For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you adopt the tongue of the crafty” (5)***
... It is as though he is saying to him: [The wickedness you utter, you have most probably learned from your evil life].

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great believes that what Eliphaz uttered against ‘Job’, refers to what the heretics are uttering against the holy church. The way Eliphaz accuses ‘Job’ that he insults God, have no fear of him, his conduct is ungodly, and that his words reflect the evil his life bears, is the same way, the heretics, who deny that the Lord Christ has taken a true body, and that he truly died, attack the holy church, counting her belief that the Word became a true body, and that He truly died in body, an insult to God!

“Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; Yes your own lips testify against you” (Job 15: 6).

It is as though Eliphaz is saying to him: [I do not judge you on your conducts before the temptations, as much as on what your mouth and lips utters after the temptations have dwelt on you, who testify to your iniquity, and condemn you.

His three friends have aroused his anger, and then counted his frustration as testifying against him.

“Are you the first man who was born? Or were you made before the hills?”
(Job 15: 7).

It is as though he rebukes him, saying: “Are you the first man to be born”, and subsequently more capable than anyone else to comprehend God’s ordinances?

Have you lived during the days of creation, and stored within yourself the wisdom of the past; to speak in such confidence, haughtiness, and self-esteem?!

Have you been created before Adam? Although Adam sinned, he did not suffer like you do! And yet, you are not ready to confess your iniquities!

“Were you made before the hills?” If wisdom itself is like great mountains (Proverbs 8: 23; Psalm 36: 6), Do you consider yourself greater than wisdom itself? Wouldn’t you rather bow your head before it, to learn from it, instead of being haughty by your self wisdom?!

The wisdom says: ***“Before the mountains were settled; before the hills, I was brought forth”*** (Proverbs 8: 25). It is as though Eliphaz in ridicule is asking ‘Job’: [Are you the wisdom itself that was made before the hills, then became a person?!]

- ❖ ‘Job’ has not uttered a single word to claim glory for himself; he did not say that he was born before all mankind ... But in one sentence he talked about what happened to humanity since the beginning (13: 26); putting himself in the place of all. But Eliphaz

intended to accuse him of embracing high thoughts pertaining to God! Listen to him adding: **“Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?” (8).**

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

“Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?” (Job 15: 8).

He saw God, in His love for mankind, setting a kind of heavenly meeting together with His beloved godly subjects; according to the words of the Song:

“While the king was at his table, my nard gave forth its fragrance” (Songs 1: 12).

“Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, and has perceived and heard His word?” (Jeremiah 23: 18).

“But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they would had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings” (Jeremiah 23: 22).

“God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods” (Psalms 82: 1).

“The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him; and He will show them His covenant” (Psalms 25: 14).

Mockingly, he says to him: Do you think of yourself as the deputy of God in His counsel?

Or as the keeper of the secrets of heaven? Or that you are more capable than anyone else to know the dealings of God? Or that you are unique on the earth in your knowledge of what is going on in heaven; and of what the God of heaven is planning? Do you think you know God, and we do not?

“Do you limit wisdom to yourself?” Is there no wise man beside yourself? Are you the only one with wisdom?!

❖ It is as though he says to him in clear words: [You, who talks about the Eternal God, Remember that you are just a creature! You, who reason with matters concerning wisdom, remember that you do not know God’s counsel!].

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Spiritually, and not physically, it is impossible to deny the presence of God, as is fitting to His nature. He is present with creatures in an amazing way, not apprehended except by a few ... It is truly said that God stands in the congregation of men in an unseen way, as is confirmed by Him on the tongue of the righteous ‘Job’ (Job 23: 24)⁴.

St. Augustine

If Eliphaz is mockingly saying that the righteous ‘Job’ has a unique wisdom that qualifies him to sit in the counsel of God; Even though ‘Job’ did not claim that, Yet our Christ truly wishes us to enjoy the honor of the divine presence. No marvel that he said to His disciple that they will judge the tribes of Israel; And the apostle Paul says that we will judge angels; namely, we, by our enjoyment of the exalted grace of God, will testify against the devil and his angels.

“What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not in us?” (Job 15: 9).

⁴ On Ps. 82:1.

Responding to him saying to them: “*What you know, I also know*” (13: 3); they say: “***What do you know that we do not know?***” Although what Eliphaz says may seem logic, saying what ‘Job’ has said; Yet there is much difference between their ways of thinking: ‘Job’ was defending himself against their several accusations. When they counted him as someone foolish and with no knowledge, he confirmed to them that there is nothing new in what they say, known by everyone by nature.

As to Eliphaz, what he said was also in self-defense; Yet, at the same time he made it a point to ridicule ‘Job’ and belittle his knowledge and wisdom.

“Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, much older than your father” (Job 15: 10).

Assuming that he feels haughty on account of his advanced age and his experience, they tell him that among them are those who are older than him and his father; and we are all on one accord in what we are telling you. One of the friends might probably be older than ‘Job’.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the heretics, who revolted against the church, that represent the wise elder, when they are with no true heavenly wisdom, claim themselves to be the church with both the experience and the wisdom; as though the church is the one without.

❖ St. John testifies that all the heretics have come out of the holy catholic church, saying: “*They went out from us, but they were not of us*” (1 John 2: 19)

Pope Gregory the Great

“Are the consolations of God too small for you and the word spoken gently with you?” (Job 15: 11).

Eliphaz counted the rejection of ‘Job’ of their counsel, is nothing but a rejection of the consolations of God Himself; and what they uttered, with all that cruel and bitter rebuke, as compassion, for he actually deserved more of it.

“The word spoken gently with you” is interpreted by some as (**Do you have any thing secret?**); namely, Do you have some secret sin that keep you from enjoying the consolations of God? As the consolations of God are not enjoyed by those who conceal their lusts inside their hearts.

“Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash?” (Job 15: 12).

Why does your heart carry you away to oppose itself and to oppose us, who intend to reveal to you the secrets of the dealings of God? Why do your eyes flash?; as though ridicule our counsel, and do not care for what we are telling you? Yes, It is indeed befitting for the believer to clothe himself with humility; because the haughty heart is its own enemy, whereas the humble would benefit from many; would hear God talking to him through his counselors, would see Him transfiguring in the church, and would always bow with his depths to learn in the Lord.

❖ Having been ignorant, I ridiculed Your saintly ministers; and did not profit from all that, except Your contempt.

St. Augustine

❖ Who receives from him (the Bishop), receives from Christ; and who rejects him, rejects Christ.

So He said: *“He who hears you hears me, he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me”* (Luke 10: 16).

The apostolic laws

- ❖ We should accept anyone sent by the Head of the household (God), to be the head of the household, as long as it was we who asked Him to send him. It is therefore obvious that we should look at the Bishop as though to the Lord Himself.
- ❖ It is befitting for you to obey your Bishop without hypocrisy, for by this we honor God who asks us to do so. He, who does not do so, is not deceiving the seen Bishop, but he actually ridicule the unseen God, who knows all secrets.

St. Agnatius the Theophorus

“That you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth” (Job 15: 13).

“That you turn your spirit against God”; namely, to turn your frustration against God; counting his frustration toward them as toward God Himself; and counting his desire of death as an opposition against His ordinances; by which he entered into an animosity against God, and joined the forces of the devil who is perpetually rebelling against God.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Job’s friends have condemned him as an opponent of God, quoting certain words he uttered, without taking into consideration what goes on in his heart.

What the apostle Peter said about the Lord Christ: *“You are the Christ the Son of the Living God”* (Matthew 16: 16), are the same words uttered by the devil and his hosts in many occasions, saying: *“We know who You are – the Holy One of God”* (Mark 1: 24). Yet, the Lord Christ blessed the first, and rebuked and chased the others away.

It was befitting of Job’s friends to ask him to clarify and interpret what he said; and not to understand his words according to the desire of their envious hearts, which were keen on hunting for anything wrong he may say.

- ❖ *“Why is your heart puffed up against God; to let such words come out of your mouth?”* It often happens that when the righteous are stricken by many tribulations, they tend to show off their good works, the way ‘Job’ did. And when the wicked hear what they say, weighing the words of the righteous according to their own evil hearts, they assume that they so talk with self haughtiness and self esteem, and not through a humble spirit.

As it is counted a great sin for man to refer to himself what is not actually his; It is equally not counted a sin against him, if he humbly talks about good things he did. It often happens that both the righteous and the wicked say the same words; while the hearts are totally different in both of them.

When the Pharisee entered the temple, he said: *“I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I possess”*; but the tax collector, who raised his eyes to heaven, and beat his breast saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner’, went down to his house justified rather than him (Luke 18: 12). When King Hezekiah was sick and near death, he prayed to God with a wounded heart, saying: *“Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and a loyal heart”*; and God saw his tears, responded to his prayer, healed him, and added to his days fifteen years (Isaiah 38). From this you can

notice that, with almost the same words by the Pharisee and king Hezekiah, God condemned the former and justified the later; because God who knows everything, weighed the words of each according to his inner heart; Hezekiah's words were not haughty in the ears of God, as they were said with a humble heart.

The heretics used to mix some true points with words that bear wrong convictions! Job's friends did the same in rebuking him: Although they raised certain true points, they learned through their contact with 'Job'; yet those words were contradictory. Concerning this, the apostle Paul says: "*It is written, 'He (God) catches the wise in their own craftiness'*" (1 Corinthians 3: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

2- A NEED FOR ABASING ONESELF BEFORE GOD:

"What is man that he could be pure? And he, who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?" (Job 15: 14).

That is true, that no man could be found pure before God, nor he, who is born of a woman could be righteous in His sight, because of the corruption of human nature, according to Job's words: "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*" (Job 14: 4). But the intention of Eliphaz is to confirm that 'Job' is wicked and a hypocrite; he is applying this fact to 'Job', and not to himself or his companions.

❖ He probably said this in response to Job's words to God, saying: "*Withdraw Your hands far from me, and let not the dread of you make me afraid*" (Job 13: 21) ... Eliphaz went too far to distort Job's reputation!

Yet in doing that he found himself a victim of his own anger and folly; In his anger, he vilified the righteousness; and in his folly, he did not appreciate the circumstances in which 'Job' uttered what he said. His words: "***What is man that he could be pure? And he, who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?" (14).*** were clearly uttered by 'Job' who says: "*No one can bring a clean thing from an unclean? Even if his days are one day on earth*" (14: 4)

'Job' was not ignorant of the weakness of human race, referred to by Eliphaz, but knew it and proclaimed it loud and clear, yet in a befittingly wise way. Thus he did not deserve to be accused, but to be commended.

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ "***Who is the man that he could be pure?***" Having been called 'man' or 'human', entails that he is weak and earthly; as the word 'man' in (Hebrew) is equivalent to 'earth' (adamah); How could he be free from the blemish, he who was created from earth; and with his free will fell into weakness?

Then it was added: "***And he, who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?***" As the woman was the first to initiate evil in paradise, how could he, who is born of the one who initiated evil, be righteous?

Pope Gregory the Great

"If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heaven is not pure in His sight"
(Job 15: 15).

Although God uses His angels and saints, yet He considers them unqualified to realize the salvation of man. If the stars are counted as illuminating compared to the sun, how much more would be heaven compared to its Creator?

- ❖ If no one could be found pure of defilement in the sight of God, however few are his days on earth (See Job 14: 4-5); If *“Heaven is not pure in His sight”* (15: 15); and if *“He charges His angels with error”* (4: 18); How much more could evil be in the minds of men? Who are those who could say: *“Do not come near me, for I am holy”* (see Isaiah 65: 5 LXX; Luke 5: 8)? We know how we suffer on a daily basis of what goes on in our minds, which we are ashamed to proclaim. There may be some who have not committed serious sins; and others who have never erred with their tongues; yet, among men, there would not be one who has not erred with his mind; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“Man’s mind confesses to You”*⁵.
- ❖ ***“He put all things under His feet (of Jesus Christ)” (Ephesians 1: 22)*** ... Why *“all things”*? It looks a little vague! But the answer lies in the fact that no one is without sin *“Heaven itself is not pure in His sight”* (15); and all creation trembles at the coming of the Lord.... Another interpretation is that the word *“all”* does not refer to everyone, but to the object of the discussion; in the way, when saying: ‘All people cried out’, it does not imply that no body kept silent; but the principle that ‘the majority overshadows the minority’⁶.

St. Jerome

- ❖ ***“Among the saints, no one is unchanged”, and “Heaven itself is not pure in His sight”***. The word **‘heavens’** often refer to the word ‘saints’. When it is written *“The heavens declare the glory of God”* (Psalm 19: 1), It means those saints, for whom, by nature, ‘change’ is befitting; But being perpetually attached to the ‘unchangeable Truth’, Through this attachment, they cross over to the heavenly life, to become themselves ‘unchangeable’.

As what could this change be, but a kind of death? Changing something into something else, would be like killing what used to be, to become what it was not! It is said about the Creator of all things: *“Who alone has immortality”* (1 Timothy 6: 16); for being alone unchangeable in Himself; and *“With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (James 1: 17); as change it is a shadow ...

It is well said: ***“Heaven itself is not pure in His sight”***; As before the particular knowledge of God, Even those preaching purity could not be found pure; as testified by St. John, saying: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 8). So now, if no one among the saints is unchangeable, and if heaven itself is not pure in the sight of God, who can claim that he practices the righteousness?!

Pope Gregory the Great

“How much less man, who is abominable a filthy, who drinks iniquity like water?” (Job 15: 16).

If God puts no trust in His saints for some of His works, like salvation; how much more would be the corrupt sinners, who drink iniquity like water? Man finds pleasure in iniquity, like a thirsty finds pleasure in drinking water; he counts sin as an integral and indispensable part of his being; just like his need for water, without which he cannot live.

- ❖ ***“How much hateful and useless would be man, who drinks iniquity like water?”*** – ‘hateful’, because of his uncleanness and blemish, and **‘useless’**, because of the evil of

⁵ On Ps., homily 9.

⁶ Epistle to Eph. 1:1:22-23.

his incomplete life. Being ‘hateful’ and ‘*useless*’ could be understood in another way: It often happens that when a wicked man practices an upright thing, through practicing the wrong things, the upright thing which he did are counted as nothing!

What is eaten need first to be chewed to be swallowed; whereas there is nothing to come in the way of what is drunk ... The ignorant practices sin the same way with no hesitation; “*he drinks iniquity like water*”.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED:

“I will show you, listen to me; What I have seen I will declare” (Job 15: 17).

After ridiculing the person, conduct, and wisdom of ‘Job’, he demands from him to listen to him with no protest on his part. He says to him: “***I will show you***”; namely, I will tell you what is worth listening to; facts I have personally seen and experienced.

When sin blinds the eyes of a wicked man, he counts himself as wise, and no one can instruct people like him. Marveling how others could do without his wisdom, he forces himself on them as a mentor. That is why the apostle James says: “*Not many of you should become teachers. My brothers*” (James 3: 1); It is rather befitting even for teachers and clergy, to covet perpetual learning.

❖ ***“I shall reveal that to you, listen to me; what I have seen I will declare”***. All the haughty have this feature: When they have a sound concept, even if it is of no much value, they twist it to serve their pride. And instead of working on lifting themselves up in understanding, they would fall into the pit of self-glorification; would be swallowed by pride, and would count themselves more learned than the learned.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Through learning from others, I wish I, myself be able to learn; as it is one Master (God), who does not learn from what he teaches all. Whereas human beings have to learn before they can teach; and should receive from God, their Teacher, what to teach others.

As for me, because I went from the position of a judge to priesthood ... without having a chance to learn; it is befitting for me to learn and to teach at the same time.

St. Ambrose

“What wise men have told, not hiding anything they received from their fathers” (Job 15: 18).

If wise, not being satisfied with their own experience, would learn through the experience of their fathers, along the successive generations; and would not hide anything they received; Eliphaz, who claims to be wise, presents those experiences to ‘Job’, even if they contradict with Job’s own experience and personal understanding.

To what extent, are we committed to the heritage of our fathers?

The saintly fathers represent the thoughts of the Catholic Church; they received from the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, who incessantly works in the life of the church. About them, **St. Augustine** says: [They abided to what they found in the church followed what they learned; and what they received, they delivered to the hands of their

successors⁷]. [Whoever despises the saintly fathers, would be despising the whole church⁸].

This authority is set upon two factors:

A natural factor. Having been characterized by a holy life, and faithfulness in receiving the talent of living faith from the hands of the apostles, the fathers are well qualified to testify to all aspects of the church life; especially that they embrace the one thought; despite the differences in cultures, talents, and circumstances; the great distances between the apostolic chairs, and the difficulties in communication at that time.

The second factor is divine; as the fathers lived, within, and under the authority of the Holy Spirit, the Leader and Guide of the Holy Spirit, to the Whole Truth, who kept her within the circle of the cross of the Lord Christ.

Yet, that does not mean the of the fathers as individuals; But the Catholic Church, as a whole, lives kept by the Spirit of the Lord.

“To whom alone the land was given, and no alien passed among them” (Job 15: 19).

The wisdom presented by Eliphaz, he claims to have received from his fathers, as the fruit of experience of trustworthy men, who occupied exalted positions, and were more capable to run the affairs of their land better than any alien to the spirit of wisdom. Responding to ‘Job’ saying: *“The earth is given into the hand of the wicked”* (Job 9: 24); Eliphaz answered: [No, The earth is given to wise, saintly, and trustworthy men, will stay that way, and will never be given to the hand of an alien]. By that, he probably hints that ‘Job’ could not be wise, nor a saint, or trustworthy, or the alien ‘Sabeans’ and the ‘Chaldeans’ would not have raided his possessions, and taken them away. On another aspect, he intended to say, that, having lost his possessions, it is as though he is removed from his prominent position as a king or a head of a tribe, and is no more worthy to be among the wise, *“to whom alone the land was given”*

He probably refers here to the church on earth that should be ordained by the wise, which walk according to the Spirit of the early fathers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with no alien among them, who lacks the true spiritual clerical and evangelical spirit.

“The wicked man writhes with pain all his days, and the oppressor through all the years stored up for him” (Job 15: 20).

Eliphaz almost accuses ‘Job’, clearly and daringly, of being a wicked, an oppressor, and a ruthless man, worthy of writhing with pain and vicious temptations; that what he did in his life have come back upon his head; and that there is no more time to pretend to be what he is actually not, for his days are counted.

❖ Eliphaz, king of the Timanians, Bildad, the tyrant of the Shuhites, and Zophar, king of the Mineans, have all violently rebuked ‘Job’, on account of their conviction that he suffered those temptations as punishment for his sins. By their prejudiced judgment, they could not realize that God has delivered him to be tempted, to be earning a greater crown, as a wrestler for the sake of Christ; and could not see the secret of that great wisdom. Their narrow hearts fearing, lest they would appear as accusing God of injustice, if they believe that a righteous man could be so tempted; put the

⁷ St. Augustine: *Contra Julian*, II 9.

⁸ *Ibid* 37.

responsibility on the righteous 'Job' for all the punishment that dwelt on him, saying: "*The wicked man writhes with pain all his days*"; and, "*He swallows down riches, and vomits them up again*" (Job 20: 15). They claimed that he suffered all those sorrows because of his sins⁹.

St. Ambrose

❖ This view is deceiving, as we often see many wicked men living in peace and prosperity, even if this does not last all their life (Jeremiah 12: 1). Trying to ridicule 'Job' for wondering why the wicked prosper, he intends at the same time to show that he, himself, although living in prosperity, is not wicked.

"Many are the years given to the oppressor". In this as well, Eliphaz does not speak faithfully; as when God intends to put an end to the authority of the oppressor, He is not bound to a number of years, nor is He limited to a certain time. Eliphaz said that, responding to what 'Job' said that the righteous and the blameless is delivered to ridicule; and in an appointed time he would die by the strikes of a stranger, and would see his house devastated by the wicked. He intended to talk about the time when God allows the wicked to torment the righteous, yet, everyone would be tempted according to his measure, and within his ability (1 Corinthians 10: 12); for the sake of virtue, until they are crowned.

As for Eliphaz, he uttered the words: "*Many are the years given to the oppressor*" which are as deceiving as the words to follow: "*dreadful sounds are in his ears*" (21). How could this be for someone who does not keep God's law in his heart; and how does he not open his ears to those who can teach him the fear of God (Psalm 37: 31; 40: 8; 34: 12)?

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ "*And the number of years given to him (the oppressor) are hidden*" ... Every haughty man practices tyranny according to the size of his authority: One practices it in a country; another in a province; another in a city; another in his own family; and still another hides it in the thought of his heart, and practices it on himself. God is not preoccupied with the magnitude of evil than man can practice; but with the magnitude in his mind, ready to be practiced. When man has no authority on someone outside him, and iniquity is filling him; Even though he does not practice his tyranny outside him, he seeks to find some way or authority to practice it on others. Being aware of what is inside the heart of men; God counts such a man as though he actually practiced what goes on in his mind.

Pope Gregory the Great

"Terrifying sounds are in his ears; When all seems well, the destroyer comes upon him" (Job 15: 21).

According to Eliphaz; Job' should not marvel that terrifying sounds are always in his ears; as heaven and earth are punishing him for what he has done. He cannot get away from anguish, because the sound of his wickedness will never quit his ears. He will be like 'Cain' who believed that whoever finds him would kill him (Genesis 4: 14).

We cannot deny that "*There is no peace*", says the Lord, for the wicked" (Isaiah 48: 22); Yet, this refers to the inner peace that sin takes away, through separating man

⁹ *Prayer of Holy Job, Book 2.*

from the source of his peace. But afflictions and troubles could dwell upon the saints to justify and sanctify them by the Spirit of the Lord; and could also dwell upon the wicked, in the hope that they would probably return to God through repentance.

As to the outer peace and prosperity, we should not marvel to hear the Psalmist say; ***“For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked”*** (Psalm 73: 3). This is not true peace; as, according to the author of the book of wisdom: ***“Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but through living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evil peace”*** (Wisdom 14: 22).

The Lord Christ came as the Savior of the world, to grant the true inner peace to His believers.

“For unto us a child is born, Unto us a son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9: 6).

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isaiah 52: 7).

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed” (Isaiah 53: 5).

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed’, Says the Lord, who has mercy on you” (Isaiah 54: 10).

“I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land, and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” (Ezekiel 34: 25).

“I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore” (Ezekiel 37: 26).

“Behold, on the mountains the feet of Him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace. O Judah, Keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; He is utterly cut off” (Nahum 1: 15).

“To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. To guide our feet into the way of peace” (LK 1: 79)

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2: 14).

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14: 27).

“These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33).

❖ ***“Terrifying sounds will be always in his ears; and when all is well, he should expect trouble”*** (21). There is nothing terrifying in encountering others, with the peace of heart, which would be like a stronghold of power; beside the fear of God, in which, according to Solomon there is ***“strong confidence”*** (Proverbs 14: 26); who also says:

“The cheerful heart has a continual feast” (Proverbs 15: 15). Living in peace and security is like a perpetual cheer; whereas the evil mind always result in pain and trouble; because a person, is in continuous fear, either of probable plots brought upon him by others, in retaliation to plots planned by him against them; or, because *“when all seem to be well, the destroyer may come upon him”* (Job 15: 21). Dealing craftily with others all the time, he assumes that no one would do otherwise with him; as it is written: *“When the wicked comes, so does contempt”* (Proverbs 18: 3); he would be surrounded by the darkness of his evil; would despair of the existence of light; and *“he does not believe that he will return from darkness, and he watches for the sword”* (Job 15: 22).

Pope Gregory the Great

“I will both lie down in peace and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4: 8).

“The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace” (Psalm 29: 11).

“Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, ‘let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant’ (Psalm 35: 27).

“The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37: 11).

“Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace” (Psalm 37: 37).

“He has redeemed my soul in peace, from the battle which was against me” Psalm 55: 18).

“The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness” (Psalm 72: 3).

“In his days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more” (Psalm 72: 7).

“Great peaces have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Psalm 119: 165).

“He makes peace in Your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat” (Psalm 147: 14),

“For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you” (Proverbs 3: 2).

“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3: 17).

“The fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom, making peace and perfect health to flourish” (Sirach 1: 22).

“If you had walked in the way of God, you would be living in peace forever” (Baruch 3: 13).

“Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5: 1).

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8: 6).

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, which bring glad tidings of good things” (Romans 10: 15).

*“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**”* (Rom 14: 17).

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace, and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom 14: 19)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15: 13).

“The God of peace be with you all. Amen” (Romans 15: 33).

“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16: 20).

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1: 3).

*“... **But God has called us to peace**”* (1 Corinthians 7: 15).

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14: 33).

“And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6: 15).

“He does not believe that he will return from darkness, and he watches for the sword” (Job 15: 22).

The wicked is always chased by his wickedness; loses all hope of coming out of the darkness surrounding him; lives in terror, as though there is a sword above his neck, that he expects to fall any moment, and deep inside him he believes that, *“He who kills with the sword, must be killed with the sword”* (Revelation 13: 10).

“They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘peace, peace’, when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6: 14; 8: 11).

“We hoped for peace, but no good has come, for a time of healing, but there was only terror” (Jeremiah 8: 15).

“Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed? We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time for healing but there is only terror” (Jeremiah 14: 19).

“Because of Your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin” (Psalm 38: 3).

“And the way of peace they have not known” (Romans 3: 17).

“And the peaceful habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the Lord” (Jeremiah 25: 37).

“He wanders about for bread, saying, ‘Where is it?’ He knows that a day of darkness is ready at hand” (Job 15: 23).

The wicked lives in a loss and void, as though hungry for a piece of bread, contrary to the righteous (Psalm 37: 23-25). The day of darkness; namely of judgment is at hand, swiftly approaching and would not be postponed. The day of the Lord will be light for the faithful believers, and darkness for the wicked, who will be condemned to the eternal and perpetual outer darkness.

❖ When man practices unlawful things, he would fear what he has done.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Because our rebellious adversary fights us by pride, and intends to overcome us by haughtiness, our victorious King provided us with the weapon of humility.

Without the unconquerable power of humility, no one would be victorious.

With humility, the pride of the deceitful would bow down, and would make him the footstool of the peaceful meek.

Mark how our mighty fathers paved the way for us; how they clothed themselves with humility, the robe of Christ, by which they conquered the deceitful and **bound him with the chains of darkness**¹⁰.

- ❖ The devils set for me a kind of temptation that would terrify the one who hears it.

Arrogantly, they come back to reveal their cruelty, and to threaten me.

But once I cross myself with the sign of the cross – **our life – they return to the darkness – their portion – and their Fire is extinguished**¹¹.

The spiritual elder, John El-Deliaty

“Distress and anguish terrify him; They overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack” (Job 15: 24).

The wicked is more terrified by the inner distress and anguish, than by outer tribulations; according to the words said by the apostle Paul: “*Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil*” (Romans 2: 8, 9). In him, who loses his connection to God, unbearable gates of hell would open. The wicked may think that he can manage to get rid of his inner fears; Yet these fears would reign over his heart, mind, and inner energies, and enslave him in such a way, to become with his whole being a captive, as though of a fierce king, backed by mighty and unconquerable armies. Whoever intends to regain his freedom, let him start with the inner freedom by Jesus Christ our Liberator; namely, with freedom by the divine righteousness against evil.

- ❖ “*Distress and anguish terrify him; they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack*”. In everything done by the wicked, he would be fenced by distress, tribulations, and anguish; His soul would be disturbed by worries and fear! He, who secretly longs to forcibly keep the good things away from others, would become labored and anguished by the thoughts of his heart, and would wish he does not exist. Another, through forsaking the Truth, would have in mind to lie in order to deceive others, and his major worry would be, to be careful enough not to deceive himself ... As the way of the truth is paved, whereas that of vanity is rough, it is written: “*They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity*” (Jeremiah 9: 5).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ It is not necessary for catching a bird to have his whole body in the net; It would be enough to entangle its foot!

So it is with the devil, to catch us in his net, he does not have to control all our conduct and faith; but, it would be enough for him to control our conduct. “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will*

¹⁰ رسالة 51 (ملحق 4).

¹¹ رسالة 32:1.

of My Father in heavenThen I will declare to them, saying, 'I never knew you' ¹²
(Matthew 7: 21, 23).

- ❖ The devil is called 'the mighty one', not because he is naturally as such, but in reference to his authority he gained because of our weakness¹³.
- ❖ What lowliness is more than that of the devil who became puffed up; and what level is higher than that of someone who intends to be humble?! The former ended up to crawl under our feet; whereas the later soared up to are with the angels in the highest¹⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Now, beloved brethren, the devil is slain; that tyrant who is against the whole world ... Death no more reigns; but life reigns instead; When the Lord said: "*I am the Life*" (John 14: 6), joy and gladness prevailed everywhere; as it is written: "*he Lord reigned; Let the earth rejoice*" ... Now, as death is no more, and the kingdom of the devil is destroyed, joy and gladness prevailed on all.

St. Athanasius the apostolic

"For he stretches his hand against the Lord, and acts defiantly against the Almighty" (Job 15: 25)

"Running stubbornly against Him with his thick embossed shield" (Job 15: 26)

"Because he has covered his face with his fatness, and made his waist heavy with fat" (Job 15: 27)

Stretching his hand against the Lord, and acting defiantly against the Almighty, the wicked crushes himself by himself.

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem says that Eliphaz likens 'Job' to the informer (Satan), who has been a great leader and occupied the first rank among the heavenly creatures before he falls (Revelation 12: 7-9). Once he stretched his hand against the Lord, he lost his reason by opposing God, became swallowed by illusion; namely, became filled with pride, and arrogantly took a position against God. Eliphaz tried to liken 'Job' to Satan who enters the battle, putting his shield over his shoulders; carries a cruel heart; **covers his face faith fatness**; namely, with prosperity; filling his belly with evil, he cannot lift his face before the Creator; And putting two layers of fat on his waist; namely, practicing his authority through two things: becoming greedy and plunging in pleasures ... Yet, in vain, Eliphaz tried to make analogy between the righteous 'Job' and the 'informer' Satan.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that these phrases apply to the Anti-Christ, head of the wicked himself, who, stretching his hand against God, is allowed to "**act defiantly**", and even to be temporarily glorified, then he would be punished forever with no mercy. To stretch his hand against God; means that he persist on doing evil, disregarding God's ordinances; Running stubbornly against Him with his thick embossed shield (**or neck**), means that he carries out shameful things that makes the Creator angry; As to his thick (**neck**), it is the riches in pride, supported by gorged storehouses (or body).

According to **Pope Gregory the Great**, these phrases also apply to the wicked man who, armed with authority, he boasts against god, and takes a stand against the

¹² In 2 Tim. hom. 6.

¹³ In Matt hom 41.

¹⁴ In Matt. hom 56:6.

commandments of truth; disregards God's riches, and covets vain temporal riches; **covers his face with temporal fatness**; harasses the poor, and feel haughty by the power of temporal glory.

- ❖ All the boastful who carry haughty necks, not only practice evil, but would also not count it as such; And when they are rebuked, they justify themselves¹⁵.
- ❖ When the wicked and haughty fight against God, largely depending on their personal strength, their (ceramic vessels), or "*embossed shield*", according to 'Job', are destroyed and turn to broken pieces¹⁶.

St. Augustine

"He dwells in desolate cities, in houses which no one inhabits, which are destined to become ruins" (Job 15: 28).

"He dwells in 'desolate societies' and deserted houses, which are destined to become ruins" (28 LXX). We probably marvel at the expression of 'desolate societies'; because the word 'society' implies (people living together); how could they be desolate? Wherever there is a crowd of wicked people, every one of them would feel isolated, as though no one shares his feelings, nor appreciate his thoughts; because sin corrupts man's relationship with his brethren, and takes love away from them.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the inhabitants of the house are the thoughts; the minds of the wicked would never find rest; but would feel as though desolate ruins with no inhabitants.

"He will not be rich, nor will his wealth continue, nor will his possessions overspread the earth" (Job 15: 29).

The wicked will never feel satisfaction or fulfillment; will always feel poor, with nothing to fill his inner void, even though he has extensive outer riches.

The wealth that he collected through evil, will go, through another evil, get less and less until it completely vanish, "*It came up in a night and perished in a night*" (Jonah 4: 10); "*Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished*" (Proverbs 13: 11); and when the wicked loses his sons and dies, strangers will inherit him¹ "***His possessions will not overspread the earth" (15)***; namely, the days he enjoys his wealth will not last long, and he will even fail to leave it to his children after him.

Pope Gregory the Great says that the wicked who suffers from inner void, would never feel fulfillment, and would be, in this world, like a passerby with no fruition.

"He will not escape the darkness; The flame will wither his shoots, And the breath of God's mouth will carry him away" (Job 15: 30)

He lives as though in a perpetual darkness; and his children of darkness will be like the shoots of a tree that withered and burned up.

In the Septuagint version, it came as: "***He will not be able to escape the darkness by any way; and the hot wind will cause his flower to fall***" before turning into a fruit.

By the breath of His mouth, the wicked will die all of a sudden; as it is written; "*This night, your soul will be taken away from you*" (luke12:20); and "*The wicked is banished in his wickedness*" (Proverbs 14: 32); and the love of the world will go away together with the world itself.

¹⁵ On Ps. 129 (128).

¹⁶ On Ps. 46 (45).

- ❖ If the haughty man intends to come back from sin to righteousness, he is committed to depart from the darkness. Yet, as he does not search for the light of righteousness, he would not be able to depart from the darkness.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Let him not trust in futile things, deceiving him, for futility will be his reward”
(Job 15: 31).

Man often assumes that deceit and ways of evil would save him. At the beginning, they will deceive him; but soon he will drink from the cup of evil, which he, himself, filled.

“Let this be the lord’s reward to My accusers, and to those who speak evil against my person” (Psalms 109: 20).

“The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward” (Proverbs 11: 18).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6: 23).

“It will be accomplished before his time and his branch will not be green” (Job 15: 32).

He will not only lose his wealth, but will die before his time.

Indeed, the wicked may live until old age; and the righteous saints may die in their early youth; yet the days of the wicked are counted as nothing, his whole life would be likened to ashes; whereas one day of the saints, in God’s sight, is counted as a thousand year. *“For a thousand years in Your sight are like a day that just gone by, or like a watch in the night”* (Psalm 90: 4) *“But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3: 8).

Even his children whom he hoped to be great in this age, would turn to dried branches (will not be green).

What are these branches that will not be green, but the spiritual fruition of the believer; If he walks in evil, the fruit of the

Holy Spirit of God will dry up; and becomes a cause of judgment instead of support.

- ❖ While ‘Job’ was very hopeful, because of his sufferings and perseverance, to receive from God a reward of His inheritance; Eliphaz was confirming to him that his ‘**cup**’ or his ‘branch’ will perish before the harvest time; namely. That he ‘Job’ will perish before the time of reward; **and that is ‘branch’ will not be green.** He is proclaiming to ‘Job’, who was hoping for a very great reward, and anticipating it, as though it was already within his reach, that all he will get is disappointment!

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

- ❖ ***“Before the consummation of his days, he will perish, and his hands will wither”*** (32) ... Most probably God, in His secret prior knowledge would not grant a long age to the wicked man, who intends to live according to the body. Not being able to reach the age he wishes to have, he seems to perish before the consummation of his days.

This phrase could also be understood in another way. We often see those who walk in evil, reach very advanced age; so how is it said that **“Before the consummation of his days, he will perish”**? While we see among them some whose hands tremble

because of old age, and still have their evil whims active in them; There are others who , after losing the right way, their conscience woke up, forsook their wicked ways, overcame their old habits, fled from their earthly conduct, and followed heavenly goals; Yet, before having the chance to hold fast to these holy goals, and to bringing their evil thoughts to death, they apostatized and fell back into their old ways that they decided to forsake ... As, unless the heart consistently abides to the heavenly desires. He will easily apostatize to his old ways, and be uprooted from his abidance to the good work.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He will shake off his unripe grape like a vine, and cast off his blossom like an olive tree” (Job 15: 33).

His children would be like bitter grape that fall off the vine before they grow and become ripe; and like the blossoms of olive that fall off before maturing to fruits. His children would die in their prime, and would not reach what he desired them to be.

❖ **Like a vine after its blossoms appear, when it is blasted by sudden severe cold, it would lose all its humidity and freshness;** there are some who after walking some time in evil, they long to the way of holiness.

But before they abide in them, they succumb to a kind of prosperity, and become confused in vain practices. And as their mind retreats from the warmth of inner love, they would be as though blasted by a cold wind that would kill in them every little new shot of virtue. Through earthly conduct, the mind turns cold, if it is not holdfast inside.

“And cast off his blossom like an olive tree”. Like a blossoming olive tree, when it goes through severe change of atmospheric conditions, it would shed off its new blossoms. The same thing happens when people doing good deeds are overly commended by those who admire them. Once they find pleasure in their commendation, some kind of fog will dwell over their minds; would be lost in this fog that would deprive them of discerning the real reason behind doing their good works; and would eventually lose their reward.

It is well said by Solomon: *“Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded; whether the grape blossoms are open”* (Songs 7: 12). The vines bud when the minds of believers present good works; but they do not bear fruit, if by their goal they cannot overcome the wrong practices.

❖ The hypocrites may look fruitful and green in the sight of their fellow men; but in that of the divine Judge, they are fruitless and withered.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For the company of hypocrites will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of bribery” (Job 15: 34).

❖ Fire will consume the tents when the high temperature of greed corrupt the minds.

The mind of the hypocrite will never take rest from planning evil; Walking along the way of the earthly love of commendation, he would envy what the other have got, would hastily run to get them for himself; **and would do his best to make the others look wicked, if compared to him, and to look more holy than the whole world.**

Causing the others to be despised, he tries to look worthy of honor; and fishing for compliment, he cast the net of his tongue to catch any good impression about himself in the sight of those he seeks their favor.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They conceive trouble and bring forth iniquity; Their wombs fashion deceit”
(Job 15: 35).

❖ Because *“he conceives trouble”*, he *“brings forth iniquity and his womb fashions deceit”*; or he would rather conceive deceit, through conceiving things of no benefit to him and to others.

If Eliphaz thought about all this in a factual way, and encountered here a deceitful person, he would have reached a more truthful and faithful conclusion; as judgment of the deceitful should be kept for the future. And in case he was speaking about future rewards, he would be vainly doing ‘Job’ wrong; vainly condemning him for the sake of his sufferings; as the splendor of this life often dwells upon the slaves of greed, and the tribulations upon the righteous. That was not wrongly, but rightly ordained by God; He does not grant the righteous the splendor of this life, whose fulfillment is like the leaves of a tree, its strength is like a shadow, its riches is like straw, and its glory is like smoke. Whereas the righteous, on the other hand, is qualified for the kingdom of heaven, for non-corruption, for non-mortality, but for the exalted glory, where men rejoice together with the angels. That is the reason, that even if they exhaust themselves with sweat, and encountered a plenty of trouble, they do not blame the divine Judge, because they know that through these *“light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4: 17), *“which shall be revealed in us”* (Roman 8: 18), by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Father Hecechius of Jerusalem

❖ ***“They conceive trouble and bring forth iniquity; their womb fashion deceit”*** (35).

Man conceives trouble, and bring forth evil, when he starts to execute what he planned.

Through enjoying envy, he conceives trouble; and through uttering contempt he brings forth iniquity.

It is a great iniquity, when the wicked strives to show the others as evil people; in order to show himself as a saint.

We should take into consideration that the Holy Book uses the term ‘belly’ or ‘womb’, to indicate the ‘mind’ or ‘mind’; as it is said by Solomon: *“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his mind”* (Proverbs 20; 27). As a child is conceived in the womb, the thought is conceived in the mind. The womb of a hypocrite prepares deceit; as his mind perpetually conceives great evils against his brethren, which conform to his goals to show himself as a saint before everyone.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 15

LET ME BENEFIT FROM THE VAIN ACCUSATIONS OF MY ENEMIES

- ❖ Unjustly, Eliphaz and his two friends accused the righteous 'Job'.
They accumulated against him bitter charges, which became a cause for glory.
As for me, allow me in my weakness, to benefit from their charges.
- ❖ They claimed that he falsely pretends to be wise.
As his wisdom is vain, and his depths bear destructive wind.
Grant me, O Lord, the wisdom.
Shine with Your light on my depths, to turn my life into a living testimony.
To utter only what I live, by and in You.
Grant me Your Holy Spirit, blowing inside me.
So that the destructive evil spirits would not infiltrate into me.
Let every word I utter be anointed with the Spirit.
Let my life become the salt of earth.
- ❖ Grant me, O Lord, Your fear, to guide my soul along the royal road.
To enjoy the fellowship with the Groom of my soul – the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
Keep me from diverting to the right nor to the left.
As long as my steering wheel is in the hands of a Mighty, Wise, and a loving Father.
- ❖ Set, O Lord, a watch on my mouth.
And set a strong door for my lips;
That nothing come out of it, but what pleases You.
Let my words harmonize with my depths and my conduct.
Let them not testify to my iniquity, nor become a cause for my judgment.
- ❖ I go back with my mind to Your amazing works.
You have created everything for my sake.
You gave a mind and wisdom to my father Adam.
You intended for his seed to be truly wise.
To be counted as Your children, who follow Your ways.
Grant me the wisdom that sits on Your right hand.
Grant me, not according to my worthiness, but according to Your love.
- ❖ You long to encounter with all Your believers;
And for all Your believers to encounter with You.
You long to shine with the light of Your wisdom on everyone.
You wish for everyone to be as though in Your presence.
To proclaim Your exalted secrets to those who fear You.
Grant me, O Lord Your Spirit of wisdom.
So as not to boast wisdom that is not mine.
Let me honor everyone, and appreciate God's talents on him.
- ❖ Let me benefit from every true counsel.
Give me humility, to benefit from the wisdom of all, as much as I can.
Let me not seek human comforts.
As You are the heavenly Physician, the Grantor of the true comfort.

When I listen to Your voice through Your church,
You transfigure before my eyes, and I enjoy the joy of Your secrets.
I see You transfigure in Your ministers.
And receive Your gifts from Your hands through them.
You are the Giver of gifts to the humble hearts.

- ❖ When I look at myself, I realize the truth of my weakness.
Who can be justified before You, O the Holy One?
No one born of a woman is righteous before You,
Even if he is one day old!
Your saints confess their weaknesses!
And the heavenly creatures are not pure in Your sight!
You entrust no one on my salvation, but You!
- ❖ I confess to You that I drink the iniquity like water;
Yet You are the Forgiver of sins.
You are the Savior of souls from corruption;
- ❖ Now, O Lord, Look down on Your holy church.
Grant everyone – clergy and laic – to be fired by a perpetual desire to learn.
To walk all of them under the guidance of Your Holy Spirit.
To follow the foot steps of the early saintly fathers.
Let no alien with a diverted thought pass among us.
Let us all, as one flock for One Shepherd, enjoy Your fruitful pastures.
Let us all enjoy the spirit of simplicity.
Let no one haughty or hypocrite be among us.
- ❖ Grant me not to judge anyone; as You are the only One who can search the hearts.
I often assume that falling under the burden of temptations,
Is the fruit of one's hidden iniquities.
But, Who can realize Your wisdom, O Savior and Lover of mankind?
Every one who suffer, is neither a saint nor a wicked!
You alone allows for prosperity or affliction!
And in either case, You only seek our salvation and glory!
- ❖ Our hidden looks at those under temptations may destroy them.
But Your divine hand presents what is for the edification of those who believe in You.
- ❖ O My God, You are the source of my peace.
You are Peace itself!
No terror or worry could enter into the life of whoever acquires You!
He would never fear the darkness or the sword!
Nothing would terrify him as long as You dwell in his depths!
Whereas he who runs after evil,
Is running after a destructive mirage.
He acquires vanity and loses the truth.
He would acquire void, and would be grasping for the wind;
And would be in need of a crumb of bread.
Affliction would dwell upon him; and the devil would reign over him.

Let me flee to Your cross;
To see You tear down the bill written against me.
You would set me free from the servitude of the devil.
Humiliate and cast the tyrant under my feet

- ❖ Yes, I shall come to You, O the amazing crucified!
When I unite with You, Pride will find no place in me;
Pride that destroyed my soul, that turned my paradise into wilderness, and made my dwelling place desolate, will be destroyed.
I will flee away from deceit; and the ways of evil will be closed shut before me.
There will be no more famine in my soul.
Nor blood will engulf me.
My vineyard will be filled by the grapes of Your love.
And my olive tree will be heavy with fruits, that flow an abundance of the oil of Your grace.
My soul will experience no more poverty.
But, by Your Holy Spirit, will bear joyful heavenly fruits.
No destructive fire of evil will approach my tent/
But it will flare with the holy fire of Your Spirit.
My whole being will become glorified in You.
I will be like Your ministers, the flames of fire.

THE BOOK OF 'JOB'

PART II

(CHAPTERS 16 to 21)

BY

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THREE LONG DEBATES

For a long time, I kept wondering: What is the importance of the three long debates between 'Job' and his friends. Would it not be enough, for the Holy Book to give us a concise summary of these debates, to reveal the bitterness of Job's soul, because of the lack of love in his friends' hearts toward him, and of their complete disregard of the inner feelings of their suffering friend?

But, by a close study of this book, I realized the important role of this debate, as far as my relationship with God and with his suffering subjects are concerned; And how it reveals the relationship of the church with the heretics opposing her; who claiming wisdom, accuse the church of being literal and dry.

In the first part of this book, we stopped at the start of the second debate, by Eliphaz, who was the most aggressive of the three friends in the first debate. Now, we pray to the Lord to grant us the blessing of studying the rest of the second debate; then the third ... We beseech Him to flare the hearts of all mankind to enjoy the word of God; to lift our hearts up to experience His heavenly love; and to partake of the sufferings of our brethren. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

A LAMENTATION TOGETHER WITH HOPE FOR A MEDIATOR

Job's response to Eliphaz (Chapters 16-17), in the second round of their debate, came to show, that he is fed up of the ridiculous position of his friends, who in his sight, are troublesome comforters; and that he looks with detest on their words, which they repeat for no reason; on their stubbornness; and on their lack of consideration of his circumstances. He confirms that, if he is in their place, he would surely support them, and utter what would make their burden lighter for them.

'Job' talks with bitterness about God, who, all of a sudden, has sent those tribulations on him, while he was living his life at ease. He thinks that God has, Himself, become an adversary against him, "*has shattered him, has taken him by the neck, and shaken him to pieces*" (Job 16: 12).

'Job' says, that he still have no explanation for the reason behind all the blows that God brought upon his body, that caused it to rot, and to become a rejected castaway; which is taken by his friends, as a testimony to his guilt. However, although he is sure that God has forsaken him, "*has delivered him to the ungodly, and has turned him over to the hands of the wicked*" (Job 16: 11); Yet, he clothes himself with the (sackcloth) of humility and grief, despite his failure to see what is the sin he has committed, that warrants his miserable situation (Job 16: 15-16).

Holding fast to his claim of innocence, 'Job' resorts to God to reveal to him His goal of those chastisements, and to clarify what perplexes the mind and conscience of his suffering subject. He is as though, resorting to God from God; From God who is hidden, to God who is "*Light with no darkness in Him*"; He resorts to Him with the spirit of faith and hope in His work of salvation.

Amid all his feelings of bitterness toward his friends, who intend to destroy his person completely; and are for him hopeless comforters; And his looking up to God, who allowed for him to bear that cruel stand of his friends, on top of all those tribulations; that led him to consider God as a Warrior against him; Yet he did not blaspheme, nor denied Him; as Satan hoped to see him do. 'Job' realized that, there is no way to escape from God, except to resort to Him! By that, a light ray of the Messianic work was revealed to him: That there is no resort from falling under the divine wrath, and the divine justice, except by the appearance of the incarnate Word of God Himself, So that by His cross, He would embrace him, as an eternal secure resort. Job's perplexity turned into recognition of the divine evangelic Truth, through the shadows; So that the Sun of Righteousness would shine on those sitting in the darkness; and that the believers would enjoy the eternal glory.

'Job' has become convinced that his only chance to get comfort, is to depart from the world, with a spirit of faith and hope in the salvation work of God. By that, he has overcome Satan, who expected to hear him blaspheme and deny God; and heard him instead, resorting to God, as his only source of comfort.

'Job', a symbol of the suffering Christ; an atoning Mediator and Intercessor:

Responding to Eliphaz, in a sorrowful language, 'Job' presents in his lamentation of his situation, such magnificent prophecies about the suffering Christ, as an atoning Mediator and Intercessor; that has preoccupied the minds of the fathers of the church in their interpretations of this chapter; In particular, **Father Hesychius of**

Jerusalem, and Pope Gregory the Great, who was fond of the writings of the Eastern fathers; and used the Greek Septuagint version (LXX) of the Old Testament, together with the Volgata.

1- 'Job' rebukes his friends for their cruelty	1 – 5
2- 'Job' laments his situation	6 – 16
3- 'Job' resorts to the just God	17 – 21
4- Passing away from the world	22

1- 'JOB' REBUKES HIS FRIENDS FOR THEIR CRUELTY:

“Then 'Job' answered and said: 'I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all!’” (Job 16: 1, 2).

The debate became so painfully violent, that 'Job' got so fed up, listening to his friends, to cry out calling them “miserable comforters”. The wise Solomon says: *“The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts”* (Proverbs 17: 14).

Even if they happen to say some words of comfort, they are still painful; coming from hearts that do not partake of his sufferings; and of his feelings; according to the words of the wise Solomon: *“They sing songs to a heavy heart”* (Proverbs 25: 20).

In an introduction by **Father Hesychius of Jerusalem**, came a magnificent talk about Job's perseverance (patience), and longsuffering, especially in confronting his adversary and mocking friends.

❖ Through reasoning and deep thinking, one can discover **that Perseverance is the basis of all virtues.**

Through it, **Abraham** became a father of many nations (Genesis 17: 5; Sirach 44: 20; Romans 4: 17); and was called *“a friend of God”* (James 2: 23).

By perseverance, **Isaac**, a symbol of the only-begotten Son, became a sacrifice (Genesis 22: 2).

And also by perseverance, **Jacob** carried a staff, in the likeness of a cross (Genesis 32: 10; Hebrew 11: 21); And, although he fled (Genesis 27: 34), perseverance brought him back very rich (Genesis 32: 22-23).

By such perseverance, **'Job'** strived, and carried the banner of conquest; despite the number and the high authority of his adversaries; Although he was completely naked, he seemed as though, strongly armed before his opponents. And although he was cast on the ground, with demon-like adversaries swarming around him in the air (Ephesians 2: 2); and with those who reviled him wearing crimson, while he wore painful sores; Yet the he was counted with splendor by the heavenly hosts.

He was glorified by the poor; ministered by the rich; and all generations concentrated their sight on his person, as a reflection of righteousness.

Do you like to learn from the strong perseverance of 'Job': There were three friends reviling him; physically sound, and full of vigor because of their temporal blessings? They kept on talking successively, one after the other; every one of them in turn, taking a chance of rest. As for 'Job', although he was alone, his body covered with sores and his soul with bitterness and grief. Yet, with **his perseverance, he managed to overcome his strong opponents**, and with his patience, to put out their flaring nonsense.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The church often quotes the words of the Psalmist David, saying: “*The plowers plowed on my back*” (Psalm 129: 3). Seeing how his friend Eliphaz consistently charging him with hypocrisy, the righteous ‘Job’, although crushed by the bitterness of his criticism; Yet, he demonstrated to him, how a miserable comforter he is.

By his perseverance, he became a symbol of the church that generally and all the time, bears with perseverance such criticism from heretics of every kind.

With such response, ‘Job’ refers to the era of the church, which seems, under the consistent pressure of her Adversaries of temporary authority, as though cast to the ground. They are all “*miserable comforters*”, whether they are heretics or wicked; who, intending to comfort her, they arouse wrong issues, out of their own minds.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Drink mockery, voluntarily and readily; as though you drink the water of life Drink it from anyone whoever he is; as though he intends to offers you a healing medication. Then, on you, a divine ray of deep purity would shine in your soul; never to be quenched¹.

St. John El-Dargy

“*Shall words of wind have an end, or what provokes you that you keep on talking?*” (Job 16: 3).

‘Job’ felt that they are going around in a vicious circle; with nothing more than windy words of no apparent goal, and of no benefit. He probably counted their talk as one of the many tribulations that dwelt upon him, if not more intense than all of them. He felt that his friends are provoking on him without cause, and doing him wrong without any benefit to them.

- ❖ “*Shall words of wind have no end?*” They are indeed words of wind, that may serve temporary boasting, but no righteousness.

Pope Gregory the Great

Losing the true love, man’s heart suffers from void; would not practice faithful friendship; but would walk in complete negativism; disregarding the suffering of his friends; or looking for excuses to charge them with evil. Instead of comforting them, he ridicules their persons and their behavior. So were Job’s friends, in their silence, as well as in their words!

Lack of love, denies man the ability of sanctifying the two gifts of silence and talk. If he keeps silent, his silence would not bear love, but a disregard to those around him; and if he talks, he utters vanity, destroying his own soul, and those of others.

The Holy Book warns us against vain and windy talk, as well against vain silence; That when we are sanctified, our silence and our talk would both be sanctified; That there would be time for talk, and time for silence; and both of them would work for the edification of man, for the comfort of his brethren, and for the glory of God.

“*Like music in time of mourning is ill-timed conversation*” (Sirach 22: 6).

“*When words are many, transgression is not lacking*” (Proverbs 10: 19).

“*Fools talk on and on. No one knows what is to happen, and who can tell anyone what the future holds*” (Eccles 10: 14).

“*Whoever talks too much is detested, and whoever pretends to authority is hated*” (Sirach 20: 8).

¹ إِبَارَشِيَّةٌ شَبِهَ جَزِيرَةَ سَيْنَاءَ: السَّلْمُ إِلَى اللَّهِ، دَرَجَةٌ 4: 99.

“Do not accustom your mouth to coarse, foul language, for it involves sinful speech” (Sirach 23: 17).

“Honor and dishonor come from speaking, and the tongue of mortals may be their downfall” (Sirach 5: 15)

“The wise person advances himself by his words, and one who is sensible pleases the great” (Sirach 20: 29)

“Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body” (Proverbs 16: 24)

“Do not refrain from speaking at the proper moment; and do not hide your wisdom” (Sirach 4: 28)

“Do not talk much with a senseless person, or visit an unintelligent person” (Sirach 22: 14)

- ❖ A sensible man seeks to please God, be silent more often; and if he talks he does not talk much; He utters only what is necessary, and what pleases God¹.
- ❖ In silence you see your mind; But when you use your mind, you are talking within yourself; As in silence the mind delivers the word; And the word of thanks presented to God, is the salvation of man².
- ❖ Whoever talks foolish, has no brain, talking without taking everything into consideration. That is why; examine everything for the sake of doing what is for your own salvation³.

St. Anthony the Great

- ❖ No mind can ever avoid the natural development of things, unless he gets out of the circle of his ‘ego’, and have in himself a place for silence, which is more exalted than thought⁴.
- ❖ The mind cannot keep silent, unless the body does. And the wall that separates them could not be broken down, except by silence and prayer⁵.

St. Mark the hermit

In a message by **Mar. Filoxinus** to the Amidian monks, written from his exile, provoking them to strive for the sake of the upright faith, and to refrain from keeping silent in testifying to **the truth**, he says:

[A monk who does not proclaim his faith is a hypocrite, and does not know God.

A monk who is too shy to show zeal before someone with authority, does not know Christ.

A monk who changes his color, and goes along with everyone, is a hypocrite who puts on the face of the devil.

A monk who is clothed with Christ, yet keeps silent concerning the truth, his garment is the leprosy of ‘Gehazi’.

A monk who lacks grace and keeps silent concerning faith; will have his mouth shut up on the day of judgment, like that of the Legion demons].

¹ 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 33 (الفيلوكاليا).

² 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 107 (الفيلوكاليا).

³ 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 108 (الفيلوكاليا).

⁴ توجيهات منتخبة عن أحاديثه الأخرى، 81 (الفيلوكاليا).

⁵ 226 نصًا إلى أولئك الذين يظنون أنهم بأعمالهم (الذاتية) يتبررون، 31 (الفيلوكاليا).

“I also could speak as you do, If your soul were in my soul’s place. I could heap up words against you, and shake my head against you” (Job 16: 4).

What does ‘Job’ mean by these words? Does he bear hatred and animosity against them; And in the bitterness of his soul, is asking God to let them suffer like he does; so that he would have the chance of taking from them the position of a comforter?!

Does he desire to ridicule them, and to shake his head against them, the way they are doing to him? ; As shaking the head in the East is a sign of scorn (Isaiah 37: 22; Jeremiah 18: 16; Matthew 27: 39).

Pope Gregory the great believes that what ‘Job’ is saying here is a prayer, that comes from a loving man, who knows that they would never learn the practical love, except by entering into the experience of affliction and temptations. His intention is not their destruction, as much as, through affliction, their hearts and their inner depths would probably be reformed.

As to heaping up vain words, and ridiculing them by shaking his head, that is far from his nature to do, nor what he later actually did, when they ultimately came back to seek his prayers and to ask him to offer sacrifices on their behalf. What he says here is intended to rebuke, to provoke them to reconsider their position, and to make them realize that they are uttering windy words, and ridiculing a suffering man. It is as though he is saying to them: [You should do what you wish others to do to you].

And as ‘Job’ represents a symbol of the suffering church; In her desire for the salvation of the wicked, she asks God to use his rod for chastisement and not for revenge; to let them learn from outer grief, how to enjoy the inner love.

❖ He says: ***‘Oh, I wish that your souls are in my soul’s place; that I would comfort you with words, coming out of my lips’***. As sometimes, it is necessary for the evil minds, unable to benefit from the preaching of someone, to be stricken by God. That is what the preacher ‘Job’, in his compassion toward them, seeks from God, not to punish, as much as to reform them. What he says is actually a prayer for their sake, and not a curse against them.

The goal of the blessed ‘Job’, in these words, appear to be, that his friends who did not know how to sympathize with him with love in his grief, need to learn through experience, how to be compassionate in such situations; By which, when they realize more about the outer weakness, they would live in a better inner condition.

Now, we comfort the wicked when they fall under the rod, **when we shake our heads in compassion toward them**, and support them amid the strikes of tribulations, by relieving their grief by nice words.

Pope Gregory the Great

It is befitting for the church – compassionate to everyone –to practice rebuke occasionally; and to seek from the Lord, the chastisement of the fallen, for the sake of their salvation, and not of their perdition.

- ❖ God endures all the weaknesses of men; Yet He would not allow for those who perpetually murmur to go without chastisement¹.
- ❖ A friend who rebukes another in secret, is a wise physician; but he who does it publicly before the eyes of many, is actually a reviler. A righteous man follows the

¹ *Ascetical Homilies*, 48.

lead of the Lord in not chastening man for the sake of avenging his evil, but of reforming him for the benefit of others¹.

St. (Mar) Isaac, the Syrian

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Proverbs 6: 23)

“Whoever loves instruction, loves knowledge; But he who hates reproof is stupid” (Proverbs 12: 1)

“Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction; But he who regards reproof will be honored” (Proverbs 13: 18).

“A fool despises his father’s instructions; but he who receives reproof is prudent” (Proverbs 15: 5)

“The ear that hears the reproof of life will abide among the wise” (Proverbs 15: 31)

“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul” (Proverbs 15: 32).

“Open rebuke is better than than love carefully concealed” (Proverbs 27: 5)

“The rod and reproof gibe wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29: 15)

“Those who hate reproof walk in the sinner’s steps, but those who fear the Lord repent in their heart” (Sirach 21: 6)

“The sinner will shun reproof, and will find a decision according to his liking” (Sirach 32: 17).

“But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief” (Job 16: 5).

Frankly, ‘Job’ spoke to his friends, saying, that even on the normal social level, they have not kept the simplest basis of friendship. And that, if the roles are reversed, he would do to them what they did to him; namely, giving comfort by the mouth and the tongue, and uttering words of wisdom, without partaking of the true feelings. He, as though, suggests to them to exchange positions with him, even for a short while, to feel the impact of the arrows they aimed toward him by their windy words of comfort.

They should have mended his broken bones by gentle words and loving hearts; instead of breaking them by their cruelty; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary”* (Isaiah 50: 4). He who collapses and becomes very sick is in need of the ointment of a physician to soothe his wounds; and not to sharp words that may worsen his condition.

2- ‘JOB’ LAMENTS HIS SITUATION:

I have already referred that Job’s lamentation of his situation, bears magnificent prophecies about the suffering Lord Christ, as an atoning Mediator and Intercessor on our behalf before God the Father. And at the same time, he represents the suffering church, partaking of the passion and cross of her Christ, by those from outside; as well as by the heretics, the adversaries of the divine Truth.

“Though I speak, my grief is not relieved; and though I remain silent, how am I eased?” (Job 16: 6)

‘Job’ is perplexed: If he speaks, what would be the benefit of his words with such people who are cruelly inconsiderate of his feelings; and if he remains silent, would silence ease the bitterness of his soul?! If he pours his complaints, he would be

¹ *Ascetical Homilies*, 48.

misunderstood and accused of murmuring; that would add to his grief. And if he remains silent, he would be accused of being overly depressed. If he defends himself, they would count him as holding fast to self-righteousness; and if he remains silent, they count him as an evil man, who is worthy of greater chastisement!

He who is serious in his life, and seeks the salvation of his soul, would benefit from the words of the holy men of God, as well as from their silence. If they speak, he would receive their words with the Spirit of God for the sake of his own edification; and if they remain silent, he would try to get in touch with their inner meditation, and their enjoyment of the heavenly life. ... Whereas he who is licentiously consistent on rejecting the truth and the eternal life; would be offended by the words of the righteous, as well as by their silence

'Job' has portrays the position of the Lord Christ; who, when he spoke the divine Truth, was accused of blasphemy (Matthew 26: 65); and when He remained silent on the cross, they said: "*He saved others, but Himself He cannot save*" (Matthew 27: 42). His soul was sorrowful even to death; not because of His passion, but because of the bitterness of the sin He carried on our behalf, to put it to death by His own death.

If the soul of the Lord Christ is sorrowful; the church, His bride, would have to keep on moaning all the days of her sojourn on earth, until the elect complement their strife, and the believers enjoy the fellowship of the glories of the ultimate coming of the Lord.

❖ "*what should I do? If I speak my grief is not relieved; and If I endure (in silence), I would not be eased*" ... These words, no doubt apply to the righteous 'job'; As far as the catholic church is concerned, when she speaks, her grief is not relieved; seeing that the wicked are not reformed by her words; And if she remains silent, her very position of silence would make her more sorrowful, seeing that the sin of the wicked is haughtily increasing.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ For you, persecution is for your own benefit; as your love for the cross is rich in you; ... Sufferings are dear to you; as the fire of love of Him who sent His fire on the earth (Luke 12: 49), is kindled in you; Your strife is amazing; because your persecutors are vicious; ... Your battle is marvelous; because your enemies are strong. If it was the heathens who persecute you, your passion would be more endurable; but it is the Jews, the enemies of the cross, who join forces against you. Your passions are more exalted than any other passion; and your crown shines more than any other crown.

How beautiful is he whose passions are great? The beauty of the crown is greater, the greater is the affliction. The Spirit of comfort, who makes you wise, knows how to tell you that "*The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (Romans 8; 18). The affliction of such a short duration, would bring you nearer to keep the limitless perpetual life; And when you die to this world, you reveal by death, the life with Christ.

Who would not wish to gain the eternal life, through the afflictions of the present time?

The world will eventually be dissolved, and its beauty will wither; It will forsake its riches, will lose its authority and honor, and will cast away its splendor; Its life will come to an end, will scatter like flowers, will escape like a shadow, will roll

like a wheel; And together with it, everything will pass away, whether it is comfort or suffering; honor, or dishonor; All its attributes will stick to it; its afflictions would not last long, and its comfort would prove to be fake¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“But now He has worn me out; You have made desolate all my company” (Job 16: 7).

Feeling how untruthful the intention of his friend was; and being sure that what dwelt upon him was allowed by God, he became weary and perplexed.

He became weary for his inability to take the sound decision: whether to speak or to remain silent?! Weary of his friends, and of his own life. But what added to his grief, was that his entire household: his children and his servants have all died; his aids were scattered; and his friends have turned into adversaries, gloating for his tribulation.

“You have shriveled me up, and it is a witness against me; my leanness rises up against me, and bears witness to my face” (Job 16: 8).

Some fathers believe that ‘Job’ as a symbol of the Lord Christ, believe that all what dwelt upon him, are but shadows of what will dwell upon the lord Christ. If they have gathered around ‘Job’ to destroy him, the host of darkness joined forces against the lord Christ, arrested Him and crucified Him; and unfortunately, it was one of His disciples who delivered Him to His enemies.

‘Job’ became as though caught in bitter captivity; became pitifully lean; as his flesh was worn out because of the wounds and sores that covered all his body. His leanness was proclaimed by the looks of his countenance; Wrinkles filled his face, not because of old age, but because of severe sickness; testifying that his complaints were not coming from void.

❖ ‘Job’ proved to acquire great gain through the attack of his adversary (Satan); who did not know that ‘Job’ would be crowned by the same ways he meant to deceive him. That is why ‘Job’ says; ***“You have shriveled me up; and it is a witness against me” (Job 16: 8).*** The adversary did not only shrivel ‘Job’ of his possessions, his sons, and his daughters; but he shriveled his person as well; took hold of, and wrestled with him.

That was a testimony against the righteous ‘Job’, elaborately used by his enemies. And after a little while, God presented these thoughts to ‘Job’, saying: Do you think I should talk to you differently? ... I shall reveal your righteousness; and will show you off as the bearer of God. **In all those circumstances, those evils also bore witness to the righteousness of ‘Job’.**

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

What happened to ‘Job’ as a symbol was realized in the Person of the lord Christ; and what happened to the Lord Christ, has opened the door for His church to partake of His passion and His cross.

While Judas, the traitor, delivered his Master, As far as the church is concerned, the anti-Christ, the liar, will keep on attacking her in secret, until, at the end of time, he will publicly oppose her in her face.

It is a perpetual war between the Son of God and the devil; or between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. In the days of the Lord Christ, its ugly face showed up in the traitor Judas who took the side of the adversaries. And after the ascension of the Lord Christ to heaven, the numerous enemies of Christ will keep on

¹ الرسالة الثامنة عشر إلى الحميريين بنجران راجع ترجمة دكتور بهنام سوني.

opposing her, until the public appearance of the anti-Christ, in a decisive and a bitter battle.

❖ **“My leanness (vanity) rises up against Me”**. Here, ‘Job’ speaks about Judas, who was a disciple and an apostle of Christ (Luke 14: 26, 27, 33); but was found a liar (vain - John 12: 6), and a traitor (Luke 6: 16).

❖ **“Bears witness (challenges) to my face”**. When I said to my disciples: *“I say to you, one of you will betray me”* (John 13: 21); he dared to say to Me in My face: *“Rabbi, Is it I?”* (Matthew 26: 25).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Satan, our adversary and enemy, will fight to keep us in his hand. Who could escape from him? It is He, who comprehend what is said concerning the poor and needy, that *“The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble”* (Psalm 41: 1)¹.

St. Jerome

❖ The enemy will not make a public war against us; but he will try to captivate us through deceit and indirect tricks. He would not put his temptations exposed before our eyes. He, for instance, would not publicly recommend the worship of idols; but, through his deceitful ways, and crafty seductive words he would present the opportunities for it².

St. John Chrysostom

❖ In regular battles, the leaders would not arm women, children, or elders; whereas our Leader, the Lord Christ, would distribute that royal weapon; namely, acquiring Christ Himself, equally among all, to let everyone know about the crafty tricks of the devil³.

Father Theodoret

❖ Every single episode of the Old Testament includes a kind of conquest over the spiritual hosts of Satan⁴.

The scholar Origen

❖ **“The liar opposed me in my face”**⁵. Even at the time of peace, the holy church faces the attack of the liar; as many, who vainly claim to be believers, deny the promise of eternal life. Unable to oppose her preaching publicly, the liar attacks her from the rear, rather than in the face; Until the time of evil comes (the days of the anti- Christ), when he, who despises the church, will stand, publicly and directly in her face, openly using words he quotes from the true faith.

Yet, we should realize, that while confronting such cruel things on the hands of our fellow humans; **they are still not as cruel as the evil spirit that prevails on their minds**; according to the words of the apostle Paul who says: *“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age”* (Ephesians 6: 12).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **The great Savior was scourged**, and by an order of the ruler, he was taken out to be crucified.

¹ Epistle to the Ephesians 3:6:13.

² Epistle to the Ephesians 2:2:6:11.

³ Epistle to the Ephesians 6:11.

⁴ Epistle to the Ephesians (on 6:12).

⁵ التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

He came to His own; but His own did not receive Him; they mockingly sent him away to die together with the transgressors.

Judas, **His betrayer, the lamp that was extinguished**, was later remorseful and ashamed of what he did; despising himself, he brought back the silver he took, and confessed that he betrayed innocent blood.

The chief priests and the elders rebuffed him and replied: “What is that to us? That’s your responsibility”

The precious blood brought terror on those who shed it; they were shaken and trembled with fear.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth; My adversary sharpens His gaze on me” (Job 16: 9).

Who is this enemy who tears him in His wrath? Is he Eliphaz or one of his fellows, who unjustly crushed him with their charges? Or is he Satan, who, finding no rest in seeing someone truly worship God, would provoke his wicked hosts against him?

Some believe, that, in his weakness, ‘Job’ sees that his enemy is God Himself, who allowed for him, for no apparent reasons, to face such horrible temptations. If “*A king’s wrath is a messenger of death*” (Proverbs 16: 14); How would be that of the King of kings? But, from the context, it is obvious that ‘Job’ did not mean it that way.

❖ ***“He directed his wrath against me; threatened me; gnashed at me with his teeth; My adversary sharpens his gaze on me” (Job 16: 9 LXX).*** Because the wrath he embraces against the holy church is scattered; Satan works through what he puts in the hearts of his followers, committed to him.

His “teeth’ are these persecutors and executioners against the righteous; who torture the members of the church by temptations. Whereas his “eyes” are those who design the plans and give the counsel for harming her. when he hunts, through the cruel children of perdition, the life of her righteous members; And sharpens his horrible “gaze” on her through the counsel of the wicked, and the endless plans he designs to keep on torturing her more and more. The incarnate Truth (the Lord Christ), for preaching His message, chose poor and simple commoners; The apostatized angel, on the other hand, that cursed anti-Christ, at the end of the world, to preach his vanity, will choose the crafty and those with distorted minds, who possess the knowledge of this world.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Notice how the Jewish nation was a harlot!

How she despised her Father and hated Him in Sinai; and when His Son incarnated, she took hold of Him, hanged Him on the cross, and stood dancing, laughing, and reviling.

Come, Moses, See what the bride you brought from Egypt is doing to her pure Groom!

Come and see the banquet she set before Him; how she brought the myrrh, mixed the vinegar. How, instead of manna, she gave Him vinegar; and instead of the bitter water, that he made sweet for her, she put the myrrh in it for Him.

Come and see, how the elect vine, produced bad grapes!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“They gape at me with their mouth, They strike me reproachfully on the cheek, They gather together against me” (Job 16: 10).

About the Lord Christ, against whom, the hosts of evil also gathered together; the same words were prophesied: “*They gape at me with their mouth*” (Psalm 22: 13); and: “*They will strike the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek*” (Micah 5: 1). And all those prophecies were literally realized (Matthew 26: 27).

❖ “*They struck me on the cheek; they consummated my reproach*”¹ (10) ... The same way, the wicked keep on striking the holy church on the cheek, when they persecute her good preachers. Those lost souls assume that they are doing something great, when they put an end to their life.

After saying: “*They strike me on the cheek*”, it is befitting to add: “They consummated my reproach”, as these reproaches consummate their fulfillment, through chastening the mind of the church by their own ways.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **They blindfolded His eyes, struck Him on the face**, and said: ‘Prophecy to us, who is the one who struck You’

When they struck the highly raised head, the angels were terrified!

They tried to eclipse the Sun of righteousness, lest it shines and reveals their corruption to the whole world.

The bride blindfolded the eyes of the Groom, lest He sees her corruption and harlotry.

They blindfolded the eyes of the Physician, lest He bandages their wounds and heal them.

Look how Christ endured those transgressors!

How He endured that ignorant who **spat in His face!**

How did you dare, O cursed tongue, to throw that spit?!

How could you, O earth, watch ridiculing the divine Son?!

That happened for Adam’s sake, the transgressor, who was worthy to be spat on;

But in his place, the Lord delivered His face to receive spitting; According to His promise in Isaiah; not to hide

His face from the shame of spitting!

The Lord, compassionate on the weakness of His servant (Adam), received the shame in his place!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“*God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked*” (Job 16: 11).

The wicked could never have the power over the lord Christ; But, having taken upon Himself to become a sacrifice of iniquity for the world, for His love of mankind; And in obedience to His Father, the Philanthropic; They were given that power from above (John 19: 11).

That was how the righteous ‘Job’ felt: Counting all his life in the hands of the Lord; and even what the wicked do to him are allowed by God, He says: “*God has delivered me to the ungodly*” (11); With that same spirit, David counted Shimei’s curses on him as being allowed by God (2 Samuel 16: 5-13).

God allows, even the ungodly, with a complete enjoyment of their freedom, to become His sword against their ungodly fellow brethren, or for the chastening God’s own children to justify them (Isaiah 10: 5).

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

- ❖ When ‘Job’ says that this is allowed by “God”, it is obvious that he means “God, the Father”, because the “the only-begotten Son” would be submitted to those ‘passions’; not only through His full free will, but also in accordance with that of His Father, as the will of the Father and the Son is one and the same; Intending to consummate His amazing work for our sake, and to suffer for the sake of our salvation.

Well, let us now compare what ‘Job’ says with the words of the Savior:

“God has delivered me to the ungodly”; namely to ‘Caiaphas’, the high priest, who questioned Him, saying: *“I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God”* (Matthew 26: 63). To this, he got a response that he did not deserve; Yet, because He adjured Him, He answered him: *“It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven”* (Matthew 26: 64); to which Caiaphas tore his clothes, as though he heard a blasphemy!

“And turned Me over to the hands of the wicked” (11). Namely, to the hands of Caiaphas and the other Jewish rulers. How could they not be wicked, those who cried out to Pilate, saying: *“away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas – who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder”* (Luke 23: 18, 19).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“I was at ease, but he has shattered me; He has also taken me by the neck, and shaken me to pieces” (Job 16: 12).

Before the temptation, ‘Job’ was at ease, enjoying God’s temporal goods; But in the middle of it, he felt that what is dwelling on him is not haphazard; but it is as though God has shattered him, and has taken him by the neck; like a father holding his son in anger; As though He has chosen him from among all men to set him as a target, at which to aim His arrows!

- ❖ **“I was at ease, but He has shattered me; He has taken hold of my (hair) and has taken it out”** (LXX). It could be truly said that the Lord Christ calls His apostles ‘His hair’, being the adornment of the head. When He was with them, they were at ease; but once they left Him and fled away because of the persecution, they were shattered (scattered). The Lord Christ said to His disciples: *“All of you will be made to stumble because of me this night”* (Matthew 26: 31) ...; then added: *“for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered’”* (Matthew 26: 31; Zechariah 13:17).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ We marvel, when we look at the Victorious, the Son of the free, standing in His trial, and smitten on His cheek!

At the Sun, embracing the pillar (to which the Lord was tied to be scourged)!

At the fire being scourged (Matthew 27: 26)!

At the Light detested by the darkness (John 8: 12; 1: 5)!

At the God of Gabriel, whom Caiaphas’ servant struck with the palm of his hand (John 18: 22)!

At the young Lion, bit by the little lowly jackals (Hosea 5: 14)!

At the Fearsome above the Cherubim, hanged on the tree of the cross!

At Him, who grants the glory to the lilies of the field, and the beautiful assortment of colors to the flowers (Matthew 6: 28), hanged naked in shame!

At Him, who planted the paradise, given the vinegar and myrrh to drink (genesis 2; 8; Matthew 27: 34)!

At the Flame, pierced in His side with a spear!

At Him, who crowned the sun with rays, crowned with a crown of thorns (Matthew 27: 29) ¹!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“His archers surround me; they pierce my (kidneys), with no pity; they pour out my gall on the ground” (Job 16: 13).

‘Job’ counted those who contributed in the dwelling of his tribulations, as archers commanded by God to aim their arrows at him; so accurately aimed, to pierce his kidneys with no pity!

“They poured my gall on the ground”; the same way the hunter of a wild animal, after slaying it, detestably pours its gall on the ground!

“He breaks me with wound upon wound; He runs at me like a warrior” (Job 16: 14).

‘Job’ was not struck just once, but successively, wound upon wound; He neither instantly died, nor had the chance to take his breath between one strike and the next; expecting all the time to get more and more; with no hope of an end to his calamity.

He probably felt **God running at him like a warrior**; And doing to him like what the cruel kings of the old times did, when they used to throw members of the defeated royal family to the ground; and, as a sign of humiliation, put their feet on their necks.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that ‘Job’ also speaks here of the devil who would not stop running, like a mighty warrior, against the church, to snatch her weak members captives under his authority. He attacks the church as a congregation, as well as every one of her members personally, by every possible way, to destroy as many of them as he can.

❖ ***“He breaks me again and again” (14).*** The holy Church breaks again and again, through her weak members; when one sin is added to another, until the iniquity reaches a serious level; like when greed makes one steal, then provokes him to defend himself by deceit and lies.

“He runs at me like a warrior” (LXX). The victim of the devil could easily confront him, if he is not convinced by his views, concerning matters of faith; But, in case his soul gets used to his convictions; the more it submits to them, the more difficult it would be to wrestle against them.

Our fierce adversary, like a ***“mighty warrior”*** makes war against a believer, through an ugly habit; But the holy church, most of the time, intervenes to bring the minds of her believers back to repentance, and cleanses them of their sins, through the activity of man’s own readiness to chasten himself by himself.

Pope Gregory the Great

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi, in his message (19), he sent to the monastery of (Mar) Isaac, presented a living portrait of the opposition of the devil against mankind; in which he says, that he started his war with lying (John 8: 44); and intends to end it with vanity:

¹ الرسالة الثلاثون راجع ترجمة دكتور بهنام سوني.

In the **first generation** in the Garden of Eden, he put animosity between God and His image (Adam and Eve).

In the **seventh generation** he taught man adultery, and defiled the children of God (of the pure Sheth), with the well-adorned beautiful daughters of the fugitive Cain.

In the **tenth generation**, when the earth got full of transgressors; God sent His law on the hand of Moses, as a lamp to illuminate the darkness of the earth.

In the **fourteenth generation**, when idol worship prevailed on the earth, and God was forgotten even among His people, God sent His prophet Elijah – the second Moses – to proclaim his zeal on the glory of God against vanity.

And **at the end of time**, God sent His Son incarnate, to become one of us, to make us like Him and with Him; Gave Himself to us to bring us to his Father; Descended to the deepest of the deep, to bring us up to the power of the heights; and greatly humiliated Himself, to despise by His humiliation, that transgressor, who intended to proclaim himself god.

❖ The enemy makes war to change man form one form to another; And once man finds himself in the new form, Satan brings upon him a condition of depression, and let him blame himself for changing his original form! He keeps on disturbing man all the time, in everything he does, to draw him to his crafty and adversary counsels¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, and laid my head in the dust” (Job 16: 15).

Because his magnificent attire were not any more befitting to his body covered with sores, and to his present miserable conditions; he sew for himself a sackcloth; as there was no one else to do it for him.

And as the **‘head’** referred to authority and power, he laid it in the dust, which he counts as being the most suitable place, not only to sit on, but also to bury in it his dignity and authority!

❖ What does he mean by the sackcloth and the dust, but the remorse; and by the skin, but the sins of the body!

Pope Gregory the Great

“My face is flushed from weeping, and my eyelids are the shadow of death” (Job 16: 16).

‘Job’ did not only lose joy, but the time became for him more befitting for shedding tears for the sake of his sins, of God’s chastisements on him, and of the cruel stand of his friends. His face became flushed from weeping, and his eyelids carried the shadow of death.

Although His whole face, and not just his eyes, flushed from his flooding tears, Yet, he did not fear death, which had no more authority over him. He considers it as just a passing shadow; Seeing by the inspiration of prophecy, the Lord Christ on the chariot of death, destroying death itself, and granting His church the power of His resurrection; For which she sings, praising Her Lord risen from the death, saying ***“He treaded over death by His own death”***.

❖ ***“On my eyelids is the shadow of death” (16).*** He does not say death, but ***“the shadow of death”***; as the Savior is not dead, but is just ‘sleeping’. That is why

¹ الرسالة الأربعون راجع ترجمة دكتور بهنام سوني.

‘Jacob’ or ‘Israel’, prophesying about the death of the Savior for our sake, utters the following words in his final blessing, saying: “*From (my seed), my son, you have gone up, He crouches down, He stretches out like a lion, like a lioness – who dares rouse Him up?*” (See Genesis 49: 9). He who roused all humanity up, needs nobody to rouse Him up;. By His own will, He roused Himself up.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ “*My eyelids were darkened*” (LXX). Because those who are entrusted with guarding the safety of God’s church, and are truly called “*her eyelids*”, are however unable to comprehend the secret ordinances of God; the ‘eyelids’ of the holy church are said to be ‘*darkened*’.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Life ridiculed death, saying: “*O Death, where is your victory?! O Hades, where is your sting?!*” (1 Corinthians 54).

At the dawn of Sunday, the gate of heaven, that was closed on Friday, in the face of the angels, lest they descend to Golgotha, was opened before them. They hastened to descend with their white attire, to receive our king who freed the captives, on His return to His Father.

The new tomb became the house of wedding, set in the garden for the slain Groom, who brought the bride back from the captivity of the enemies.

To its gate came and assembled the angels in their white attire; ... the women disciples with the spices they had prepared (Luke 23: 56); ... Simon and John, came running after hearing the good news (John 20: 3-8); ... and the eyes of Cleopas, and his brother Simon, were opened to see and to testify to the resurrection (Luke 24: 31). ... The disciples revealed their faces, and the opponents bowed them down!

Annas and Caiaphas became mute.

Judas was hanging from a tree.

The rulers of the Synagogue slapped their faces.

The gate of Hades was closed; and the gate of the Baptistry was opened.

The cross was erected by the rivers of water;

The rational flock came to drink from the water that poured from the cross.

Standing by the spring of water, they looked at Him clothed by Light; to be clothed in turn by it.

The whole flock became, like the cross, clothed by light as white as snow¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

- ❖ Once Christ came and died for the sake of the world, death is no more called death, but ‘sleep’ and ‘repose’².
- ❖ Do not you know how the cross reformed many wrong things? Did it not destroy Death; and abolished sin? Did it not put an end to the power of Satan? Did it not fulfill the being of our good body? Did it not reform the whole world? ... And yet, you still do not trust it³?!
“Who can tell of the entire Lord’s wonderful works?” (Psalm 105: 2). **After death, we became eternal!** Do you realize the extent of your conquest, and how you reached it? Do you neither know how you acquired that conquest with no labor nor

¹ الرسالة الحادية والثلاثون راجع ترجمة دكتور بهنام سوني.

² *De coem. et cruce. PG 49:394 B.*

³ *Baptismal Instructions, 12:57.*

sweat on your part? Your weapons were not covered by blood; you did not stand on the line of battle; You were not wounded; You have not seen a battle; Yet you acquired it! **Your strife is your enjoyment of your Christ, and the crown of conquest became yours.**

Now, as long as the conquest is ours, It is befitting for us as soldiers, to sing with joyful voices, the praises of conquest; to praise our Lord, saying: “*Death is swallowed up in victory, O Death, where is your victory? O Hades, where is your sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15: 54, 55)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

3- ‘JOB’ RESORTS TO THE JUST GOD:

“Although no violence is in my hands, and my prayer is pure” (Job 16: 17).

The testimony of his upright conscience did not forsake him. He does not recall that he has ever unjustly treated anyone; that he has not raised a prayer for something temporal; nor has stretched his hands for prayer, while defiled with any oppression.

❖ **“Although no violence is in his hands” (17).** In the Holy Book inspired by God, it is said about the savior: “*He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth*” (Isaiah 53: 9).

“My prayer is pure”. Having been pure, even from anger, it was obvious to the Jews who crucified the Savior, that

He prayed, saying: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23: 34). ‘Job’ was both a prophet and a bearer of God; **having been able to see the passion of Christ as though happening before him**; he spoke about His person, to demonstrate His passion to the predecessors of the Jewish people, to make them realize them well.

Yet he did not speak boastfully, but to let his friends, and all the future generations follow his lead, in presenting a pure prayer.

A pure prayer comforts and help the righteous to be worthy of faith; and to keep it the way St. Paul comprehends it: “*I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting*” (1 Timothy 2: 8). Prayer will be pure when the hands are pure of greed and every blemish. For how could man be righteous, unless his inner man is free of wrath and doubting when he prays? (Romans 7: 22). In prayer, we are talking to God Himself, and approaching the great King, who washes us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanses us from our sins (Psalm 51: 3).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ I recall I mentioned that the righteous ‘Job’, who bears a symbol of the holy church, sometimes speaks with the voice of the body (the church), and sometimes with that of the Head (the Lord Christ). While talking about her members, he suddenly talks as her Head, adding: **“Although no violence is in my hands, and my prayers are pure” (17).** He suffered, “*He who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth*” (1 Peter 2: 22); He endured the cross for the sake of our salvation. However, He above any others raises pure prayers to God the father, for the sake of His persecutors, saying: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23: 24). How could there be a more pure prayer?!

¹ *De coem. et cruce. PG 49:396D-397A.*

He grants His intercession, even to those whose hands practiced the iniquity; as the same blood shed by His persecutors, after believing in Him, they have come to drink it, proclaiming that He is the Son of God.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ As the purity of His prayer is set upon those circumstances; it is not un-befitting of Him, in His prayer to the Father, to ask Him to forgive them, if He Himself grants others His forgiveness¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Go on, pray; humbly ask for compassion; and take from the Grantor of goods.

He is the One who receives all prayers and supplications; No prayer goes to His father without Him; and no gift comes from His Father, except through Him, and on His hands.

He received **Hanna's prayer** in His holy temple; and brought to her the mercies from His Father's house.

He **listened to Jonah's prayer** from the belly of the whale, and brought it up as an offering to His Father.

He listened to the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax-collector in His holy temple, and received that of the latter.

He **listens to the prayers of the whole world**; and presents them the same way they are ministered.

- ❖ The pure prayer finds its way to God; It talks to Him; listens to Him, and trusts in Him.
- ❖ Don't ever despair and assume that your supplication comes back void.
Don't ever say: I prayed much and did not receive; and would probably never receive²!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

***"O earth, do not cover my blood, And let my cry have no resting place"* (Job 16: 18).**

Some interpret this, that he believes as though his friends, by pouring vain accusations against him, have shed his innocent blood; So he asks the earth to testify to him against them; and not to keep his cries anywhere, but to let them go up to God in heaven.

And others interpret it, that if his friends have accused him of evil and hypocrisy; he is asking the earth to testify, if he ever has shed innocent blood, or committed a crime, let it expose and proclaim it (Genesis 4: 10-11; Isaiah 26).

- ❖ ***"Do not cover ..."*** I wish Job's tribulations are never forgotten! I wish the sweat of his labor, that pours while practicing virtue and every work of perseverance, does not dry up! I wish the sores of that righteous man become revealed to the eyes of the public, to provoke them to purify themselves by their desire to follow his lead!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Remember his pure conscience and his blameless prayer: ***"O earth, do not cover the blood of my body"*** (Job 16: 18 LXX); to be ***"set as incense before the Lord"*** (Psalm 141: 2); and not to have ***"a resting place in the earth"***.

¹ *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness, 25.*

² الرسالة الثامنة والثلاثون راجع ترجمة دكتور بهنام سوني.

The prayer of the righteous “*will reach to the clouds*” (Sirach 35: 17); Whereas the earth will open up its mouth to hide that of the sinner in the blood of the body; As God said to Cain the murderer: “***You are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand***” (Genesis 4: 11-12)¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ “***O earth, do not cover my blood; I wish my cry would have no resting place in you***” (Job 16: 18 LXX). It was said to man when he sinned: “*You are dust (earth), and to dust you will return*” (Genesis 3: 19). **This earth** does not cover the blood of our Savior, from which every sinner takes for himself, the price of his salvation; to confess, to praise, and to proclaim it to everyone. Moreover, **the earth have not covered His blood; as the holy church has preached the secret of His salvation all over the world.**

Notice how he added: “*I wish my cry would have no resting place in you*”, as the blood of salvation that is taken, is itself the cry of our savior; according to the words of Paul: “*The blood of sprinkling speaks better things than that of Abel*” (Hebrew 12: 24). About Abel’s blood it is said to Cain: “*Your brother’s blood is crying out to Me from the ground*” (Genesis 4: 10); But Jesus’ blood speaks better things than that of Abel; For Abel’s blood brought about the death of his brother; whereas that of the Lord brought about life even for His persecutors. As the secret of the passions of our Lord, are not without benefit to us; We are committed to follow the lead of what we acquire, and preach whom we worship.

Pope Gregory the Great

“***Surely even now my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high***” (Job 16: 19).

So as not to be accused anew, of referring self-righteousness to himself, he seeks from heaven to testify to him, and from Him who dwells in it to proclaim his upright character.

❖ If you ask, where and when that testimony took place? I shall answer you: ‘In the River Jordan’, when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, and “*a voice came from heaven, saying: ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’*” (Matthew 3: 17).

Here, I want to clarify that there is neither voice nor image for God; As He is beyond of anything of the sort.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ “***My witness is in heaven***” (19). Not because of his wealth, as God needs no reward; He who is not preoccupied with the love of the world (Matthew 6: 19-20).

“***And my evidence is on high***” (19). He, who is aware of the works, the words, and the movements of thoughts, presents to us this unforgettable memory of ‘Job’, kept in the divine books.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ “***Surely even now, my witness is in heaven, and (the fellowship of my heart) is on high***” (Job 16:19 LXX). When the Son came down to earth, He had a witness in heaven; namely the Father, according to the words of the Lord Jesus: “*The Father Himself who sent me, has testified to me*” (John 5: 37). He described well as “*the*

¹ The Prayer of Job and David I: 8: 27.

fellowship of my heart”; as they have one will, and one counsel; the Father works always in unity with the Son ...

This can also apply to the voice of His ‘body’; namely the holy church; that endures the tribulations of this life, for the sake of the high grace, which leads her to the eternal rewards.

Aiming to the glory of the resurrection, the church belittles the physical death. What she suffers is temporary; while what she anticipates is eternal. There is no doubt in her mind concerning these eternal blessings. Seeing by her mind the resurrection of His body, her hope becomes stronger; Counting what she saw as something that happened to the (Head); she certainly hopes to have it realized in the (body); namely, in herself ...

So it should be with the believing congregation; when they suffer from adversity, or become disturbed by bitter afflictions; raising their minds toward hope in the coming glory, and trusting in the resurrection of the Redeemer, they should say together with the righteous ‘Job’: ***“I see my witness in heaven, and (the fellowship of my heart) is on high”***.

He rightly calls it **‘fellowship’**; as He, not only recognized our nature by creating it; but also by acquiring to Himself what is ours.

This voice could also apply to every one of us together with the blessed ‘Job’. As he who aims toward human commendation in what he does, seeks a witness on earth; whereas he, who longs to please the Almighty God by what he does, seeks a **witness in heaven**.

It often happens that even our good works, could be considered wrong by some ungodly persons; Yet he who has a witness in heaven, does not need to fear the rebukes of men.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ When the wise get good things on earth; they send a part ahead of them; according to the words of ‘Job’: *“My witness is in heaven”* (19). By the command of the Lord, those who acquire possessions should use them to create for themselves, friends and treasures in heaven¹.

St. Aphrahat

“My friends scorn me; My eyes pour out tears to God” (Job 16: 20).

His friends did not only oppose him, but they also went so far as spoiling his reputation, and designing plots against him. He, consequently, no longer expects from them any compassion or comfort; and intends to pour out tears before God alone; offering Him his broken and contrite heart, which He would never despise! When his friends scorned his cries, he presents his tears as a pure offering to God, the hope of the afflicted!

- ❖ ***“I wish my supplication come before the Lord”***; as, when my prayer reaches up high, my enemies will become no more; ... *“The righteous will stand with great confidence”* (wisdom of Solomon 5; 1); The snare will break; and the sparrow being free, will fly away (psalm 124: 70); The persecutors bow their heads, and the persecuted rejoice (Matthew 5: 10).
- ❖ ***“Let my eyes pour out tears before Him”***. By intention he says ‘before’ Him; namely, ‘before God’; as crying before men, even the wise, is completely futile for those who pray. It is surely foolish to seek glory from people.

¹ *Demonstration 22 of Death and the Latter Times, 10.*

“Put my tears into Your bottle” (Psalm 56: 8); the more tears we pour in prayer before the Lord, the more the deceitful will flee and are destroyed (Psalm 5: 6); while the king will be clothed with compassion. Tears cleanse the souls and the bodies, purify every defilement and blemish, and turn those who cry whiter than snow (Psalm 51: 7).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ *“My friends are full of words, but my eyes pour out tears to God”* (LXX). By the eyes he means the intention of the heart; according to the words of the Lord: *“If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light”* (Matthew 6: 22)

Pope Gregory the Great

“Oh, that ‘One’ might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor!” (Job 16: 21).

Knowing for sure that no man could judge in his favor; He would rather stand before God who searches the heart, and is aware of the thoughts and the intentions. He, alone, is the One to judge and to justify him through His rich grace.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that the ‘One’ or ‘man’ referred to here, is the Son of Man, who incarnated for our sake (John 1: 12; Romans 3; 1 John 4: 2; 2 John 7), who sits on the right hand of the Father (Psalm 110: 1). Being equal to the Father in royal dignity, He intercedes for us, and nullifies the charges of the devil against us.

“For when a few years are finished, I shall go the way of no return” (Job 16: 22).

‘Job’ felt that death is at hand; and in a few years he would depart to his eternal home, not ever to return to this world.

❖ *“Our years are counted, and their end is at hand”* (22); namely, I am going the way of no return; about which

David says: *“I go the way of all the earth”* (1 Kings 2: 2).

Thus, If it is impossible for man to return from this way, as is also testified by David, when his son died, saying: *“I Shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”* (2 Samuel 12: 23); let us then prepare the necessary requirements for the journey; namely, the virtues; As on that way, we will not get thirsty, hungry, or naked, nor lose the glory of life.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

‘Job’ realized that the Messiah will not come during his time. In a biography of **Abbot Sisoës the great**, it came, that, Although the true believer rejoices during the moments of the departure of his soul from this world, Yet, feeling his weakness, he wishes to stay a little longer, to have a chance to repent.

About him it is said, that, at the moments before his final departure, he was heard saying: [Behold, there is Father Anthony coming; A chorus of prophets, and of apostles are approaching]; He was heard as though talking with someone, and said to those around him: [I am asking the angels who have come to receive my soul, to give me a few more moments to repent]. When he was told that he is in no need for repentance, and he responded by saying: [I do not think I have even started!], they all realized that he is of a very exalted stature of holiness and perfection. Then, when his countenance suddenly shone with an incredible splendor, he proclaimed: [Behold, Here is the Lord Himself, saying: Bring to me the vessel of the wilderness!] At this

moment he delivered his spirit; and there was something like lightening, and a fragrance of incense filled the house¹.

As the Lord destroyed the authority of death, and shone on us with the splendor of His resurrection, the believers started crying, yet not for fear of death, but rather because of their sins, and longing to set forth to be with the Lord Christ.

❖ According to the law of nature, we cry for the dead. But we should rather cry for the sake of our salvation.

Those who lose their loved ones would think of nothing but of those whom they have lost; while we, who have lost the heavenly kingdom, would think of everything, but of our great loss!

No one, even of a royal status, would feel ashamed to submit to that natural law of grief for losing one of his close relatives; he would easily and with no effort, fall to the ground, cry bitterly, and practice the things that befit the time. While we, who should grieve for losing our own soul, do nothing of the sort, claiming excuses of illness, or even of being highly educated!

We are slothful, even to do what does not require a physical effort on our part!

I wonder, What kind of effort do we need to practice the remorse of heart, to watch in prayers, or to think about our iniquities?! The things that may draw God's compassion on us²?!

St. John Chrysostom

In the biography of **St. Ephram the Syrian**, referred to **St. Gregory of Nyssa**, It came that he was preoccupied with pouring tears for the sake of enjoying his eternal salvation:

[Whenever I recall the flood of his tears, **I cannot help crying myself! There was never a day or night, or even a single moment, I saw his watching eyes not glittering with tears!**

According to him, he used to cry for the sake of the misery and foolishness of everyone in general, **and for the fall of certain individual in particular**. You see him crying and mourning, not only while speaking about issues of remorse, of ethics, or the control of life; **but even during prayers of praise to God!**³].

❖ Grief, crying, tears, and lamentation, are due over the sins and iniquities that have dwelt upon our soul, and brought it down to perdition; That they may probably bring it back to God!

God grieves on the image that was lost because of our sins. To God, the soul is more precious than His whole creation. Through sin it became dead; and yet, O sinner, you do not care!

Pour a flood of tears! And bring pleasure to God⁴!

St. (Mar) Ephram the Syrian

❖ Let us have compassion on ourselves; Let us walk our way toward the compassion of God the Father! Let us sow tears; to reap joy⁵!

❖ Tears are the flood that pours on our sins; and cleanses the world⁶.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

¹ *The Saying of the Desert Fathers (Mowbrays, London, 1975): Sisoës, 14.*

² *De Compunctione 1:10 PG 47:409 f.*

³ *PG 46:829 D.*

⁴ *Sermones Exegetici, In Is. 26:10.*

⁵ *Oratio 16:14 PG 35:952 B.*

⁶ *Oratio 4, Contra Julianum 1. PG 35:593 C.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 16
YOU ARE ALL MISERABLE COMFORTERS

- ❖ I often long to hear a word of comfort from someone.
But I realized that they are all miserable comforters.
No one could enter into my depths.
No one could share my feelings or partake of my moaning.
But You are the only One who loves every single human soul.
They may utter sweet words with their lips
But, do they truly have a heart big enough to bear my weaknesses?!
Even though they may utter soft words, yet they still criticize with their eyes!
Only Your eyes see what is good and beautiful in me.
- ❖ Grant me. Not to lean upon human comfort.
For You are my comfort and the joy of my heart.
Even if you wound me; Your wounds would bear the anointment for my healing.
Together with Your chastisements, I feel the exalt sweetness of Your love.
- ❖ Grant me amid my sufferings, not to be preoccupied with the looks or the words of men.
But to be only preoccupied with looking at You, the source of every comfort.
- ❖ Let everyone ridicule me.
In their ridicule, I see some benefit for my depths.
I shall bear their ridicule;
As You alone will shine on me.
You alone, O the Sun of righteousness, will scatter my darkness,.
- ❖ I marvel, how, if men keep silence, I feel that they disregard me;
And if they talk, I feel their words pierce my heart like deadly arrows!
As for You, Your silence carries me to see Your glories.
And Your words flare my heart with Your love.
Instruct me when to keep silent, and when to talk.
Let the law of Your love, be the guide for my silence and of my talk.
- ❖ Let me bear You in my depths; Let me introduce You to my brethren.
Let me introduce You, by my prayers for them.
And by my words that bear the sweetness of your love.
Let me aim at them, not the arrows of criticism that destroy.
But those of Your love, that, even when they wound, they will also heal.
- ❖ Your comforts to me proclaim Your presence in me.
When I see You, O the Crucified, I enjoy suffering, even to death.
When I see You destroy by Your cross, the authority of the devil,
I realize that the devil's opposition is for my own victory'
Let him then, strike as hard as he can; as I am hidden in You.
By You, I enjoy a crown of glory that will never fade.
- ❖ My enemy who testifies against me, is actually opening for me the door to overcome him.
It is an endless war.
But what can the devil do to You, O my Savior?!
Can the darkness overcome the light?!

Can the anti-Christ confiscate Your kingdom?!

What a worthless enemy!

What a deceitful and a crafty enemy!

But You are the undisputable Truth.

- ❖ Amid my affliction I open my eyes, to see You.
Even if you allow for chastisement, You are still a Father.
Even when the affliction becomes harder, Your eyes reveal Your compassion.
The devil has no authority on me.
He can manage to distort my image;
But You are always the secret of my eternal splendor, and my heavenly comfort.
- ❖ The devil wants to strike me on the cheek.
To keep me from testifying to You.
Yet Your word in my mouth is a flaring fire.
That the enemy will never be able to quench,
Nor can he mute.
- ❖ The devil may indeed be a mighty monster!
Who will never despair of attacking the church as a whole, and everyone of its members in particular.
As he started his war against the first man in paradise,
He will continue making war along the successive generations with various means.
He will never stop until the end of time.
He craftily works hard, through the anti-Christ,
Using every chance to destroy us,
To turn our life into hell,
Until we loose hope in our salvation,
Until our eyes darkens with despair,
And until we assume that death has eternally captivated us.
But Your death, having granted us the resurrection,
And Your ascension, having opened before us the gates of heaven,
The devil will no more be able to shut us up in Hades, with its eternal darkness.
We shall no more not fear him; For You, O Redeemer, are our victory!
Our resurrection and our crown.
- ❖ Let the enemy strike hard; The earth itself cries out!
The earth will never accept to swallow innocent blood, but will cry out to You.
The earth could not shut You up in the grave; For You are the Heavenly One!
Let me unify with You; so as not to return to the dust of the earth.
But By You, I become heavenly.
And enjoy the heavenly glories.
- ❖ Amid my sufferings, I see You testify to me in heaven.
I see You testify to me, by Your death, resurrection, and ascension.
For, as I partake of Your passion,
I enjoy the fellowship of Your glories.
- ❖ Amid my sufferings, my tears pour, not before men, but before You.
While humans are miserable comforters,
You treasure my tears.
- ❖ Amid my sufferings, I anticipate my crossing over to You.

My years are few, and the end of my life is near.
I am going along the way of the whole earth.
But not alone, For You are with me!
To You I go to settle down eternally!

CHAPTER 17

HOPE FOR THE DIVINE MEDIATOR

'Job' continues his talk, showing that no one stands by him; as his friends see him like a horrible dragon!

An upright man marvels when he sees the wicked in prosperity; yet he fears, lest he may go astray from the way of righteousness, to partake of their prosperity (8-9).

'Job' also thinks that his friends might have gone too far in their hope to correct the situation, as far as he is concerned, saying to him; "*The light is near in the face of darkness*" (10-12). All what he sees now, is death, and the complete loss of hope in this world (13-16).

Anticipating his near departure from this world; and seeing how his friends have done him wrong, he resorts to God, with great hope that He will stand by him, bring him justice, and reveal his innocence.

1- The graves are ready for me	1
2- A cry for help from the Lord	2 – 7
3- Righteousness will prevail	8 – 9
4- There is no hope in this world	10 – 16

1- THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME:

"My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, The graves are ready for me" (Job 17: 1).

Reaching such a bitter condition, 'Job' counts himself as good as dead. He could have entertained the thought that eventually, he will cross over from this world with no return. But here, amid his bitterness, he sees his spirit broken, the light of his days extinguished; and lying on such a heap of trash, he is as though dwelling already in the grave.

Instead of saying '*The (grave) is ready for me*', he says "*The (graves) are ...*" As though the graves of his ancestors are getting ready to take him in as well. As long as this is the case, it is befitting for the believer, to be prepared to enter into them as a conqueror and a victor.

- ❖ Nobody can go there, unless he is called by God. If it is God, who connected the soul to the body; It is not up to man to loosen their bond by any means. 'Job' says this, not on account that the common enemy is threatening him with death; but, because of the painful condition of his body, he prays to God to release him from the world.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ When the elect feel that their departure from this world is near, and that the day of ultimate judgment is drawing closer; And they see in themselves any trace of carnal thought; Their minds tremble with fear, and their souls become crushed with the contrition of remorse. Anticipating the coming of the firm divine Judge, they tend to judge and to chasten themselves more strictly.

The lost, on the other hand, who assume that they will live forever, keep on practicing their wickedness.

While the spirit of the righteous would be crushed by contrition; that of the wicked would swell up with haughtiness¹.

The righteous realizes the perfect life by thinking about death; and does his best to avoid falling in the net of sin; according to the wise words: “*In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin*” (Sirach 7: 36).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Whenever you go to sleep, say to your bed: [This very night, you probably will be my grave; for I do not know whether, instead of the temporary sleep, this would be my ultimate one!].

As long as you still have two legs, hasten to work, before they get tied by the shackle which, once put, it will never get loose!

As long as you still have two hands, stretch them in prayer, before the two arms fall down from their sockets, and you become unable any more to draw them up!

As long as you still have fingers, let them make on yourself the sign of the cross; before death comes, and deprives them of their ability to do it!

As long as you still have two eyes, fill them with tears, before the time comes, when dust cover your black clothes; and your eyes become fixed on one direction, with a stir that you cannot recognize nor apprehend. Fill your eyes with tears, as long as your heart has the ability to discern; before your soul depart, and leave your heart like a house deserted by its tenants!

Be wise, and do not get deceived by expecting a long-lasting life²!

❖ Once a trader finishes his day’s work, he hastens to go home. A man (a monk), who has not yet consummated his role in the strife of righteousness, would feel bitter, when he thinks of his departure from his body. But when he realizes in his depths, that “*he has redeemed his time*” (Ephesians 5: 16), and has gained his ‘advance payment’; he would be longing to see the anticipated life. Like a merchant sailing on the sea, who would always be dreading that waves may suddenly get violent, and shatter the hope of his work; Man (or monk), as long as he is still in this world, would always dread that a sudden and an unexpected unfavorable situation may destroy the achievements he strived to accomplish since his childhood. As a merchant always concentrates his sight on the shore; a monk always concentrates his sight on the moment of his death³.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

❖ A monk was praying fervently; while another was busy ministering, with tears constantly filling his eyes.

When the former asked the later the reason behind his bitter crying, he answered him, saying: [While working, I always imagine myself standing before the divine Judge; and finding nothing to justify me, I get so terrified that I end up forgetting one or more verses of the psalms. That is why I feel guilty and cry. Forgive me, brother, for disturbing your prayer; Let each of us minister on his own]. The other one said: [No, my brother! As I live with no remorse; when I see you crying, I get ashamed]. **When God saw his humility, He granted him the remorse like his brother⁴.**

¹ قمت بترجمة النص كما ورد في نص الأب نفسه.

² *Ascetical Homilies* 64.

³ *Ascetical Homilies*, 48.

⁴ *The Armenian version of Apophthegmata*, L. Lelorr, ed. *Paterica Armenica, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Louvain, 1974 -, 1, p. 547.

From the sayings of the fathers of the wilderness

2- A CRY FOR HELP FROM THE LORD:

“There are mockers with me? And my eye dwells on their provocation?”
(Job 17: 2).

While seeing before him the graves prepares to receive him, he also sees his friends as ‘mockers’ who ridicule and insult him in his face. Instead of giving him comfort, they turned the sessions into provocations. Saying *“My eye dwells on their provocations”*, reveals that they spent the whole day in provocations; and when they leave him at its end, there would be nothing in his mind, but the memory of those provocations, to dwell on all the night.

The text here, translated from the Hebrew, came different from the one in the Septuagint version, as well as in the Volgata. In the Septuagint version, it came: *“With anxiety, I beseech: What should I do? The strangers are robbing my goods”*.

Before such a flaring battle, ‘Job’ gets overwhelmed with anxiety; Before such friends, who turned into strangers, carrying the spirit of animosity against him for no apparent reason, He sees behind them the devil with all his hosts opposing him! **Those who are strangers to the human race**, preoccupied only with robbing man of the divine blessings he enjoys, and the heavenly glories that are set for him. They are adversaries, longing for humiliating humanity, to let it partake of their cursed eternal destiny in hell.

❖ Why was ‘Job’ suffering anxiety? Being disturbed by temptations, the secret of which he has no knowledge, he was praying for death, and asking God: *“what should I do?”*.

“Strangers are robbing my goods!”. Here, ‘Job’ calls the devils *‘strangers’*, because they are deceitful, and *enemies* of our race. As to robbing his goods, he does not mean, robbing his possessions; But because they lied to God, as though they (robbed the words), when their head said to God: *“But now, stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face”* (Job 1: 11). ... God, being aware of how Satan has (robbed the words), allowed him to tempt ‘Job’, to prepare him to be crowned with the glittering sign of conquest; and to dare, as a truly victorious, to proclaim: *“Who is he who will shake hands with me?”* (Job 17: 3 LXX).

❖ *“I have not sinned, and my eye dwells in bitterness”*. As though he says: ‘Although I did not sin, yet I am being scourged’. In several other situations, ‘Job’ admitted that he is a sinner, why is he now denying it?! ... He quickly explains it, by saying that he did not commit such sins that make him worthy of being struck with the rod; besides, he cannot be without sin!

He was actually struck, but not as punishment for committing sin, as much as to make him worthy of enjoying more grace. The divine Judge Himself testifies to him; While He strikes, he commends!

We can understand it better, if we take our **Redeemer into consideration**; Although He did not commit any sin, Yet He endured bitterness for the sake of our sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

‘Ernest Latko’, commenting on the term *‘saints’* – as the congregation of God are often called – says: [The scholar Origen believes that even the saints, have their own sins. In one of his homilies on the book of Numbers, he said that, being ‘saints’ does not mean that they are exempted of having committed sin. Their holiness is not

absolute, but is rather relative, shown by dedicating their life to the Lord, who – by His goodness – keeps them from committing the more serious kinds of sins¹].

❖ Those who are not ‘saints’ die in their sins; Whereas the ‘saints’ repent their sins, endure their wounds, recognize their faults, then go for healing to a priest, or seek purification through the bishop².

❖ “*Be holy; for I am the Lord your God (is Holy)*” (Leviticus 20: 7). By saying “... For I am Holy”? He means, as I separate myself, and keep away from any thing worshipped on earth or in heaven. As I am exalted above every creature, and above anything my hands have created; You as well, should reject anything not sanctified or dedicated to God.

Moreover, this word, translated in Greek as ‘*hagios*’, means (something away from earth)³.

❖ The Holy Book, however, says “*There is not a just man on earth who does well*” (Ecclesiastes 7: 20). The Lord Christ alone “*Committed no sin*” (1 Peter 2; 22); namely, the works of His hands are perfect⁴.

The scholar Origen

We can say that, although ‘Job’ has not committed a sin for death; yet, as he admits, “*No man is without sin, even if he is only one day on earth*”.

“*Now, put down a pledge for me with Yourself, Who is he who will shake hands with me?*” (Job 17: 3).

Despite saying that he did not commit a sin that warrants all those strikes, ‘Job’ still admits that he is in need of someone to put a pledge for him, to pay a bond on his behalf.

The Holy Book often refers to the role of the guarantor (or surety), saying: “*A good person will be surety for his neighbor, but the one who has lost all sense of shame will fail him. Do not forget the kindness of your guarantor, for he has given his life for you*” (Sirach 29: 14, 15).

‘Job’ did not find any man on earth, even among his close friends, to testify to his innocence, nor to surety for him, but all have turned into opponents against him. He found no one to resort to, but God Himself, who is aware of the secrets of his heart, intentions, and his hidden and apparent actions.

In the name of all humanity, he cries out to God, asking him to put down a pledge for him, for no one is capable of paying back our debts, and to represent us before the divine presence, except the incarnate divine Word; as expressed by **St. Augustine:** [There is no resort from God, except to God Himself].

❖ It is the Lord Christ, although He never sinned by thought nor through deeds, Yet He became in bitterness by His passion; Who, set free by resurrection; became, by His ascension to heaven, on the right side of the Father, as our Guarantor.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Before the coming of our Lord and Savior, the devils have reigned upon the minds and bodies of men, and settled down in their bodies. Then the grace of the Lord Savior, and His mercy, came on earth, to instruct us how the soul of everyone

¹ Ernest Latko: *Origen’s Concept of penance*, Laval 1949, p. 82.

² In Num. hom. 10:1 PG 12:638.

³ *Homilies On Leviticus 11:1.*

⁴ *Homilies On Leviticus 12:3.*

should regain her freedom, and the image of God, according to which she was created ...

Who is He, but the Lord Jesus Christ, by whose scourges we, His believers, were healed; *“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them on the cross”* (Colossians 2: 15)¹.

- ❖ We have fallen under the authority of our enemy; namely, the ‘ruler of this age’, and his evil hosts; And because there was need for redemption through Him, who can purchase us, to bring us back from the state of sojourn from Him; Our Savior shed His blood as a surety on our behalf.

And as “the forgiveness of sins”, that follows the redemption, is not possible, before man is liberated; It was imperative for us, to be liberated from the authority of him, who captivated us, and kept us under his authority; and to be taken away from his hand, in order to be able to enjoy the forgiveness of our sins, and the healing from their wounds; in order to perform the works of piety and other virtues².

- ❖ *“To have peace with God”* (Romans 5: 1), by our Lord Jesus Christ who reconciled us with God through the sacrifice of His blood ..., Christ came to destroy the enemies, to make peace, and to reconcile us with God, from whom we were separated by the wall of wickedness, we set by our sins³.

The scholar Origen

“For You have hidden their hearts from understanding; Therefore, You will not exalt them” (Job 17: 4).

As for Job’s friends, according to their intentions, God took away from them the wisdom and discernment that He has previously granted them, as they are unworthy of them. God takes away the understanding from the hearts of those who have no compassion on those who suffer; He deprives them of dignity, and brings shame on them, to be in a state of collapse, and not in exaltation or glory. They, accordingly, would not have the ability to realize the mercy of God, nor the discernment to understand His dealings; especially when He happens to allow for affliction to dwell over His believers.

- ❖ It is of benefit to us when our enemies lack wisdom or are deprived of it; for which Paul says: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2: 7-8).

“Therefore, You will not exalt them” (4). ... Why? For the sake of our benefit. The knowledge of truth is hidden from them (the devils); who, wishing us evil, they intend for us to be ignorant, and to blaspheme the Creator.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

It came in the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great** as: ***“Their hearts were hidden from chastisement”***; and in the Septuagint version as: *“Their hearts were hidden from wisdom”*. Depriving Job’s friends of the understanding or wisdom, He deprived them of the knowledge of God’s wisdom concerning chastisement; As He chastens through afflictions, to edify, to justify; and not to destroy!

Those who accept the divine chastisement with wisdom and understanding, will have their hearts contrite with repentance; *“For whom the Lord loves, He*

¹ *Contra Celsus 1:54f.*

² *Comm. on Eph. 4 on 1.*

³ *Comm. on Rom. 4:8.*

chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there, whom a father does not chasten?" (Hebrews 12: 6, 7).

- ❖ Therefore rejoice while under scourges, as the inheritance is kept for you; He never drives His people away; He may chasten for sometime; but would never judge forever¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ **“You have hidden their hearts from chastisement” (4)**. As, if they realize the goal of chastisement, and would never despise the commandments of our Redeemer; their mortal bodies (under chastisement) would be provoked toward the eternal life.

Now, some may endure the scourges; Yet they do not conform their life to become renewed in the fear of God who scourges them; About whom it is truly said: “Their hearts are hidden away from chastisement”; Namely, although the body is under chastisement, Yet the hearts are not; As long as the person under the scourges of the rod, has not returned to the humility of the mind. . He does not say this, as though the Almighty, and the merciful God, has hidden man’s heart away from chastisement, But, after falling through his own will, God allows for him to stay fallen down.

“Therefore, they will not be exalted”; As, if the heart of man is under chastisement, he would seek the higher things, and not the temporal ones ... Whereas those who set forth toward the lowly pleasures, would always long toward the earthly goods, and not towards the heavenly joys; If they raise their minds toward hope in the heavenly city, they would be glorified.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He who denounces friends for reward, even the eyes of his children will fall” (Job 17: 5).

The mockers will not only be deprived of the understanding; namely the inner insight to know the wisdom of God; But they will also do harm to their children, when they see their fathers do their friends wrong.

In the **writings of Pope Gregory the Great**, it came as: *“The devil promises spoil to his friends, and the eyes of his children will fall”*. It is as though ‘Job’, comparing the children of God to those of the devil, says: The former fall under chastisement for the sake of their exaltation, their glory, and their eternal inheritance; Whereas the later are given by the devil, false promises of getting spoils, which are only temporary gifts, while they would eternally perish.

Pope Gregory the Great notices that ‘Job’, spoke first about the wicked in the pleural tense, then started to speak about their head, the devil, in the singular tense. Being the head, the devil sometimes speaks for him, and other times, he can speak in the name of his followers, the wicked; as what is for the head is for the whole body, and what is for the whole body is referred to the head. **Pope Gregory the Great** also says that **the devil, the head of all the wicked, promises his fellow devils, and the evil spirits, to give them a spoil, which is nothing but the children of men who became his captives.**

- ❖ *“The devil promises to give his friends a spoil and the eyes of his children fall”*. After uttering a statement that concerns the wicked congregation; namely the body of the ancient enemy, the blessed ‘Job’ instantly moves to another statement

¹ On Ps. 94 (93).

concerning their leader himself (the devil), the head of all the children of perdition. He moves on from the plural to the singular tense. As the devil and the whole evil people are one body, It often happens that the body takes the name of the head; **or the head is called by that of the body.**

The head takes the name of the body; as it was said about the apostate angel himself: *“An enemy has done this”* (Matthew 13: 28).

The head of all the wicked, has some followers as fellows, and some as children: Who are his fellows, but the apostate angels, who have fallen together with him from their positions in the heavenly city? And who are his children, but his wicked followers, whom he gains through his evil provocations. So it is also said by the voice of the divine Truth to the non-believers: *“You are of your father the devil”* (John 8: 44).

That evil head, promises his fellow devils, the evil spirits, **to give them**, as a spoil, the souls of the wicked people, to hold till the end.

And *“the eyes of his children fall”*; when he makes people look forward to the earthly things as their goals; and when he makes them love what they cannot hold on to for long; As the tendency of the wrongly directed love, cannot hold for long, when it becomes apparent that those who love, together with what they love, would soon end up to naught!

Pope Gregory the Great

“But He has made me a byword of the people, And I have become one in whose face, men spit” (Job 17: 6).

Job’s friends who used to seek his company and his favor, and to commend him, started to mock him in his affliction, and to count him as an example and a lesson of every evil hypocrite, for people not to follow his lead!

‘Job’ became a living portrait of those who live in the Lord, for the world to mock, and even to spit on the face; And also became a **symbol of the Lord Christ, whom the wicked ridiculed, mocked, and spat on His blessed face!**

“Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease; with the contempt of the proud” (Psalm 123: 4).

“I have become the ridicule of all my people; and their taunting song all the day” (Lamentation 3: 14).

“I gave My back to those who struck Me; and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50: 6).

“Then they spat in His face and beat Him, and others struck Him with the palms of their hands” (Matthew 26: 67).

“Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head” (Matthew 27: 30).

“Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophecy!’ . And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands” (Mark 14: 65).

“Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing their knee, they worshipped Him” (Mark 15: 19).

“Still others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment” (Hebrew 11: 36).

❖ *“We are exceedingly filled with contempt”* (Psalm 123: 3). *“Yes, All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3: 12). They would be despised by those who do not choose to live in piety; on account that they seek

happiness, they cannot see by their eyes; by those who say to them: [In what do you believe, O foolish man? Has anyone come back from the underworld, and reported to you what goes on there? Look! We see and enjoy what we see; and you are despised, for you hope for what you do not actually see!]

“Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease (the rich); with the contempt of the proud” (Psalm 123: 4). Scorn and contempt are the same thing; the way the rich and the proud are the same thing. Why would the rich be proud? Because they intend to be happy here in this world ... Being puffed up by their haughtiness and their vain dignity, they scorn us, saying: [Look! We would rather enjoy the good things before us¹!

... Away with those who promise what they are unable to produce! We hold fast to, and enjoy what we actually see! Let us be successful in this life; As for you; Go on believing as you wish in Christ who, as you claim, died and was risen again, and in the other life He promised you; But you better make sure that you are going to have it!].

St. Augustine

❖ The Lord of glory was humiliated and rejected by all How painful for the heart to read how He was treated by the scribes, the Pharisees and by everyone; How He gave His back to those who struck Him; and His cheek to those who plucked out the beard; and did not hide His face from shame and spitting! (Isaiah 50: 6). Now, if the Lord humbled Himself, and endured all that passion, scorn, and shame; You should be ashamed to care, to what extent you, mortal, do; You, whose nature is of dust and mire! For there is no comparison between you and your Lord! He came to give you comfort; and still you are not ready to endure a little bit of what you call sufferings, by which your wounds could be healed²!

St. Makarios of Alexandria

“My eye has also grown dim because of sorrow, and all my members are like shadows” (Job 17: 7).

‘Job’ became a man of sorrow and tears, that his eyes grew dim; and a man of grief, that his body dissolved to be like a skeleton, or a shadow, with nothing but skin and bones.

His eyes grew dim and unable to see the light of the divine Truth, which has almost disappeared. His friends turned into enemies; their strong opposition supported by their possibilities; and their behavior justified by what dwelt upon ‘Job’ himself, who became like a shadow without being, and with no possessions.

On another aspect, this portrays the condition, not only of the believer or of the church, suffering from the bitter persecution of the wicked, but also the great grief of the believer and of the church as a whole, for the sake of every single soul that goes astray from the way of the truth, and loses the true knowledge. That is why the apostle Paul cries out, saying: *“Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?”* (2 Corinthians 11: 29).

These used to be the feelings of the men of God in both the Old and the New Testaments; who experiencing the sweetness of intimate fellowship with God, could not stand to see anyone deprived of it.

The Psalmist says: *“Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law”* (Psalm 119: 53); And the prophet Jeremiah says: *“Oh, that my*

¹ On Ps. 123 (122).

² The First Epistle of St. Makarios of Alexandria on the Discipline.

head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people” (Jeremiah 9: 1).

- ❖ **“My eyes grew dim because of indignation; And all my members became like nothing” (7).** The eyes of those who are granted the light of the Truth grow dim with indignation, when they see themselves scorned by the wicked for an extended time. They marvel, become confused, and fail to understand the secret of the will of God: Why He allows the wicked to prevail on the innocence of the good? Who would not marvel to see Hero Dias, through a dance by her daughter, gain from the hand of the drunk king, the head of the ‘friend of the Groom’, a prophet, and greater than a prophet, given before his guests on a platter?!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ When the righteous see one of the children of the law, not keeping it, they would be grieved and would be grown by indignation; for the pain of one member would be shared by all the other members.

Onesimus, Bishop of Jerusalem

- ❖ Among sinners, some sinned without the law (Romans 2: 12); for they did not know the law. And others sinned in the law; by not keeping it, or not caring for it. *“Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked who have forsaken Your law”* (Psalm 119: 53). Indeed *“If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (1Corinthians 12: 26).. Therefore, it is befitting for us to follow the lead of that saint, and feel sorrow for our brethren when they sin.

St. Dedymus, the blind

- ❖ Whoever sheds hot tears for the sins of his neighbor would be healed by his grief on his brother¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ Let us weep for them, not one day or two days, but all the days of our life².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Beloved brethren! If we are to acquire comfort from sorrow, rest from labor, well-being from sickness, and eternity after death; we should then not be grieved by the ailments that dwell upon humanity, nor be worried by the temptations that dwell upon us.

We should not dread, in case those who fight Christ (the followers of Arius) plot against His good believers; who would rather, by these things, bring pleasure to God, through getting more prepared and trained on the life of virtue.

As, how would we gain perseverance, unless we go through troubles and sorrows?!

How would our perseverance be put to test, if there is no attack by such and other enemies?!

How would our longsuffering be justified, if there are no afflictions by the anti-christs?!

And how can man realize the virtue, unless the wickedness of the wicked first appears?!

¹ PG 31:257 D.

² In Epis, ad Phil. 3:4.

In all that, our Lord has already demonstrated to us how perseverance should be “When He gave His back to those who struck Him, His cheeks to those who plucked out the beard, and when He did not hide His face from shame and spitting” (1 Peter 2: 23; Isaiah 50: 6).

He finally chose, by His own free will, to be led to death; that we can see in Him a portrait of all the virtues and eternity; That we may follow His footsteps, and with the truth, tread upon the serpents, the scorpions, and every power of the enemy (the sin)¹.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- ❖ Let us consider the, the captivity of our brethren as our own captivity; and the sorrow of those in danger as our own sorrow. Becoming sure that there is only one body; It is not only the love, but also the piety, that should motivate and encourage us to save the members of our family² (our body).

St. Cyprian

- ❖ In 2 Corinthians 11: 29, Paul does not mean to pretend to be as weak, but that he sympathizes with their weakness³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ What an amazing compassion in the great Shepherd, Paul, to say that the offenses of others would flare the fire of his own sufferings. I wish all those who are entrusted with shepherding the rational flock, would follow his lead; and would prove that they are not less caring than the common shepherd who cares for a long time for his irrational herd. In our case, if a single rational sheep goes astray, or falls a prey, the loss would be greatly enormous, the damage, and the punishment would be unutterable! If our Lord has taken upon Himself to shed His own blood for his sake, What would be the excuse of him, who chooses to become slothful for the one so much considered by the Lord?! And does not give all effort to care for him⁴?!

St. Augustine

3- RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL PREVAIL:

“Upright men are astonished at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite” (Job 17: 8).

Hearing about what has dwelt upon ‘Job’ of successive tribulations, and about his friends’ stand against him, the righteous get astonished at this, thinking that God must have forgotten the earth, and forsaken His believers. The innocent would then, stir himself up against the hypocrite; namely, not feeling comfortable to hear that, he starts to question the secret of God’s care that may seem vague to him; and would stir himself up against the hypocrite, defending the Truth, or rejecting every erroneous interpretation.

- ❖ *“The righteous men are astonished at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite” (18).* The ‘innocent’ here, may mean the (righteous), who is not yet perfect; who, having just started the good ways; even if he does not think of doing harm to anyone, he is not yet able to practice the perfect things, and could

¹ *Paschal Epistles, 10.*

² *Letters, 62:1.*

³ *Letter 40 to Jerome.*

⁴ *Homilies on Genesis, 57.*

not help feeling envy toward the prosperity and glory of the wicked hypocrite in this world.

Or the 'innocent' may mean the (righteous), **perfect in goodness**, who stirs himself up against the hypocrite, when he sees him prosperous, but despises him and his prosperity. He would then preach the true things, and says that such a wicked man should be despised for desiring things that he cannot keep for long.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb”* (Psalm 37: 1-2). What may seem to you as a long time is actually 'soon' in the sight of God? Once you submit yourself to God, you will feel the same thing, and things would become in your sight of no value, like grass that appear green on the surface of the earth at winter time; yet, having no deep roots, would dry up once burned by the hot rays of the summer sun. Now, is the winter time of your glory; If your love has a deep root like trees, the cold winter will pass by, and the summer (the time of judgment) will come with its heat, when the green grass will dry up, but the glory of the mighty trees will prevail¹.
- ❖ When I saw the wicked, I noticed that they seem as though in peace! But what kind of peace? It is a temporary, changeable, passing by, and an earthly kind of peace! And yet, I also seek it from God! When I, who minister to God, saw those who do not minister to God, getting what I long for; *“My feet had almost stumbled, and my steps had nearly slipped”* (Psalm 73: 2). But now, I know why they have peace and prosperity on earth it is because their punishment will not be temporary, but will hold on forever².

St. Augustine

***“Yet the righteous will hold to his way; and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger”* (Job 17: 9).**

When the righteous sees how the wicked prosper, while tribulations and afflictions dwell upon the upright men; he does not retreat from the way of fellowship with God, but would hold to it more strongly; Because he knows for sure that the troubles that come upon the righteous would lead to their growth and to their enjoyment of more strength.

The spiritual man experiencing the down payment of heavenly life, would not be shaken before the temporary success of the wicked, nor be disturbed before the tribulations and afflictions that come upon the righteous; But he would find pleasure in being persistent on the Spirit of God, who grants great sweetness to the fellowship with the Lord Christ in His cross, and perpetually flares the depths of the believer to seek the heaven lies, disregarding any temporal gift.

A true believer would never stop being persistent on standing against sin, and on enjoying the holy life, for the sake of his enjoyment of the fellowship with the Lord.

- ❖ The hypocrite, through his evil will, gets the things of this world; whereas the righteous would always be bound more strongly to the love of the heaven lies.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ On Ps 37 (36).

² On Ps. 73.

- ❖ When we observe the law of persistence, and practice the knowledgeable discernment, where the fruit of life is harvested; then there would be the struggle against the attacks of desires that would never be able, in any way, of approaching our minds¹.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

- ❖ We, who are given the eternal life, do the good works, not for the sake of a reward, but to keep the purity given to us².

St. Mark the hermit

- ❖ Reading in the Holy Book is highly recommended, because it gives wisdom to the soul, **directs the Spirit toward heaven**, moves man toward thanksgiving, destroys the desire in earthly things, and **makes our minds perpetually concentrate on the other world**³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ *“The judgments of the Lord are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19: 10)*. When the soul is committed to being like pure honey, free of the mortal bonds of this life, simply anticipating the blessings of the divine banquet; Or when it becomes, like in a disc of honeycomb, clothed with this life, like in the cells of the honey wax, filling them, yet without becoming wax; In all that, she needs the help of God’s hand, which presses, not to destroy, but to squeeze the honey. The judgments of God, for such a soul, would become sweeter than homey and honeycomb.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Contemplate in the Orthodox ways and values in the spiritual battles; in how the Christian fighter, having overcome his rebelling body, and having treaded upon it underneath his feet, would be carried victorious up high. He thus runs, but not as though without being sure that he will enter into the holy city – the heavenly Jerusalem⁴.

St. John Cassian

4- THERE IS NO HOPE IN THIS WORLD:

“But you, come back now, all of you, and I shall not find a sensible person among you” (Job 17: 10).

‘Job’ asks them to forsake their thoughts, and to realize that there is no sensible person among them; Because they request from him to repent, for the sake of returning to his past prosperity in this world; assuming that this is the real comfort for those suffering. They are not wise because they turned their eyes away from the comfort of heaven, to the prosperity of the world; not realizing that the happiness of the righteous is in their hope for eternity, and not in the foolishness of hoping for temporal blessings.

- ❖ *“Well, come back now, all of you, I find no truth in you” (Jon 17: 10 LXX)*. As though he says to them: Come, all of you together, to enter into a hot debate with me.

¹ *Ascetical Homilies*, 62.

² للمؤلف: الفيولوكاليا، 1966، ص 136.

³ د. عنان طرابلسي: شرح إنجيل متى للقديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم، 1996، ص 5.

⁴ القديس يوحنا كاسيان: المؤسسات لنظام الشركة، 5، النهم 18.

'Job' knows well, "*how could one rout a thousand, and two put a myriad to flight*" (Deuteronomy 32: 30); knows that, there is no need for a great number of wrestlers, especially when they are armed with lies.

"Because I definitely see that there is no truth in you, I provoke you to come to battle!"

It is befitting for us to notice the daring spirit in Job's words; How, even after his friends treaded upon him with their feet, he is still persistent on debating with them; has not forsaken his perseverance, that made him such a terror to his enemies.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

It came in the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great** as: [**As for you all, Change your ways, then come to me**] (10). It is as though he says to them: [If you are asking me to repent on sins that I have not done; you are falling into the sin of revile and unjust accusation. Therefore I advise you to reconsider your ways evil ways; then you may come to me, to have a reasonable conversation!]

In this, the Pope believes that 'Job' is asking them to do two things: the first is negative, which is to stop doing a sin; and the second is positive, which is to do the right thing. He means to say: [Change your evil ways, then come to me carrying the good works].

- ❖ St. Paul asks us to die for the world; as that would be of more benefit to us, being the beginning of a new life. He also instructs us to be ignorant for this world, to enter into the true wisdom. We shall be ignorant for this world, when we despise the earthly wisdom; and become sure that it does not contribute to our realization of faith¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The wisdom of this world which lacks the grace of God is utterly human in its features².

Father Theodoret

- ❖ They have to **change** their ways, then to come. The **change** is done by faith; while **coming** is done by practice. Namely, they have to change themselves through forsaking the evil works; then they may come through practicing the good works; As it is written: "*depart from evil, and do good*" (Psalm 37: 27).

"***I will probably not find a single wise person among you***" (10). What does it mean, to ask them to acquire wisdom; and, at the same time, to (wish) to find no single person wise among them?! But, that they cannot reach the true wisdom, as long as they go on deceiving themselves by completely trusting their vain self-wisdom!

About this, it is written: "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes*" (Isaiah 5: 21); and, "*Do not be wise in your own opinion*" (Romans 12: 16).

In this concern, the great preacher, St. Paul, gives his counsel to those, he finds humanly wise; Which is that, In order to gain the true wisdom, they have to be first 'fools'! Saying: "*If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools, so that you may become wise*" (1 Corinthians 3: 18); And the Truth Himself says: "*I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and have revealed them to babes*" (Matthew 11: 25)

Because those who are wise in their own eyes, cannot reach the true wisdom; the righteous 'Job', longing to change his listeners, wishes to find no single person

¹ Homilies on Epistles to the Corinthians, Homily 10:2.

² Commentary on 1 Cor. 3:19.

wise among them; As though he is saying to them: [Learn how to be fools in yourselves, to become truly wise in God].

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Do not let much wisdom become a rock of offense to you, and a snare in your way; But holding fast to trusting God, would become for you, the beginning of the way filled with blood (the way of spiritual strife against sin); So as not to become perpetually lacking, and bare of the knowledge of God; As he who is always afraid of the wind, would never sow his land¹!

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

“My days are past; my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart” (Job 17: 11).

They ask ‘Job’ to repent his evil ways and hypocrisy, in order to regain what he has lost; While, as far as ‘Job’ is concerned, these things have no more place in his heart; His days are past, or are hastening to their ultimate end; And his old purposes of good works and care for the poor, are all broken off him; Starting to see death not far away from him, he cannot think of what he is not able to do.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that ‘Job’ in this symbolizes the persecuted church; The more the affliction on her becomes, the higher her thoughts rise toward heaven, and the less would be her preoccupation with the earthly things, not even with the simple social services; to concentrate only on the eternal glory. What we say about the church as a holy congregation, is realized as well, in the life of every one of her members.

- ❖ **“My days are past” (11).** The holy church believes that her life passes through periods of day and night: night during periods of affliction; and day during days of peace, when she can afford to care for temporal preoccupations. **“My thoughts are scattered and hurt my heart” (11).** When the temporary glory passes by from the minds of the righteous; so also their commitment for the earthly things would be taken away from them; those commitments which make them suffer inside themselves for having to go down to caring for lowly things. It happens that the same works of persecution against them would then turn into a great cause of rejoicing, because of the peace of heart they gain through them.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ **“My soul is in my hand” ...** Any man’s soul becomes in his hands when he is in danger ... That is why, it is as though, the righteous ‘Job’ says to God: [As for me, Although I die every day; and am continuously in danger because of my commitment to Your words, and for the sake of the truth ... Yet, the danger of death would never make me forget Your law].

We can also understand this phrase in another way: That my soul is always in my palm; namely, always does good things; as the ‘hand’ or the ‘palm’ are the tools for doing the work².

The scholar Origen

- ❖ You may be granted a world of light, for every one day of bitter pain you endure.
If you persevere on hunger for the sake of His love, your desire to see His face would flare inside you.

¹ *Ascetical Homilies*, 6.

² القمص تادرس يعقوب ملطي: المزمور المائة والتاسع عشر (118) غنى كلمة الله ولنتها، 1996.

If your countenances appear dark, as a result of working for His sake, He will beautify you with His glory forever.

If you are bared of your possessions, He will clothe you with His light.

If you forsake what is yours, you will acquire Him eternally in yourself¹.

The spiritual elder, John El-Deliaty

- ❖ The labor of long years during this present life would disappear when we anticipate the eternity of the glory to come. All our sorrows would disappear when we think of that great blessing; they would vanish like vapor, or like lightening, as though they were never there².

St. John Cassian

- ❖ The martyrs have lost interest in everything on earth, once they, by the eyes of faith, looked at the King of heaven, with the hosts of angels standing before Him, ... Once, by their minds, they saw heaven and its unutterable blessings. Once they moved their thoughts to heaven, they no more cared for anything they see by their physical eyes.... They no more saw the tools of torture; ... They passed by, counting them as mere dreams and shadows; ...Because of their desire for the coming things, their minds got wings³!
- ❖ Knowing that we are on our way to a better life, not prone to death or destruction, and free of any oppression; we no more dread poverty, sickness, or any affliction⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

“They make night into day;’ The light’, they say ‘is near to darkness” (Job 17: 12).

Job’s friends tell him about the night, which is about to pass, and would turn into day; albeit not as bright with daylight, but with light which is more like darkness; They concentrate their talk on the prosperity in this world as a reward from the Lord to the righteous; and portray it in their minds as a cause for comfort; Yet, expecting no more on this earth; and seeing death before his eyes; ‘Job’ has no more hope in temporal things; He welcomes death, as a home to settle down, and the grave to set a bed for himself.

“If I wait for the grave as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness: If I say to corruption, ‘You are my father’, and to the worm, ‘You are my mother and my sister ... ” (Job 17: 13).

With bitterness, ‘Job’ looks forward to exchange his friends in this world with the grave, which would become for him ‘a father’, being more merciful than them; And instead of their promises of temporal blessings, he finds in the worms, ‘a mother and a sister’. Complaining that his relatives are far removed from him, and that his acquaintances are completely estranged from him (Job 19: 13, 14); He would rather exchange them here with relatives who would never desert or deny him – the grave and the worms!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that ‘Job’ called corruption as ‘a mother’ and ‘a sister’; because sin has brought upon man the verdict to dissolve, corrupt, and return to his dust.

¹ رسالة 15:19 راجع ترجمة الأب سليم دكاش اليسوعي.

² القديس يوحنا كاسيان: المؤسسات لنظام الشركة، 12 في روح الكبرياء، 12.

³ *Baptismal Instructions*, 7:18, 19.

⁴ *Baptismal Instructions*, 12: 12.

- ❖ To understand this spiritually, It is not strange for us to call nature ‘our mother’, and the habit ‘our sister’; being born from one, and grown up with the other. The same way, we may say that the corrupt nature, and the evil habits or thoughts, are some kind of worms that devour the mind, and bring forth unbecoming cares in the weakness of our hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ I wish we can get rid of the filth of sin; so that the previous beauty of virtue would re-appear; Let us be purified, that the image of God in us would be revealed. That is what God desires from us, to be free of defilement, defect, or blemish¹.

Father Dorotheos

- ❖ All saints grieve daily, and sigh because of their weakness; And throughout their changing thoughts, the secrets of their consciences, and their deep retreats, they cry out in supplication: *“Do not enter into judgment with your servants, For in your sight no one living is righteous”* (Psalm 143: 2)

There you see, that, although all saints truly confess that all men including themselves are sinners; Yet, they never despair of having salvation, but seek a complete purification through God’s grace and mercy.

No one, however holy he may be, is without sin in this life, as we are also instructed by the Savior in the model of perfect prayer He taught to His disciples; to say: *“... And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”* (Matthew 6: 12).

Having delivered this as a true prayer to be practiced by all saints; who could then remain on his stubbornness, arrogance, foolishness, haughtiness, and vain pride, thinking that he is without sin²?!

- ❖ The way a saint is the temple of God; the sinner sets a grave out of himself³!

St. Jerome

“Where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?!” (Job 17: 15).

“Job”, believing that all his previous hopes would go together with him down to the grave, he laments them. Indeed, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”* (1 Corinthians 15: 19). Nobody can see the hopes that would comfort us; As we hope, not for the temporary things that are seen, but for the eternity that is not seen (2 Corinthians 4: 18) Being mortal, Job’s friends offer him what is mortal; They offer him hopes that would go down together with him to the grave.

- ❖ ***“What is then my hope?” (15)*** Where is man’s hope, in which such way of weakness is realized?! ***“Where shall I see my goods?”*** when I depart from this world?

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ ***“Now, where is my expectation?” (15).*** what would be the expectation of the righteous, but God who justifies the righteous; He, who condescended by His free will to human punishment; and, by His righteousness, He liberated the captives of death? They would never stop having those expectations, filled with hope; ... They know that they will come; But they seek their swift coming. That is why, ‘Job’

¹ تأملات في مديح للقديس غريغوريوس النزينزي.

² Cassian: Conf., 23: 16–18.

³ On Psalms, Homily 7.

adds to “*Where is my expectation?*”, the word “Now”; revealing that he seeks its swift coming without delay.

“***Who can appreciate my perseverance?***” (15) The Truth testifies, saying: “*Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it*” (Luke 10: 24). Job’s words reveal his hot desire! What God counts as a short time, is seen by man as a long time!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ **We should deposit in heaven what we lose now on earth;** for the enemy who can break into our houses, Can he manage to break through the gate of heaven?! He, who can kill the door man here, can he manage to kill God who watches over the gates of heaven?!
- ❖ If an architect tells you that your house will soon collapse; will you not escape as quickly as you can, instead of lingering to mourn it?! Behold, the Founder of the world tells us that the devastation of the world is close! Should we not believe Him?! ... Hear the voice of His prophecy: “*Heaven and earth will pass away*” (Matthew 24: 35) ... Listen attentively to His counsel¹!

St. Augustine

“***Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we have rest together in the dust?***” (Job 17: 16).

- ❖ “***Will they go down with me to hell; Or shall we go down together to the dust?***” (16). If that is the case; Why do we erect buildings? ... Why do we care for expensive bed covers and clothes? ... Why do we “*add field to field*” (Isaiah 5; 8)? ... Why do we seek riches that would not go with us?

Why do we not believe the ordinance of the divine Judge, or listen to Him, saying: “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal*” (Matthew 6: 19, 20). There, the angels and the Lord of angel guard our treasures.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ “***Do not you think that I shall find comfort for myself there?***” ... “*If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?*” (1 Peter 4: 18). Although the blessed ‘Job’ knows that he will find comfort after the tribulations he has endured; Yet he brings fear to our hearts, when, by saying the words: “***Do not you think?***”, he seems as though in doubt concerning the reward of eternal comfort.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Some people believe their homes to be their kingdoms. Although they know for sure that death is imperative, and that, one day, they will have to leave them, yet, in their hearts they feel that they are staying there forever! They boast the huge size of their houses, the expensive material with which they are built, and the beautiful furniture they contain ... They believe that the sturdier their houses are the more security and peace they will find in them for many generations to come.

As far as we are concerned, On the contrary, we know for sure that we are just guests, who live temporary on earth; that the houses we live in are not more than

¹ *Sermon On the N.T. 10.*

hotels along the road to eternity; We do not seek security or peace in the walls around us, or the roofs above our heads, but we rather seek to surround our selves by walls of the divine grace; and we look at heaven high above, as our roofs. As for the furniture in our life, they should be the good deeds we do with the spirit of love.

St. John Chrysostom

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 17
I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR ENCOUNTER

- ❖ Whenever I remember the day of my departure, when I am going to encounter You,
My soul is crushed within me.
It moans because of my weaknesses.
Behold, how the wicked grow fat.
They assume they will live forever.
As for me, the day of your ultimate coming is inscribed on my heart.
It never departs from my memory.
How can I be justified before you?
- ❖ Yet amid my grief because of my weaknesses,
My heart rejoices within me.
Yes, I long to return to my eternal home.
My eyes look toward you.
When shall I encounter you, face to face?
- ❖ My God; I am surrounded by those who wish to debate against me!
They spoil my repentance, and my looking forward to encounter you.
The evil one; foreign to me, and to all humans,
Is only preoccupied with how to take away my enjoyment of contemplating in You,
And my preparations for the fellowship of the eternal glory.
He is a consistent adversary!
He would not despair before he manages to take me down, together with him, to
his eternal dwelling place.
By this, I am not justifying myself.
You know how sinner I am.
How wounded by my sins!
But, I find in You, the healing Physician.
I am a sinner! I find in You the Holy One, who sanctifies all my being.
I am in debt; And You are my Guarantor.
Your blood tears up the bond written against me.
Your cross liberates me from my captivity.
When You deprive the rulers and the principalities of their authority;
And by Your cross, You publicly make them of no reputation;
I can slip away from their hands, and bow before their authority no more;
I can set forth from my submission to the prince of this age;
To be protected under Your wings, O the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.
The evil one assumed that, by his wisdom, he managed to captivate and humiliate
me.
But his wisdom turned proved to be just craftiness and deceit!
Having separated himself from the wisdom of God,
My Lord has taken the true wisdom away from him.
And the deceitful became ignorant, and lost his possibilities.
In my ignorance, I cry out, longing to get united with You, O Wisdom of God!
When I acquire You, I become by You, truly wise.
And be qualified to dwell in heaven, the place of the wise!
- ❖ It grieves my soul to see the evil one captivating so many!
I count myself going into darkness, together with every soul that loses Your light.

I count myself going into perdition, together with every soul that despises her salvation.

I count myself going into captivity, together with every soul captivated by the enemy.

- ❖ Why do my soul moan, whenever I see the wicked and the opponents of the Truth living in prosperity?
Yet however long they may live,
They eventually will pass by,
And like the weeds, they will dry up.
Your children are like a tree in the winter season.
That seems as though dead with no leaves and fruits.
But, once the spring of your days come,
And the snow of this world passes by,
Your trees become glorified by their amazing fruits.
However heavy the snow of this world and whatever are its tribulation,
The world will soon pass by.
And what your children have of eternal glory will be revealed.
The advance payment of heaven fills me with joy;
And the fellowship with You, even in your passion, fills me with peace.
- ❖ As my days will soon pass by.
Grant me the grace to acquire the wisdom and the divine Truth;
To deny the haughtily vain human wisdom;
And to enjoy You, O the wholly humble One!
- ❖ My soul is on my hands, while I walk in the midst of danger.
With joy, I anticipate my departure from the world at any moment.
I will never stop consummating Your work with my hands, for I am Your ambassador.
So that, when I depart, I would be with You, enjoying Your splendor.
- ❖ Finally, Let all my hope be in You.
Let my treasure be in Your heavens.
For there is no place more secure.

CHAPTER 18

A GLOOMY PORTRAIT OF DESTRUCTION

Again came Bildad's turn to speak; and his second talk, like that of Eliphaz, came more cruel and harsh. With Job's complaint of his misery, that his days have turned into night and darkness, and that he is everywhere surrounded by snares, Bildad found his chance to reconfirm his evil.

'Job' probably erred, when his severe anguish made him long for death, for the grave to become his father, and for the worms to become his mother and sister; By such attitude, he was destroying his soul; instead of believing in God, who can move the mountains (4).

Bildad the Shuhite did not add anything new to his previous talk, other than providing more clarifying examples to confirm his view about the destiny of the wicked, **and presenting the following portrait of the wicked, which, according to him, applies to 'Job'**, whom he believed to be as haughty:

- ❖ He has no light to illuminate his house; or a flame to keep it warm (5 – 6).
- ❖ He is indecisive; loses his way, because of the darkness of his faults (7).
- ❖ He runs around like an animal, to be cast into a net, and to fall into trap (8 – 10).
- ❖ Terror chases him wherever he goes (11 – 13).
- ❖ He is uprooted from the shelter of his tent; is devoured by sickness; and is delivered to the king of death (14).
- ❖ Strangers will dwell in his tent; Or will perish by brimstone like Sodom and Gomorrah (15).
- ❖ He and his household will be uprooted, roots and branches; and will violently pass away from the light of this world to the darkness of death (16 – 19).
- ❖ His destiny in this world is frightening.

1- Accusing 'Job' of haughtiness	1 – 4
2- The light of the wicked will be put out	5 – 6
3- The wicked will lose their way	7
4- The wicked will fall into snares	8 - 10
5 Terror will prevail over the wicked	11 – 13
6- The wicked will be uprooted from the shelter of their tents	14 – 15
7- The memory of the wicked is cut off from the earth	16 – 17
8- An utter destruction for the wicked	18 – 21

1- ACCUSING 'JOB' OF HAUGHTINESS:

“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: How long will you put an end to words? Gain understanding, And afterward we will speak” (Job 18: 1 - 2).

By this, Bildad aims an arrow at Job's heart; accusing him of uttering nonsense with no understanding; And together with 'Job' he probably Includes Eliphaz and Zophar, or others who might have defended 'Job' every now and then.

Bildad got fed up of hearing vain words; once his turn came to talk, and assuming that wisdom is only confined to him, he cruelly, and with no compassion whatsoever, poured out all his frustration.

With such an attitude in mind, the apostle advises us, saying: *“Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak” (James 1: 19).*

In the days of his prosperity, 'Job', as a wise man, respected by everyone, used to have the final decisive word; Now, however, he, together with those on his side, are commanded not to speak, before gaining understanding!

- ❖ When you look at those who were preoccupied with judging him, and muting his tongue, you will realize that they were not be giving him comfort, but ridicule and mockery! In their envy, they count his silence as disgrace and utter foolishness

St. John Chrysostom

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**, the text came as: "*Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: 'To what extent will you go on putting forth and spreading your words on large scale? You should first gain understanding, Then let us speak'*" (1- 2). In most of his commentary on the book of 'Job', this father believes that 'Job' symbolizes the holy church, and his friends symbolize her opponent heretics.

Here, he presents Bildad – as a representative of the heretics – providing two charges against the church: the first that her views are not original; and the second, is that she has no understanding!

Her thoughts, having not been appreciated in all eras, and having abided to the living faith with no licentiousness; the church was always accused of being arrogant, haughty, and hard-headed; And having rejected the corrupt views, she was always accused of being narrow-minded, and not contemporary, unable to comprehend what goes on around her!

In a commentary by **St. Jerome** on the words of the apostle Paul: "... *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*" (Ephesians 2: 3); he says: [There is a difference between the sin of the flesh and that of the mind: A sin of the flesh is to be licentious, without shame, and act as a tool to realize its lusts; Whereas the sin of the mind concerns teaching against the Truth, and descending to the level of heretics¹].

- ❖ The same way, all heretics assume that the holy church, not understanding some of the issues adopted by them, wrongly accuse them of being haughty.; Bildad, while confirming that the blessed 'Job' is broken by pride, and proclaiming that he "*spreads his words on a large scale*"; Bildad, himself, carries a sign of his own haughtiness; and being puffed up, counts the blessed 'Job' as uttering things that he does not understand.

Pope Gregory the Great

Whatever are the charges against the church, she would never cease to strive until she brings all believers to the unity of faith, which is counted by the apostle Paul as maturity or reaching perfection: "... *till we all come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*" (Ephesians 4: 13-14).

Commenting on this phrase, **St. John Chrysostom**, says: [Maturity, is when we reach the unity of faith; namely, when we become partners in the one faith; when we all become one; when we are all committed to the same covenant²].

"Why are we counted as beasts, and regarded as stupid in your sight?" (Job 18: 3).

'Job' has indeed called his friends 'mockers' (Job 17: 2); and portrayed them as being with no wisdom and compassion; But he never called them animals or beasts

¹ Epistle to the Ephesians, 1:2:1.

² Homilies on the Ephesians, 1:4:13.

as claimed by Bildad here. Bildad was offended by Job's admonition, and counted it as a grave insult, which should be countered by one more grave and cruel!

❖ ***“Why should we keep silent before you as beasts?”*** (LXX). It is you, Bildad, who has the spirit of a beast, and bows your head toward the ground! Your thoughts are definitely not sound, and are unbecoming to true men, but to those mentioned by David: *“Man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like beast that perish”* (Psalm 49: 12).

Realizing that he is not able to respond with reason to ‘Job’, Bildad resorted to insults. He wrongly counted Job's words to the adversary (the Devil), as being directed against God; And accordingly, And so was not ashamed to revile the blessed man.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ The same way, all heretics doubt that the holy church despises them; so did Bildad, when he said: ***“Why are we counted as beasts, and regarded as stupid in your sight?”*** (3). It is only natural for man to assume that the things he does, would probably be done to him; Despising the ways of good people, they believe they are equally despised by them ... When the church try to convince the heretics that what they believe is not reasonable, they assume that the church is looking at them as beasts.

Pope Gregory the Great

“You who tear yourself in anger, Shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed from its place?” (Job 18: 4).

Bildad was so overwhelmed with anger to count ‘Job’ as a wild beast; Probably intending to respond to Job's charge against God, saying: ***“He has torn me in His wrath, and hated me”***(Job 16: 9); he says to him: [Do not blame God, as though He has torn you in His wrath; It is you who tears yourself in your anger].

Bildad furthermore, accuses ‘Job’ with arrogantly trying to ordain in God's place: ***“Shall the earth be forsaken (deserted) for your sake?”***; As though he wishes all the laws of nature to be changed for his sake alone; ... As though the world would not be here without him; ... Or as though, if he perishes, all the world would perish; and the earth would be forsaken, together with him].

Some believe that Bildad is rebuking ‘Job’, saying that: He should either admit that he is evil, and is worthy of what have dwelt upon him; Or should assume that God has forsaken His divine care, and has deserted the earth; that the Rock of ages has been removed from His place!

Mockingly, the heretics speak to the church, the same way Bildad here speaks to ‘Job’. It is as though they say to her: [do you think you are alone, the ark of salvation; and that without you, no one will enjoy the divine salvation... What you proclaim is nothing but a kind of foolishness and false pride!].

Pope Gregory the Great comments on this text, saying: [The heretics count the strong feelings of good ordinance or the spiritual grace of the holy preaching, not as a good virtue, but as the foolishness of wrath ...

“Shall the earth be forsaken for you?” (Job18: 4) ... While the catholic holy church proclaims that God is not to be worshipped except through her; confirming that all those outside her will not be saved; The heretics, on the other hand, trusting that they could be saved, even without entering into her range, confirm that the divine help would reach them wherever they are ...

“Or shall the rock be removed from its place?” The heretics call those who, according to them, by their exalted thoughts, stand among the human race, boasting of being teachers, ‘rocks’... But the holy church presents her to gather together those who have gone astray, to enter into the bosom of sound faith. What could that be, but *“removing the rock from its place?”* Those who have before, taken the position of stubbornness, holding fast to wrong concepts?

Thus Bildad symbolizes the heretics, who thought highly of themselves as leading a happy life; and haughtily considered themselves above the strikes that have dwelt upon the blessed ‘Job’].

It was not possible for ‘Rahab’ or her household, to enjoy salvation, if they go outside the doors of the house on which the scarlet cord is bound; As there is no salvation outside the church redeemed by the blood of Christ.

❖ ‘Rahab’ represents the church; the scarlet cord symbolizes the blood of Christ; And those inside the house are the only ones who are saved. Whoever wishes to be saved should come to this house, where the blood of Christ is the sign of redemption ... No one should deceive himself; ... No one would be saved outside this house; namely outside the church¹.

The scholar Origen

❖ Do you think you would be able to withstand and go on living, if you go out to establish for yourselves separate houses; when it was said to ‘Rahab: “... *Bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home. So it shall be, that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless*”² (Joshua 2: 18, 19).

❖ In this, the secret was proclaimed, that whoever wishes to live and to escape the perdition of this world, should gather together in one house, namely, in the church. Whereas, if anyone, after getting this grace, forsakes the church, and gets outside her door, his blood shall be on his head, and he will be responsible for the perdition of his soul. This was clarified by the apostle Paul, urging us to avoid the heretics (Romans 16; 17)³.

❖ Whoever stays outside the church, would be out of the camp of Christ⁴.

❖ Whoever is not inside the church of Christ, would not be a Christian⁵.

❖ How could anyone be with Christ, if he is not inside His Bride – His church⁶?!

❖ Who does not have the church as His mother; would not have God as his Father⁷.

St. Cyprian

2- THE LIGHT OF THE WICKED WILL BE PUT OUT:

“The light of the wicked indeed goes out, and the flame of his fire does not shine” (Job 18: 5).

¹ Homilies on Josh., 3.

² Unity of the Church, 8; Epistle 75:4.

³ Unity of the Church, 8; Epistle 75:4.

⁴ Epistle 40 to Cornelius.

⁵ Epistle 43 to Antonius.

⁶ Epistle 42 to Cornelius.

⁷ Unity of the Church, 6.

Although what Bildad say here sounds truthful, yet it does not promptly materialize, in a seen and public way.

By saying the word “*indeed*”, Bildad refers to the great grief that Job is suffering, and under which he is falling. He is , as though, saying to him: [What you say is right, and what you are going through is only natural, and befitting for a wicked man ... So do not marvel that the little light you once had, has utterly gone out!]. By the light of the wicked, he probably means the wealth and joy he had before the tribulations came upon him; “*the light of his own fire, and the spark he has kindled*” (See Isaiah 50: 11); and not the eternal light of the Sun of Righteousness, the unquenchable light of the Lord.

‘Job’ talks of the days of his prosperity, when “*the lamp of the Lord shone upon his head*” (Job 29: 3); about which the Psalmist David also says: “*You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness*” (Psalm 18: 28). On another aspect, the righteous ‘Job’, expressing his great suffering says: “*How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?*” (Job 21: 17); And Solomon says: “*Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness*” (Proverbs 20: 20); “*The lamp of the wicked will be put out*” (Proverbs 24: 20); and: “*The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out*” (Proverbs 13: 9).

While the Lord Christ Himself refers to the deprivation of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the light, through entering into the outer darkness; namely, Hades (Matthew 8: 12; 22: 13).

❖ “*The light of the wicked indeed goes out, and the flame of his fire does not shine*” (5). If, by this, Bildad means the present life, he would be wrong; As the light is often seen shining in the life of the wicked; while the darkness of disgrace and poverty covers that of the righteous.

Because “*The light of the wicked indeed goes out*”; when the happiness of the present life comes to an end, together with the life itself; So it was befitting to add: “*The flame of his fire does not shine*”. For every wicked, there is “*the flame of his fire*”, ignited in his heart by the various temporary lusts, and the numerous fantasies of the world. Yet, it is a fire without flame, that emits no light, and does not shine in their wickedness; unlike that of the righteous who also have own flame of fire, that illuminates with splendor through their good deeds.

Pope Gregory the Great

The devil cannot shine; And even if he does, his light is fake, As he is the prince of darkness; who may appear as an angel of light to deceive mankind, and to bring them into the kingdom of darkness. So are the wicked who persist on their rebellion; they would not be able to shine; because they offer what are theirs and their father, the devil; namely, the darkness.

❖ Defining the Lord Christ as “*The true Light*” (John 1; 9); He is also “*unapproachable*” (1 Timothy 6:16), by vanity. As far as our life is concerned, we know that it is necessary for our life to be enlightened by the rays of the True Light. Virtues are the rays of the “*Sun of righteousness*” (Malachi 3: 20); that are emitted for our enlightenment, through which we renounce the works of darkness (2 Corinthians 4: 2). **By doing everything in the light, we would, ourselves, become light, that shines on others** (Matthew 5: 15, 16); as this is the feature of light¹.

¹ On Perfection.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ Satan never aims his arrows in daylight; lest they would be seen; as everything done in light, are proclaimed by light¹.
- ❖ The heretics do not have Christ, the Truth, on their lips; not being in their hearts They promise something on their lips, while they mean something else in their hearts; They utter piety, and conceal evil; They talk about Christ, and hide the anti-Christ. Knowing that they would not get along with their deceit, if they reveal the anti-Christ, **they only present the light, so as to hide the darkness; by the light they lead to the darkness**².

St. Jerome

“The light is dark in his tent, and his lamp beside him is put out” (Job 18: 6).

Here, he means the tent of the soul (2 Corinthians 5: 1); namely the body, which would completely corrupt, and become darkness. If the tent is the body, having its lamp put out refers to death; as *“When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes”* (Proverbs 11: 7)

The wicked assume that life is in the enjoyment of carnal lusts, and pleasures; and that deprivation from them is a loss of life. They see it as their light, without which they would be like dwellers of gloomy tombs. Yet, what they consider as light will soon turn into darkness; and what they assume as a lamp, will soon be put out.

This is the light and the lamp of the wicked; whereas, for the true believers, it is the Word of God which scatters the darkness; and sets out of the believers, a true light in the Lord.

3- THE WICKED WILL LOSE THEIR WAY:

“The steps of his strength are shortened, and his own counsel casts him down” (Job 18: 7).

Dedicating all his energies, and giving every effort for the sake of thinking about temporal things, and not caring for eternal blessings; the days of the wicked become like a shadow; his steps are shortened; his counsels turn into his own enemies; he will come out of life empty-handed; and will lose the true eternal life.

- ❖ ***“His own counsel casts him down” (7).*** Every wicked man, having temporal things as the goal of his counsel, and turning the eternal aside; would practice oppression, and despise righteousness. But, once the divine Judge of both the righteous and the oppressors comes, He will cast down the wicked by his own counsel. As his choice of things was through evil intention, he would be cast into the darkness of eternal woe.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ‘Love’ of this world is like a harlot, who, by her beauty, seduces those who fall for her. Whoever is possessed by the love of this world, and falls in its nets, cannot liberate him out of its bosom, until his soul is utterly taken over. When the world deprives man of everything, then ultimately casts him away from his dwelling place on the day of his death; only then, can he realize that he was indeed deceived³!

¹ On Ps. 91 (90), homily 68.

² On Ps. 5, homily 2.

³ Ascetical Homilies, 37.

- ❖ The closer man gets to this world, on the way of his life, the deeper the roots of love of material things, go down in him; Because of them, He would perpetually become worried and disturbed; would fight others for their sake; and would be captivated by certain friendships ...

Let us then, my friends, remember that, ... Let us, as much as possible, not care for things, here in this world; so as to be gradually drawn towards the things to come.

We would not have the strength to cast away our carnal desires, if we do not manage, through looking at God, to control ourselves, a bit by bit¹.

St. (Mar.) Isaac, the Syrian

- ❖ If *“the form of this world is passing away”* (1 Corinthians 7; 31); all what belong to it would indeed come to an end; ... Everything will pass away; ... Every day, the world would grow older and older²!

Father Ambroseaster

4- THE WICKED WILL FALL INTO SNARES:

“For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walks into a snare” (Job 18: 8).

As the wrong ways of the wicked lead him to evil, all his strong projects and his mighty efforts would fail, and he would not consummate his goals. The more efforts he puts into his counsel, the deeper he becomes entangled in the nets and the sooner would be his perdition.

- ❖ *“He puts his feet in the net, and walks into its snares”* (8). Whoever puts his feet in a net would not be able to get them out except by seeking the grace of God. Whoever allows himself to fall into a sinful habit would not be able to bring him up when he intends to do; and when he tries to set himself free, he would find himself more shackled and entangled in the threads of its net, and would not be able to walk away from it.

It often happens that someone is led astray by the pleasures of this world, to realize eventually that the glories of the honors he has got, are of no true value, and are not worthwhile; ... He would then realize, in the true light, the mighty bonds by which he is shackled;

We would not even realize that we are shackled, in a sound concept, except when we strive to get liberated, and try hard to lift up our feet ...

Pope Gregory the Great

Many fathers of the church, like **St. Macarios the Great**, confirm that sin carries its corruption in itself; The wicked who persist on his evil, would perish as a natural fruit of the evil that realizes the corruption.

The wicked does not need someone to confront him; because what he does would bring him up to bitterness and death. He would end up drinking from the same cup that he filled for himself; unless he casts it away through the enjoyment of the fellowship with his Savior, and his serious strife through his holy will in the Lord.

- ❖ The longer you stay in what concerns the dust, the sooner you will ultimately turn into it. Therefore, it is befitting for you to change; to transform; and to become heavenly³.

¹ *Additional Homilies, 2.*

² *Commentary on Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. 7:31).*

³ *Homilies on Genesis, 9.*

The scholar Origen

- ❖ We have all turned into a lump of mire; a lump of sin. And, having lost our reward through sin; In the absence of God's mercy, We, as sinners, would only deserve eternal perdition. Whoever, in such a lump, could dare to ask God, 'Why did you create me this way?' If you really wish to know these things, you should not be mire, but rather a son of God, through the mercy of Him who gives the believers in His name, and the power to become children of God¹.
- ❖ By sin, we indeed slide into death. Where there is law, sin would be more serious than without it. Anyway, through grace, we can, strongly, without difficulty, and with our free will, consummate what the law dictates. We would no longer be slaves to the law through fear, but friends and servants of righteousness through love².

St. Augustine

Whoever eats and drinks sin, would fall into its snares; would have his will dissolved and weakened; and would turn into its humiliated slave; unable to set himself free, but his thirst for it grows more and more. We should not marvel at this, as whoever takes drugs, the longer he does, the deeper entangled in their snares he would be; and the stronger his longing for them would become.

There are many who wrongly assume that practicing sin would provide them with so much bitterness that would motivate them to strive to escape from them on their own. This logic is not sound; As whoever taste sin, while realizing its perdition, he would desire it more and more, on the expense of his inner joy and his eternal glory. Sin is like fire that consumes man and destroys his will; he would no longer be capable of setting himself free from it, unless supported by the exalted grace of God.

"The net takes him by the heel, and a snare takes hold of him" (Job 18: 9).

The wicked, who persists on his wickedness, and on not returning to God, would never escape from drinking from the bitterness of the cup of evil, and from cropping its deadly fruits. That is what the Holy Book sometimes calls 'the divine wrath', or the realization of the 'divine justice'. That is the interpretation of treasuring the freedom of will; as by choosing evil through his own free will, man would keep its fruit for himself. *"The Lord knows how to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment"* (2 Peter 2: 9).

In the Septuagint version it came as: ***"The nets would take hold of him, and those thirsty for his perdition would get stronger" (9 LXX).***

- ❖ ***"The thirsty (for his perdition) would strongly flare against him"³ (9).*** Once our old enemy catches someone alive in the nets of sin, he thirsts for his death.

This phrase would also be understood in a different way:: Falling into sin, someone with a wicked mind may intend to seek, through superficial thought, how to escape from its nets; Yet, out of fear of people's threats or rebukes, he would chose to die eternally, rather than to suffer temporary tribulations. By that, he would deliver himself completely to the ways of evil, when he sees himself already shackled. ... The sinner would despair his return; and by that same despair, he would more violently burn in the lusts of this world; the heat of lust would greatly intensify inside him; and

¹ Questions, 68:3.

² Questions, 66.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

his mind, fallen in the nets of past sins, would flare toward more bitter rebellion. That is why it is added: **“And the thirsty would strongly flare against him”**.

He who suffers from ‘dropsy’, the more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes. It is the same way with the greedy, whose greed grows with the growth of his wealth!

Pope Gregory the Great

**“A noose is hidden for him on the ground, and a trap for him in the road”
(Job 18: 10)**

The deceitful devil would never stop fighting mankind by several ways; hiding his nooses and snares on the ways treaded on by men. His war is secret and full of deceit, and he would never despair from opposing the ministers and people; old and young; women and men; virgins and married; rich and poor; sick and healthy; ... He would use for each one the war that suits him. Yet, by looking towards the Heavenly, the Grantor of conquest, we would not fear his crafty and deceitful ways.

❖ **“Their nooses are hidden on the ground, and their traps are all on the road” (10 LXX)**. It is a fact, that Satan hides his nooses on the ground, in such a way to trap those who live according to the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians 3: 9), and according to the lusts of men (1 Peter 4: 2; 2 Peter 1: 4). The devil intending to catch and captivate men would catch the righteous by his self-righteousness and the greedy by his greed. David prophesies: *“The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside”* (Psalm 140: 5) Even Bildad, who happened to utter the truth in his previous phrases, started to lie in those to follow.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ Our enemy will have his nooses carefully hidden on the ground. In executing his plots, while motivating the longing of the human mind toward the earthly gains, he conceals the snare of sin, to entangle the mind completely ... After studying the personal tendency and the favorite sins of everyone, he puts a diversity of sins before his face; To those with a gentle and a joyful nature, he suggests the licentiousness and vain glory; whereas to those with violent nature, he suggests pride and viciousness.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ We have warned you against the deceit of the evil spirits, who strive to hold you as slaves and servants; and sometimes even use visions and apparitions in dreams, to submit all those who fail to practice strong efforts for sake of the salvation of their souls.

The Word incites us to keep away from the devil, and to follow the living God alone by His Son.

We, who have for so long been sunken in adultery, are now accepting only purity.

We, who used the ways of magic, are now dedicating ourselves to the good living God.

We, whose only interest has been to gain wealth, now bring all we have to become public possession for everyone in need.

We, who for so long, have hated and destroyed those who differ from us in behavior or race; Now, since Christ came, are living together in peace and harmony.

Today, we pray for our enemies, and try to provoke those who vainly hate us, to listen to the good principles and commandments of Christ, wish for them to share

with us the same joyful hope, in order to gain the reward granted by the Almighty God¹.

Justine, the martyr

- ❖ Satan always works hard, even when facing the danger of losing his battle².
- ❖ Satan can destroy even under the appearance of piety; not only through leading his victim to adultery; but, on the contrary, through leading him to exaggerated grief that goes with the repentance on adultery! Although it is his befitting work to acquire us through sin; Yet it would be a shame on us, if he does it through our repentance; As repentance is our weapon and not his³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ It would not be enough for us to recognize the plans of the devil, but we should also ridicule them. In this we should follow the lead of the apostle Paul, who did recognize the plots of Satan, not to get preoccupied by them, but to avoid falling into his nets⁴.

St. Dedymus the Blind

- ❖ Seeking to draw the miserable souls to fall into his nets, and to turn them away from worshipping the true God, there is *“No wonder that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11: 14). He does that to test those who are in need to be tested, or to deceive those who deserve to be deceived⁵.
- ❖ Yet, the great mercies of God are alone capable of saving man from wrongly understanding the true nature of the evil spirits, and from seeing them as good angels; and saving him from the unutterable deadly troubles and losses that result from such Satanic deceptions⁶.

St. Augustine

5- TERROR WILL PREVAIL OVER THE WICKED:

“Terrors frighten him on every side, and drive him to his feet” (Job 18: 11).

He talks here about the destruction kept for the wicked in the other world, and that would dwell upon them as well in the present one. The destruction that would dwell over his heart, to shake his whole being, and reaches down to his feet that become incapable of carrying him; that would come because of his feeling of guilt; as an advance payment of the horrors that he will suffer after his death.

Everything around the wicked would terrify him, *“He flees when no one pursues”* (Proverbs 28: 1); as he is actually pursued, not by what is outside, but by what is inside him.

“‘There is no peace’, says the Lord, ‘for the wicked’” (Isaiah 48: 22).

“The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59: 8).

“They have also healed the hurt of My people, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’, when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6: 14; 8: 11)

¹ Apology, 1:14.

² Homilies on Corinthians, 43:5.

³ Homilies on Corinthians, 4:5.

⁴ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church, on 2 Cor. 2:11.

⁵ City of God, 10:10.

⁶ City of God, 19:9.

“We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and there was trouble” (Jeremiah 8: 15).

“Because they have seduced My people, saying; ‘Peace!’, when there is no peace and one builds a boundary wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar” (Ezekiel 13: 10).

“‘that is, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace’, says the Lord God”(Ezekiel 13: 16).

- ❖ And now, those who do not keep the feast ... are coming to days of grief, and not of joy; as “‘There is no peace’, says the Lord, for the wicked (Isaiah 48: 22). And, according to the wisdom: “Joy and happiness are taken away from their mouths”¹.
- ❖ Because, what is meant by the feast, but ministering the soul?! And what is this ministry, but the perpetual prayer, and thanksgiving to God?! The non-thankful, are truly denied the subsequent joy and rejoice, **which is taken away from their mouths; that is why the divine word, does not allow for them to be in peace** (Isaiah 48: 22); but they would be in grief and pain².

St. Athanasius the apostolic

- ❖ “**Terrors will frighten him on every side**”; Imagining that everyone are against him, he struggles against everyone.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His strength is starved, and destruction is ready at his side” (Job 18: 12).

The wicked does not feel fulfilled; as what he thinks is the source of his fulfillment – his wealth, honor, or strength, etc. would bring him to shame and to feeling of void. Beside this inner famine, “*the wicked would be brought to desolation, as in a moment!*” (Psalm 73: 19)

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**, it came as “**His strength would be stricken with hunger, and his ribs would be invaded by famine**” (12)...

According to **Pope Gregory the Great**, man is formed of a soul and a body; The soul represents the strong element, while the body represents the weak one. Giving the leadership to the body and its lusts, the wicked however strong he may look – is actually weak; having lost his inner strength, and inner fulfillment; and living in weakness, famine, and void. The spiritual man, on the other hand, giving the leadership to the soul, and being sanctified by the Spirit of God, he lives by the spirit of strength and the inner fulfillment, needing nothing.

- ❖ Every man is formed of a soul and a body; as though of strength and weakness. Because of being built of an element of a rational spirit, he is properly called strong; While, as far as the element of his physical being is concerned, he is weak. Thus man’s strength is in his soul, capable of opposing the evil tendencies he faces; as expressed by the blessed ‘Job’ in the words: “*You prevail forever against him, and he passes on*” (Job 14: 20); Man, by the rational soul, would eternally live; Whereas the strength of the wicked would be stricken by hunger, as his soul is not sustained by any inner nourishment; as expressed by the words of God: “*I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord*” (Amos 8: 11).

¹ Paschal Letters, 2.

² Paschal Letters, 3.

It is well added: “*His ribs will be invaded by famine*” ... One’s ribs are the senses of his mind, floating around his hidden thoughts. Famine would invade his ribs, when all the spiritual nourishment is taken away; the senses of the mind are weakened, and would be incapable of controlling or protecting its thoughts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ One may think of the people of Israel as being rich, having the adoption as the children of God, the divine worship, the promises, and the fathers. But they have actually become poor because of their sins against the Lord; and on account that they killed the Bread of life¹. “*But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing*” (Ps. 34: 10).

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ When Joseph was thirty years old, he was set free of the shackles, got to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, and became the ruler of Egypt. In the years of fulfillment he gathered the wheat, to distribute it in the days of famine. I believe that Joseph’s age of thirty, was a symbol of that of the Savior, the second Joseph, who gathered, not the same wheat the first Joseph gathered in Egypt, but another kind of wheat, to distribute it, to confront, “*not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord*” (Amos 8: 11)².

The scholar Origen

“*It devours patches of his skin; the firstborn of death devours his limbs*” (Job 18: 13).

Death approaches the wicked to devour his body members; namely, to eat them up and bring them to corruption; whereas, as far as the righteous are concerned, death sets for them the eternal glory, where the body shares them with the soul.

In the writings of Pope Gregory the Great, this text came as: “*The beauty of his skin is taken away from him, and the firstborn of death devours his arms*”. What is the beauty of his skin but the temporal glory, which, being a beauty on an outer skin, and not deep inside, is devoured and taken away? Whereas, concerning the righteous, it is said in the psalms of David: “*The royal daughter is all glorious within*” (Psalm 45: 13); and in the prophet Zechariah: “*I will be the glory in her midst*” (Zechariah 2: 5).

Beside taking away the temporal glory, death dwells on the human soul that forsakes God, the source of her life and resurrection; Spiritual death would devour her limbs; namely, make her helpless to do any work.

- ❖ “*The beauty of his skin*” is the temporary glory he desires; which is nothing more than a beauty over the outer skin.

And what is death, but the sin that devours the inner life of the soul? About which it is written: “*Blessed and holy is He who has part in the first resurrection*” (Revelation 20: 6). By this resurrection, man would, later on, enjoy a joyful resurrection in his body; he who in this life, would rise again from the death of his soul.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ “*The royal daughter is all glorious within*” (Psalm 45: 13). Moving up to the level of the mind, he would discover the beauty of the soul³.

¹ Homilies on Ps. 33:7.

² Homilies on Luke, 28:5.

³ On Ps. 45.

6- THE WICKED WILL BE UPROOTED FROM THE SHELTER OF THEIR TENTS:

“He is uprooted from the shelter of his tents, and they parade him before the king of terrors” (Job 18: 14).

He who lives in this world for the sake of the body and its lusts, would even lose this same body; namely this tent; And death would come upon him, not as a joyful crossing over to heaven, but as *“the king of terrors”*.

Everything, over which he depended as his master, would be taken away from him, even his tent. His soul would be separated from the tent of his body, which would have no more support; the way it was said to the rich fool: *“Your soul will be required of you”* (Luke 12; 20).

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the great**, it came as: *“His trust in his tent will be taken away, and death as a king would tread upon him”*. He believes that death refers here to Satan to whom the wicked delivers his soul, and submits as a king; and refers as well to the sin that humiliates the wicked and enslaves him.

❖ **Death** here refers to the **devil**, the enemy of the human race, who brought on them death, through a certain agent of the enemy, about whom St. John says: *“whose name was death”* (Revelation 6: 8). Death would tread as a king over the wicked on the day of his departure from this world; Death that previously deceived him by smooth seductions, will ultimately carry him to punishment, and will violently bring him down, shackled in the chains of his own evil doings.

And here as well, as death acquires the lost heart of the **sinner**; and at the same time it provides it with the feeling of pleasure, it treads over it, as though with the feet of his overwhelming authority. But, if we understand death, not as the devil, but as the sin, whose fruit is death on the Day of Judgment, Death indeed would tread as a king over the mind of him who gives no resistance to its seduction. The temptation of sin could never be far from someone in this life; yet resisting the temptation of sin is something, but being enslaved by its authority is something else. Therefore, it is aid about the wicked, who does not resist the seductions of sin, and does not fear submission to its authority: *“Death as a king will tread over him”*; against that same death, the apostle Paul used to warn his disciples, saying: *“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body”* (Romans 6: 12).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **Those who live in pleasure would fear death**, while those in sorrow would long for it to depart soon.

The rich would fear death, while the poor would desire it to find in it comfort from their misery.

The strong are terrified when they think of it, while the sick would look forward to find in it comfort from their sufferings¹.

Father Aphrahat

❖ He who loves the earthly lusts, would never dare to think of being with Christ after his departure; and would not be able to say: *“I am a stranger on this earth”*; Whereas he who says: *“Do not hide Your commandments from me”* is a saint ...

¹ *Demonstration 22 Of Death and the Latter Times, 8.*

That is why the prophet seeks from God to reveal to him the greatness of his commandments for the heavenly life¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ He fears death, he who is not born of the water and the Spirit, as he will be delivered to the fire of Hades.

He fears death, he **who did not experience the cross of Christ and His passion.**

He fears death, he who, after death, would anticipate another death.

He fears death, he, for whom the eternal fire and the limitless punishment wait.

He fears death, he who seeks a benefit of postponing his death, to delay his sighs and moans².

Cyprian, the martyr

“They dwell in his tent who are none of his; Brimstone is scattered on his habitation” (Job 18: 15).

God created man to be the subject of His love, of His compassion, of His rich grace, and of His goodness. But in case man persists on rejecting the attachment to God, Curse would dwell upon his tent, when his body, as well as his soul, become a dwelling place for the devil, who takes by force what is not his; Man would turn into a land for the devil that receives brimstone and fire, like Sodom and Gomorrah, instead of being a holy temple of God.

St. Macarios the Great believes that the inner man, would either be a land dwelt by God as His sanctuary, or occupied by the devil as his own. By ‘land’ here he means (a dwelling place) or a (habitation).

- ❖ ***“Brimstone is scattered on his habitation” (15).*** What is brimstone but the fuel that feeds the fire, which emits a horrible smell? It is to be understood as the carnal sin; that filling the mind with evil thoughts, like some kind of smell of corruption, would flare in it an eternal fire. While the cloud of its horrible smell infiltrate into the lost soul, it would act like a fuel for its perdition; hence it is described as brimstone. The history of the Holy Book gives us an example of this, in telling how the Lord rained fire and brimstone on Sodom (Genesis 19: 14)

The wicked man, through slothfulness with his body, on which he should have authority, would be incessantly preoccupied with evil thoughts, that keep him from producing the fruit of any good work; which is well expressed in the words: ***“His roots are dried out below, and his branch withers above” (16).***

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ There is a land inhabited by beasts; and another (land) in the air where birds live and fly; and in case they chose to walk on earth, they would be caught by hunters; and fish have as well their own (land) which is the sea water. Thus (land) here means the habitat where creatures are born, live, feed, reproduce, and find its pleasure and comfort; whether on land, in the air, on in water.

In a similar way, there is a (land) for the devil, a dwelling place where the hosts of darkness and the spirits of evil move and find comfort. And there is as well a (land) of light, of the Godhead, where the hosts of angels and holy spirits roam, land, and find comfort.

¹ القمص تادرس يعقوب ملطي: المزمور المئة والتاسع عشر (118) غنى كلمة الله ولذتها، 1996.

² *Treatise 7 On the Mortality*, 14.

The carnal eyes can neither see nor touch the dark (land), nor that of the light; namely, that of the Godhead; ... Whereas, for the spirituals, both (lands) are revealed to the eyes of their hearts¹.

St. Macarios the Great

- ❖ We should know that we would become (land) for them (the devils), when our souls receive their evil and dark thoughts; and when our bodies where we dwell, be the stage where they become visible².

St. Anthony the Great

- ❖ Do not be in the company of the adversaries; lest the legion of devils dwell in your house.

Beware of the envious; because he is an incarnate devil³.

The spiritual elder – John El-Deliaty

- ❖ It is obvious that the evil spirits could not find their way into the bodies of those they possess, unless they first manage to reign over their minds and thoughts, taking away from them the fear of God, and the meditation in Him. In this way, having no divine immunity, they can dare to approach them as though, put them in chains, then find for themselves a place in them to dwell, as though they have the right of possession on them⁴.

Father Cyrinus

Some believe that when 'Bildad' heard about the fire that came down from heaven and consumed Job's servants and his flocks of sheep, he counted 'job' as someone whose evil reached the level of that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and was worthy of God's fire and wrath to devour what he had unjustly possessed.

- ❖ The beauty of virtues of a pious man would not change by abnormal tribulation. The health he earns by his prayers would not be taken away from his tent (his body), as long as he is rich in practicing good works. And even if his riches go away, he stays shining by the splendor of righteousness through his perseverance.

"His exaltation would be scattered by brimstone". That is exactly what happened to the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah; and what the other wicked would expect in this world and the coming one.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

7- THE MEMORY OF THE WICKED IS CUT OFF FROM THE EARTH:

"His roots are dried out below, and his brances wither above" (Job 18: 16).

When man, through his persistence on wickedness, loses the riches of the exalted grace of God, he becomes as though deprived of *his roots*; namely, of his blessed fathers. He would be like a tree whose roots are dried out below, and became without life; He would also lose his descendants, like a tree whose branches wither above, and become without fruits. This is what happened to many wicked persons, like 'Rehoboam', 'Baasha', and 'Ahab', who had no living descendants.

¹ عظة 4:14.

² الرسالة السادسة.

³ رسالة 2:21 راجع ترجمة الأب سليم دكاش اليسوعي.

⁴ مناظرات يوحنا كاسيان مع مشاهير آباء البرية، 24:7.

As far as we are concerned, even if our roots are dried out below, yet the Lord Christ presented Himself as a 'Root' that floods our inner selves with His divine life, and refreshes our branches to bear the fruits of His Holy Spirit; namely, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5: 22, 23).

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**, the text came as: "***His roots are dried out below, and his crop gets corrupt above***".

- ❖ What would we understand by the term "***roots***", hidden from sight, that produce branches above, obvious to all, but the unseen thoughts in the heart, that produce seen practices "***crop***"? The wicked man concentrates his thoughts in the lowly things, and disregards seeking the pleasures of the green eternal ones . . . "***He lets his roots dry out below, and his crop corrupt above***". ... His perseverance is counted as naught in the sight of heaven, even if he seems good in the sight of man. ... We should then, send good thoughts down here on earth, to become, one day, worthy of getting the fruits of our good works, as an eternal reward.

Pope Gregory the Great

"The memory of him perishes from the earth, and he has no name in the land" (Job 18: 17).

Nothing preoccupies the mind of Satan like vain glory; because of which he rebelled against God and fell; and goes on fighting to reign forever on the hearts and thoughts of mankind.

The children of Satan, following his lead, seek the temporal glory, and present every human effort, assuming that the world will hold their name and memory forever along history. But as evil wipes out the name of the wicked from the book of life in heaven, his honor is buried in dust, and his name would bear nothing but despise even on earth "***He would have no name on the land***". He would get here the advance payment of the eternal shame and disgrace which he will confront on the great day of the Lord, according to the words of Solomon: "*The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot*" (Proverbs 10: 7).

About the wicked it is said:

"The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins; their cities have rooted out; the very memory of them has perished" (Psalm 9: 6).

"For He who avenges blood is mindful of them; He does not forget the cry of the afflicted" (Psalm 9: 12).

"The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Psalm 34: 16).

"Let them be before the Lord continually, and may his memory be cut off from the earth" (Psalm 109: 15).

"The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost" (Ecclesiastes 9: 5).

"They will become dishonored corpses, and an outrage among the dead forever; because He will dash them speechless to the ground, and shake them from the foundations; ; they will be left utterly dry and barren, and they will suffer anguish, and the memory of them will perish" (Wisdom of Solomon).

"He removes some of them and destroys them, and erases the memory of them from the earth" (Sirach 10: 17).

And about the righteous it is said:

“His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations” (Sirach 39: 9).

“May their memory be blessed; May their bones send forth new life from where they lie” (Sirach 11, 12).

“The memory of Nehemiah also is lasting; he raised our fallen walls, and set up gates and bars, and rebuilt our ruined houses” (Sirach 49: 13)

❖ ***“The memory of him perishes from the earth, and he has no more name in public places”*** (17 LXX). It is obvious that this concerns those whom the Lord Christ designated by saying: *“will be cast out into outer darkness”* (Matthew 8: 12; 25: 30); those who partake of the wedding banquet, wearing dirty attire, and about whom the king says: *“Bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 22: 13, 14).

“and has no more name”; As the wicked are cast out of the land of the righteous, and their memory will be blotted out from mankind (Deuteronomy 32: 26); About whom David also sang on his guitar, saying: *“Their memory has perished forever”* (Psalm 9: 6).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ ***“The memory of him perishes from the earth, and he has no more name in the streets”***. It is befitting for us to notice that by this, ‘Bildad referred to Satan, the prince of all the wicked, who, at the end of time will himself enter into the vessel of perdition called by the name ‘the anti-Christ’; And who, even now, strives and seeks to put his name everywhere and on everyone, through the glory of vain commendation and temporal haughtiness.

Therefore, I wish these words are understood by every wicked person, and particularly by the prince of the wicked himself.

Pope Gregory the Great

8- AN UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED:

“He is driven out from light into darkness, and chased out of the world” (Job 18: 18).

The wicked is driven out from what he thinks as light in this world, on account of the comfort he enjoys, into the darkness of the grave, then into the outer darkness, where *“he shall never see light”* (Psalm 49: 19), and shall never have hope.

He is driven from the pleasures of this world, the same way his early parents Adam and Eve were driven out of paradise. He is driven out from the secret chamber of the heavenly Groom, where he has no place, and stays eternally in the outer darkness.

❖ ***“You blot out their name forever and ever”*** (Psalm 9: 5). You destroy them completely, uproot them, and wipe up their memory. As a sign of God’s care, He does not do this in secret; but in order to mend the ways of people through the tribulations of others, He refers to the publicity of the devastation that will dwell upon them¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ ***“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open on their cries”*** (Psalm 34: 15). You may say: I have cried out to Him, yet I am still suffering.

¹ *On, Ps. 9.*

When you are passing through tribulation, you should hold fast to His ways until He listens.

Being a divine Physician, He would go on cutting off the corruption, and would not lift His hand until He finishes His job of purifying you. A physician who heeds the cries of his patient, and stops his surgery before it is finished, is actually cruel physician. And a mother who goes on giving her child a bath for his own good despite his continuous cries and tears; Is not a cruel mother?

The same way, God, full of love and compassion, although He may seem sometimes as though He does not listen; He will not stop caring until He heals us.

The wicked may say: I shall go on doing evil, and will always feel secure, because God's eyes are not on me, but on the righteous! But being aware of the thoughts of men, it is said: "*The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth*" (Psalm 34: 16)¹.

St. Augustine

❖ "***He drives him out from light into darkness***" (18). When man falls under eternal judgment because of his love of gaining the honors in the present life.

Pope Gregory the Great

Bildad and his friends assumed that Job's name would be cut off from the earth, on account of his assumed wickedness; the same way, the Jews intended for the name of Jesus by crucifying Him, to be replaced with that of Barabas the thief. But it was their name which was cut off, while that of Jesus remained and shall remain forever glorified. What was intended against 'Job' and the Lord Christ, is still intended against the church; Yet the church will remain the holy bride, testifying by her life to the exalted riches of God's grace, and enjoying the fellowship of His glory forever.

"He has neither son nor posterity among his people, or any remaining in his dwelling" (Job 18: 19).

The spiritual man, as a living witness to the gospel of Christ, acquires many children as posterity in the Lord. The apostle John calls those to whom he ministers "My children"; and the apostle Paul speaks about his disciple 'Onesimus', "*whom I have begotten while in my chains*" (Philemon 10). While the wicked, on the other hand, even if he has numerous children, according to the flesh, yet he would be with no son or grandson to inherit his wealth, nor to carry his name or memory.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that these words would not apply to the righteous 'Job', but to the evil devil, as well as to the anti-Christ, who assumes that he reigns on the whole world. It would also apply to all the wicked, like the traitor 'Judas' who betrayed his Lord for his love of silver; on whom it is written in the book of Psalms: "*Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it*"; and, "*Let another take his office*" (Acts 1: 20).

"The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins" (Psalm 9: 6).

"May their camp be a desolation, let no one live in their tents" (Psalm 69: 25).

❖ "***He has neither son nor posterity among his people, nor any remaining in his dwelling***" (19); As it is written that the Lord Jesus: "*Will consume him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming*" (Thessalonians 2: 8). Thus, as his evil would come to an end, at the same time together with the end of the world, "***He will have no posterity among his people***",

¹ On Ps. 34. (33).

being driven, together with his people, on the same level, to punishment. All the wicked who walk in wickedness according to his evil counsel, would, together with their ruler (Satan), be stricken by the splendor of the coming of the Lord, with an eternal desolation; and would have no posterity in the world. The just Judge would bring to an end his wickedness, together with that of the world. We know that these words concern the anti-Christ, when we read the following words added to them: ***“They of the west are appalled at their fate, and horror seizes those of the east”*** (20).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“Strangers would also dwell in his tents”*** (LXX 19). The blessings of the coming age are set for all, if they choose to walk along the paths of the Lord (Psalm 25: 10); The mansions there are set for all (John 14: 2-3), if they intend to be alert. Yet it may happen that they get open to embrace (the demons), who do not walk along the paths of the Lord, whence it is said: ***“Strangers would also dwell in his tents”***; Meaning that those who walk along the paths of the Lord should keep away from the wicked (the evil spirits).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“They of the west are appalled at their fate, and horror seizes those of the east” (Job 18: 20).

Seeing how the curse would dwell upon the wicked, and how he would fall into a bitter and sudden change, not expected by anyone, nor heard of by those succeeding (of the west), or preceding him (of the east), they, in astonishment would cry out, saying: ***“How awesome are Your works, O Lord”*** (Psalm 66: 3).

The element of suddenness of what would dwell upon the wicked on the Day of Judgment, astonishes the righteous, both those preceding and contemporary to him; as it is impossible to describe the extent of their suffering. The same could be said about the glory set for the righteous, who no human mind can imagine.

Speaking about the wicked here, he probably means the worst of them; namely, the ant-Christ, who would appear as a king with authority, who would have control on the whole world, and to whom many peoples would submit, Yet, he would suddenly collapse when God sends help to His church, and devastation would dwell upon him.

- ❖ ***“They of the west are appalled at their fate, and horror seizes those of the east”*** (20); when Satan would be released to stand with so much evil against the righteous, that horror seizes the hearts of the elect, according to what is written: ***“So as to deceive, if possible, even the elect”*** Matthew 24: 24). Not that the elect will fall, but, because of the horrible circumstances, horror would seize their hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“Those succeeding him would sigh in their depths for his sake; and astonishment would seize those preceding”*** (20). ‘Bildad’ calls those who, through repentance, are worthy of getting their wages at the eleventh hour (Matthew 20: 9), the ‘succeeding’; those who truly sigh over the wicked, wondering in themselves, why did they not, as well, covet the spiritual prosperity through repentance!

“And astonishment would seize those preceding”; Who from the beginning enjoyed God’s commandments.

Meaning, how, even at the end of time, they (the wicked) have not heeded God’s commandments!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him who does not know God” (Job 18: 21).

That is what will befall on the dwellings of the wicked: destruction, devastation, and misery *“In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God”* (2 Thessalonians 1: 8). What are the dwellings of the wicked, who persisted on not knowing God, but the eternal Hades?

St. Hippolytus in his article, ‘Against Plato, on the cause of the Universe’, he says: [All souls after death, are led by guardian angels; The wicked souls, who are worthy of temporary punishment on their wickedness¹, as an advance payment for the eternal punishment that awaits them, are led to hell, a spacious dark place, where they stay until the day of resurrection, close to the lake of fire – namely Hades – see its flames, smell its smoke, and become terrorized by the judgment to come². The righteous, on the other hand, are led to another place of more splendor and joy, called “the bosom of Abraham”, where they enjoy the fellowship with the angels, and the fathers Patriarchs, and rejoice in anticipation of the reward to come³].

St. John Chrysostom did not intend to speak about the location of Hades, other than that it is “out of this world”⁴; But spoke in some detail about its curses, saying in one of his sermons:

[It is a sea of fire; not a sea with the dimensions we are familiar with, but greater and more violent; with strange waves of fire.

A great pit full of horrible flames coming out on all sides, like fierce wild animals.

There, no one can resist, and, from there, no one can escape.

There, the gentle face of Christ, the Grantor of peace, is not seen anywhere.

As it is with those fierce convicts, condemned to work in mines, which cannot anymore see their families, but only their guards; so it will be there! And much worse! Those in the mines can anytime, raise a petition to the ruler seeking amnesty, which they eventually could have; But there in Hades, there is nothing of the sort. From there, they will never come out, but will forever stay suffering such inexpressible torture⁵].

Again he says that fire in Hades would emit no light; and would not finish the condemned, but perpetually consume them⁶. Their bodies would turn to non-corruption, and would suffer forever⁷.

St. John Chrysostom believes that in Hades, although there are different grades of suffering, depending on the extent of sins⁸, yet all the condemned would be there eternally⁹. He also believes that God has set Hades with the intention of not casting anyone in it¹⁰!

❖ There is no way for Hades to be a fiction¹¹!

¹ PG 10:796 F.

² PG 10:797B-C.

³ Ibid A 13-B10.

⁴ In Rom. hom. 31:4.

⁵ In Matt. hom. 43 (44):4; cf. In Hebr. hom.31:4.

⁶ Ad Theod. Laps 1:10; In Hebr. hom. 1:4.

⁷ Ad Theod. Laps.

⁸ In Matt. hom. 75 (76):5.

⁹ In 1 Cor. 23:4; In 2 Cor. 10:4; In 2 Thes. 3:1.

¹⁰ In Ps 7:12.

¹¹ In 1 Thes. hom.; cf. 2 Cor. 10:4; In 2 Thes. 3:1.

- ❖ Suffering there are not intended just to realize the divine justice, but to provoke men, still living, to repent and keep away from sinning¹.
- ❖ If God is keen on correcting our paths, on keeping us away from sin, and on sparing us such a horrible destiny; It is then obvious that there is definitely a punishment for the sinners, and a reward for the righteous².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ I wonder how is it possible for anyone to take the probability of fire on the day of judgment so lightly! How could they fear the heat of a furnace, and not be terrified of the fire of Hades! Why are they still so senseless and mindless? Why are their hearts so delinquent³?!

St. Augustine

- ❖ ***“It is the place of them who do not know God?” (LXX 21).*** Who are such people? And how could they be that ignorant? To them, the Only-begotten Son clearly says: *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink”* (Matthew 25: 41, 42).

Yet, you could not doubt that ‘Bildad’ did understand that; as the natural law proclaims it as an ordinance of God.

Anyone who soundly receives the natural law in his life, knows for sure what the righteous and the wicked would expect; and knows that those who pretend not to know, could not offer such an excuse before the great awesome Judge.

Yet ‘Bildad’ is worthy of blame and contempt, on account that, together with his knowledge of what concern the wicked, he, in a shameful way included ‘Job’ in them. By that he acts like those who call the adulterers as chaste; the greedy as righteous; and the hypocrites as humble!

As for us, we should discern between the good and bad; And, while honoring the righteous, and glorifying God, we should also, at the same time, sanctify our words and purify our hearts, and zealously dedicate our bodies and the temples of our souls to God, who gets pleasure in honoring His ministers; To Him is the glory to the age of ages, Amen.

St. Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ The gnashing of teeth (as described by the Lord in the everlasting fire), is not gnashing of physical teeth; so are also the worms. But he, who does not repent and be purified from his sins, would be consumed by his own fire, and be devoured by the worms (of his deeds). That is why Isaiah wrote, saying: *“Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled”* (Isaiah 50: 11). It is the fire and the worms resulting from sin that stab one’s mind and heart, and devour his conscience⁴.
- ❖ ***“Those are certainly the dwellings of the wicked; and that is truly the place of him who does not know God” (21);*** about whom, he already said: *“He is driven out from light into darkness; and chased out of the world”* (18). That is how the wicked, in every deceitful thing they do, would expect; Those who boasts now that

¹ Cf. In 1 Tim hom. 15:3.

² In Rom. hom. 31:4.

³ Sermon 362:9.

⁴ The Faith of the Early Fathers Vol 2, p.163.

they do not know God; who thinks themselves happy here, in the fake light of the righteous, and who strive to acquire for themselves the title 'righteous'. As they are actually occupying the place of others; they will eventually be brought to their true place, in the everlasting fire, as a fruit of their iniquity.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 18
YOU ARE MY LIFE; WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO LIFE!

- ❖ My God, You are the everlasting life.
You shed light on my depths, to turn me into light for the world.
Without you, my lamp is extinguished.
My dwelling place would turn into a grave.
And I would lose every heat and life.
- ❖ Lead my soul; as You are the Way.
Without You I would stumble in the darkness; and I would fall and never stand again.
By You I set forth to heaven.
I would securely walk the journey of my life.
- ❖ You are the Truth; In You I set forth to the true knowledge.
Without You I would walk like a lost beast.
Or like an irrational animal.
I would fall into the nets of the devil; and would become his laughing stock.
Set me free off the snares of the enemy.
To become like a sparrow that sets forth out of a broken snare.
And flies to complete freedom.
- ❖ You are the 'Life'
Without You, death would possess me.
It would devour me, with no escape.
I would live as though in an unbearable hell.
Come O 'Life'!
Fill my depths with your peace.
- ❖ You are my treasure and my riches.
When I acquire You, Everything would be within my hands.
I would feel no need.
And no temptation would break me.
- ❖ You are my Father.
You count me as Your son.
I approach You to find You in my depths.
You are never far from me.
Who can separate me from You?
Finally, Let me acquire You, O Holy One.
Then evil would escape from me.
And the enemy would find no place in me.
Let me experience the advance payment of Your heavens.
- ❖ My God, You are everything to me.
You are my Light that scatters my darkness.
You are my strong Leader.
You are the irresistible Truth.
You are the secret of my salvation.
You are my treasure and riches that no one can take away from me.
You are my heavenly Father, who embraces me in His bosom.

CHAPTER 19

GOD, IS HE MY ENEMY? HE IS MY ONLY HOPE!

'Job' let 'Bildad' go on without interrupting him; Then, hearing him talking with some confirmation about the temporal devastation and the eternal perdition that the evil 'Job' is worthy of; he strongly responds to him in this chapter, which is considered of importance, taking into consideration the tribulations and temptations 'Job' is going through, and in particular the attitude of opposition taken by his friends against him:

1- As a human being, however righteous he is, because of the fierce nature of his temptation, his view is not as exalted as it should be. Like many others, struggling in such a situation, he is wondering: Has God turned into an enemy, to allow Satan to put him under such an unbearable temptation? And if He has, How did his friends lost their humanity, disregarded his past history with them, and referred to him what is far from his true nature?!

The righteous 'Job', as many saints do, lived through those human feelings, though temporarily, amid their sufferings.

Surrounded by afflictions on every side, when comfort turned into torture (1 – 7), 'Job' in this chapter expresses how he is fed-up with Bildad's talk, on top of the attitude of his other friends, who, crushed his soul and added to his suffering and shame, by their unjust criticism and unfair accusations, about which he knows nothing! They all pretend as though they do not recognize him; and are treating him in a way completely different from what they used to do in his prosperous days.

'Job' wondered, if God has chosen to show him as a sinner in the sight of the world; to deal with him as an enemy; to allow for him to pass through such tribulations (8-12); and to suffer such cruel attitude, not only from his friends, but even from his own wife, his household, and his servants (13-19), who, because of the miserable and disgusting condition of his body, despise him and treat him as a fugitive deprived by God of his past glory!

2- In his human weakness, feeling need for compassion from those around him, assumed that he can get what he was denied by god, from his close friends (21-22).

3- The righteous 'Job' was privileged by the fact that, despite his human weakness, By a living faith, he rose up to another true level; namely; that God's love is exalted, and His care is amazing; which made him wonder: Could it be possible that God, my only hope (23-27), really be my enemy?! At this point, he goes back to his exalted faith, to say in perfect trust: "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth*" (Job 19: 25); and comforts himself with faith and hope in the happiness in the other world. We believe that 'Job' started here to get under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to lift him up above himself, to enlighten his insight, and to put in his mouth such exalted words. **We notice that in Job's further talks, we find no more protest nor complaint from the dealings of God, as he previously did; because that hope brought peace to his spirit.**

4- Having risen up by his heart and mind to realize the love of God, and to have his heart filled by hope, the righteous 'Job' utters certain statements concerning his conditions, **that bear amazing prophesies about the Lord Christ, who has occupied the position of a Man of passion. In Him**, the prophet Isaiah was first

offended, saying: “*He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him, He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him*” (Isaiah 53: 2, 3). Yet later, Isaiah got back to enjoy the secret of His cross, and gave us the praises of the suffering Servant, the song of every soul that encounters the secret of the cross, and recognizes her Savior, the Forgiver of our sins, and the Grantor of the true righteousness, and the fellowship of eternal glories.

Most of Job’s words in this chapter came as prophecies that were realized in the Person of the suffering Lord Christ, as the Head of the church; as well as in the church as the body of the suffering Christ:

a- Tormented by the talks of his friends (1-4). The leaders of the Jews approached the Lord Christ to tempt Him, using sharp words and vain accusations; instead of preaching him as His friends, who recognize Him through the symbols and the prophecies in their hands.

b- They showed haughtiness over the Savior Messiah, despite being unable to prove the accusations against him (5).

c- By the passions he went through; as though fallen in the tent of God, He realizes the will of God the Father, through His own will (6).

d- His way became as though in darkness; That is why darkness dwelt upon the world at the time of crucifixion.

e- As Job’s crown was taken away (9), The Lord Christ hid His glory to carry the crown of disgrace – the crown of thorns – on our behalf.

f- As ‘Job’ was utterly broken down (10), the Lord Christ delivered His Spirit on the cross.

g- As ‘Job’ was seen in the eyes of his friends as an enemy of God (11), Our Christ carried the sins of the world on His shoulders, to lift up the divine wrath and animosity from us.

h- As Job’s household and relatives turned into strangers to him (13), The Lord Christ came to His own, who rejected Him.

i- As Job’s own wife could not bear to smell the stinky odor of his body (17), The Lord Christ became “an aroma of death to death” for the Jewish nation that denied Him (2 Corinthians 2; 16).

j- As ‘Job’ pleaded to his friends to have compassion on him (21), The Lord Christ cried out on the cross, saying: “*I thirst*” (John 19: 28); longing to the water of love of those who would forsake their wickedness and denial. “*He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2: 4).

And as ‘Job’ seeks from his friends to comprehend the secret behind his sufferings; and wishes that his story be inscribed on stone, for the benefit of the coming generations (23-24), The Lord Christ sends His Holy Spirit, that inscribes the secret of His practical love on the stony hearts, to make them carry the rock of faith, and to turn into joyful heavenly divine kingdom.

k- As ‘Job’ draws his friends’ attention to the resurrection that the living God will grant him (25), The Lord Christ directs humanity, whom He dearly love, to His resurrection, to enjoy its power, and to rise by Him from death to the eternal life.

L- As ‘Job’ ends his talk by warning his friends against rejecting the truth, and holding fast to vain words (28), lest they would be slain by the sword (29), The Lord Christ warns non-believers, lest they would be denied the joyful eternity, and be cast together with the devil into Hades.

'Job' ends his talk by warning his friends that, in case they stay on their conviction that his sin is the cause of his sufferings, the appearance of God whom he hopefully anticipates, will bring fear upon them. 'Job' wishes that his story be recorded and inscribed; believing that a day will come when God will stand testifying to him. But, did he expect that to happen before or after his death?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1- Comfort turns into torment | (1 – 7) |
| 2- God allowed for his tribulations | (8 – 12) |
| 3- Relatives turn into strangers | (13 – 19) |
| 4- Nobody has compassion on him | (20 – 22) |
| 5- Eternity is our hope | (23 – 27) |
| 6- A warning to his friends | (28 – 29) |

1- COMFORT TURNS INTO TORMENT:

“Then ‘Job’ answered and said: ‘How long will you torment my soul, and break me in pieces with your words?’” (Job 19: 1, 2).

All the physical pains and tribulations that came upon 'Job', are nothing compared to the psychological pains that dwelt upon his soul from his friends. While temptations made him offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God; he was crushed by the words of his friends; to cry out together with the Psalmist, saying: *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled”* (Psalm 6: 2).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that these words are an admonition by 'Job' to his friends who almost broke down his hope, something that the devil failed to do! The most that the devil could do, was to bring on him temptations of physical sufferings that would eventually come to an end by death. He did not care for sufferings, and did not fear death; as he believed that the more intense his battle with the devil would get, the more crowns he would have. Whereas the attacks of his friends, who aimed their arrows, not against his body that dissolves day after day, but against his soul to break down his hope, are more serious than the attacks of the devil.

The Holy Book often talks to us about how the cruel words could break down the soul; and warns us as well against the smooth words that hide a killing and deceitful heart. The sharp tongue is like a killer arrow, whose stabs are more serious than those of the sword and then the blows of the whip.. The lying tongue is put on the same level with the haughty eyes and the bloody hands.

“Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have fallen because of the tongue” (Sirach 28: 18)

“Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he lies in wait” (Jeremiah 9: 8).

“The blow of a whip raises a welt, but a blow of the tongue crushes the bones” (Sirach 28: 17)

“A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood” (Proverbs 6: 17)

“The mighty in speech are widely known; When he slips, the sensible person knows it” (Sirach 21: 7)

“His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is trouble and iniquity” (Psalm 10: 7)

“May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things” (Psalm 12: 3)

“My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword” (Psalm 57: 4)

“Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me?” (Sirach 22: 27)

- ❖ *“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile” (Psalm 34: 13; 1 Peter 3: 10).* Because the sin caused by the tongue is very active and multi-sided, it has its role in frustration, hypocrisy, judgment, and guile. Do you want me to enumerate the many names of the sins of the tongue? From the tongue come ridicule, foolishness, vain accusations, bitterness, false vows, vain testimony¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ A horse cannot tame itself; nor can man. There is need for man to tame a horse; And for God to tame man².

St. Augustine

- ❖ The sword kills the body; and the tongue kills the soul. The tongue knows no middle way; it would either be greatly exalted, or intensely wicked. It would be greatly exalted when it proclaims Christ as God; and would be intensely wicked when it denies that. I wish no one deceives himself, assuming that he never sinned; as I may sin by my tongue³.

- ❖ The more the tongue sin, the more miserable man becomes⁴.

St. Jerome

- ❖ A practical proof of a sound and a perfect mind is to refrain from saying the wrong things, and to keep our mouths shut when necessary. It is better for us to adopt the befitting talk that knows and expresses perfection. The talent of most benefit is to be able to utter wisdom when talking about the good life. Bad talk should be alien to the saints⁵.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ Keep the tip of your tongue; It is like a horse; If you place a rein in its mouth, and teach it to walk properly, it submits to your control; But if you let it go without restraint, it turns into a chariot for the devil and his hosts⁶.
- ❖ The tongue is a sharp sword. I wish we would not wound anyone with it, but rather cut off the gangrene in us⁷.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ When my body is worn out, I do not feel a real need for anything. ... I would count my sufferings as nothing; and would not care for my body to exhaust this mire and pass away. ... Do not torment my soul, and do not disturb my spirit. ... In the battle, I am a conqueror, ... I do not fear pains; ... whereas you, my friends, crush me with your words, ... take away my hope to get the crowns, ... and make me step back, as though I did not run well.

¹ *Catena.*

² *Comm. on Sermon on the Mount, 55: 2.*

³ *Sermons, 41. FC 48, p. 306.*

⁴ *Sermons, 86, FC 57, P. 204.*

⁵ *Catena.*

⁶ *Catena.*

⁷ *Catena.*

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ You should comprehend the words of 'Job', who sometimes utter them on his own behalf; sometimes on that of the Head (the Lord Christ); and other times as a symbol of the Catholic Church.

Now, the soul of that righteous man becomes deeply grieved when others revile him without learning how to practice the good life. By their words, they refer the righteousness to themselves, when practically, they are its enemies.

Speaking on his own behalf, 'Job' utters his words on the tongue of the catholic church, saying: "*I am truly ignorant, and my ignorance is in my company*" (Vulgate 4); As though he says to the heretics: [All your knowledge are not counted for you, but against you, as long as it lifts you up in foolish pride; Whereas my ignorance is working for my account, As I do not dare to talk in what concerns God with the pride of heart, Butkeep myself in truth, with the spirit of humility].

Pope Gregory the Great

If Job's wounds became more sore because of the bitter words of his friends, it would be befitting for us as believers who should care for the peace, salvation, and joy of our brethren in the Lord, to refrain from uttering harsh words, but should utter nothing but nice words that would rather heal their wounds and put their hearts at peace in the Lord. The Holy Book provokes us, not only to keep away from having a sharp tongue, but to pray to have a mild tongue that would support us and our brethren by its healing sweetness.

- ❖ The apostle, saying: "*No man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*" (James 3; 8), does not mean to deal mildly with the evil of our tongues, but to seek a divine grace to help us tame them¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ The spring is the heart of man; the stream of water that flows from it is his talk; the outlet from which it comes out is his mouth; the sweet water is the sound teaching; and the bitter water is what is contrary to this².

Father Hilary, Bishop of Arl

- ❖ It is a great thing to be able to control the tongue; As failing to do so is the greatest of evils³.

St. Cyril the Great

"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16: 24)

"He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does him takes up a reproach against his friend" (Psalm 15: 3).

"My heart overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the king; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Psalm 45: 1).

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit" (Proverbs 15: 4)

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18: 21)

"By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone" (Proverbs 25: 15)

¹ *On Nature and Grace, 15 (16).*

² *Introductory Tractate on James.*

³ *Catena.*

“Do not be reckless in your speech, or sluggish and remiss in your deeds”
(Sirach 4: 29)

“Pleasant speech multiplies friends, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies” (Sirach 6: 5)

“If kindness and humility mark her speech, her husband is more fortunate than other men” (Sirach 36: 28)

“The flute and harp make sweet melody, but a pleasant voice is better than either” (Sirach 40: 21)

“These ten times you have reproached me; You are not ashamed that you have wronged me” (Job 19: 3).

They reproached him by what they referred to him of evil attributes, and by what they accused him several times. Their words were like a deadly sword and heavy rocks that crushed his soul. They were not ashamed to despise him, by estranging themselves from him, and by pretending as though they do not ever know him (Job 2: 12). They did not deal with him as they used to do in the days of his prosperity; about which the wise Solomon says: *“A friend loves at all times”* (Proverbs 17: 17).

They spoke five times; and every one of them multiplied his reproach, that made ‘Job’ say: ***“Ten times you have reproached me”***. The figure 10 refers to time perfection; hence the Ten Commandments in the law, that came as a reference to the commitment of the believer to the commandment all his life long. Here, it is as though Job’s friends did not let a single moment of their sitting with him pass without bearing the spirit of stingy criticism and shameful reproach.

❖ ***“You should have known that it is the Lord who deals with me like this” (LXX 3).*** He says to them: ‘I wish the honor of Him who chastens me, makes you change your look at me. It is not befitting for you to tread over the someone whom God chastens; but you should rather sigh and grieve for him; It is not befitting for you to rejoice over the death of another; as such behavior would not pass unpunished’.

St. John Chrysostom

“And if indeed I have erred, My error remains with me” (Job 19: 4).

“And if indeed I have erred”; meaning: Suppose that your accusations against me are true; and that indeed I have erred, whether through ignorance or by mistake, as everyone is prone to that; That would only touch my life; As my error – if I did err by intention, and out of craftiness and deceit – would remain with me, and not with you. So why is all this deadly attack?!

He probably means, if I indeed am wrong and evil; And if I am suffering all these tribulations that dwelt upon me, because of that; Leave me alone in my bitterness. Why should you add to my sufferings?!

❖ ***“You stand up against me”***¹ As though he says to them: It was more befitting of you, seeing me in such bitter situation, and It would be a far better ordinance, to stand up first against yourselves, before standing up against the wicked.

We would stand up against ourselves, when we look at our evil deeds, punish ourselves with the recompense of self reproof, when we never forsake ourselves in our sins, and never stand by any foolish thought toward ourselves.

We should first firmly chase the evil in us; that we may be justified to stand up to oppose the evil in others for their benefit, and to apply what we punished in ourselves on others.

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

This kind of *'standing up'* is not known at all to the wicked, who disregard their errors and charge against the others ... That is why the righteous 'Job' says to his friends, who felt haughty over him in his difficult situation:

"You stand up against me"; In other words: 'You overlook yourselves who are worthy of more blame, and reproach me with such cruel words'. Whoever does not first condemn himself, would not be justified to soundly condemn others ...

Those who, with such deceit, brought over a harlot to be stoned were told by the Lord Jesus: *"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first"* (John 8: 7). They came to condemn the sins of others, and forsook their own sins.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ *"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ... 'Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye'" (Matthew 7: 3-5).*

Take away from yourself the hatred, to be able to mend him whom you love. The Lord says well *"O Hypocrite"*, As it is only one with a loving heart, who has the right to complain from the sins of others; But the wicked, if he does, would be a 'hypocrite'; portraying himself in a way he is actually not ... There are pretenders who complain of the sins of others, to appear as someone with good counsel ... Let us be aware of such behavior! ...

And in case you find yourself in a position, when you have to reveal the sins of others, or to rebuke them; ... Look first into yourself, and see whether you are committing the same sin, or have committed it. If you are not or did not, beware that you are only human, and prone to the same danger. But if you did commit such a sin before, then got rid of it, You should always have in mind your own weakness; should embrace for those whose error you intend to reveal, love and not hate.

However, we should not preoccupy ourselves with the sins of others ...; before blaming or rebuking the sinner, we should rather grieve for ourselves, not demanding from him to obey us, but to strive together with us¹.

❖ We should rarely use rebuke; and if we have to use it, then we should eagerly seek the ministry to God and not to ourselves. ... Let us have only one goal, and do nothing with a double heart; ... Let us take out from our eyes the plank of envy, hatred, and pretense, to be able to see clearly, to take out the speck from our brother's eye; ... Let us look at that speck with the eyes of a dove, those of the bride of Christ – the church (Songs 4: 1), whom God chose for Himself a glorious bride, not having a spot or a wrinkle, holy, and without blemish (Ephesians 5: 27)².

St. Augustine

❖ A Christian should be diligent ... not to judge anyone, not even a harlot, nor anyone well known for an iniquity, or for his lack of discipline; but to deal with all mankind with the simplicity of intent, and the purity of eye. He, as a man, by his nature and foundation, should not disregard, judge or hate anybody, and should not discern between men. ... If you see a one-eyed man, do not despise him in your heart, but give him his due of respect, as though he is without blemish ... The perfect purity of heart that befits the saints of God, dictates that, in case you encounter the sinners or the weak; Commiserate with them, and show them mercy;

¹ Sermon on the Mount 2:64.

² Sermon on the Mount 2:66.

“Set yourselves on the rampart” (Habakkuk 2: 1; Isaiah 21: 8), to watch the vanity and deceit of the world, and to address God through the inner man.

St. Maccarios the Great

- ❖ Do not do wrong to man, who is in the image of God, on account of the evil in him; As evil is only a temporary thing, a tribulation, or a kind of sickness; whereas his being, as an image of God, is still intact¹.

Father John Kronstadt

“If indeed you magnify yourselves against me, And make my humiliation an argument against me ...” (Job 19: 5).

‘Job’ felt that they are not only taking against him an inhuman position, turning away from their friendship, But they are actually magnifying themselves against him, counting themselves exalted above him, in order to humiliate him. Instead of taking away their own disgrace, they are using his humiliation as a proof of his lack of integrity, faithfulness, and perfection; making it an argument against him.

The haughty Pharisee saw in the harlot (Luke 7), some unbearable defilement and an unpardonable evil; and wished to drive out the Lord Jesus, to keep such a woman away from his house. The Lord Jesus, on the other hand, saw in her contrite heart, and in the tears of her eyes, much love, to warrant the forgiveness of her many sins.

The multitudes, likewise, saw in Zacchaeus (Luke 19), the head tax-collector, a sinful man, and a money-worshipper, who should not live among them; Whereas the Lord Christ saw in him his longing to be saved and to get rid of iniquity; that not only warrant the entrance of the Lord of Glory into his house, but His entrance even into his heart.

The look of our Lord Jesus, the lover of the soul who admits her dark countenance, is “Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair” (Songs 1: 15); whereas her sisters, who only see her darkness, she rebuked, saying: “Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me” (Songs 1: 6).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believes that the righteous ‘Job’, to whom God testified, and who has got such wisdom from high above, could never err, utter what is alien to the truth, or embrace any vain thoughts. Yet, even if he did, that does not give his friends the right to magnify themselves against him in his humiliation.

He is as though saying to them: Why should you deal with such haughtiness with someone in humiliation? ... Why should you attack such a fallen man...? Why should you harm someone, toward whom you should have compassion, and for whose sake you should pray? ... And even if you chose to feel haughty against him, why should you equally feel haughty against God, whose exalted care dwells upon him?!

St. Cyprian says: [It is indeed pride and haughtiness, for anyone to dare to assume that **he is capable of doing what God did not grant even to the apostles**; ... to discern between the tares and the wheat; ... and to choose the golden and the silver vessels, and despise and cast away the wooden and the ceramic ones; ... When the wooden vessels are not to be burnt except in the great day of the Lord, by the burning divine fire; and the ceramic vessels are only to be crushed by Him who was given the iron rod!²].

- ❖ The Lord commands us not to judge anyone hastily and oppressively; As He wishes for us to do everything with a simple heart, always inclined toward God. And

¹ *The Spiritual Counsels of Fr. John Kronstadt, 1966, p. 189.*

² *Ep. 51: 52.*

because the intention of him who judges others, is to rebuke and judge, motivated by pride and envy, rather than to mend and correct in love; the Lord of glory added: ***“Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7: 3).***

If your brother falls in the sin of anger, you, through judging him, would fall into that of hatred; there is a great difference between anger and hatred, as it is between the speck and the plank! Hatred is a long-term anger ...

With time the (speck) of anger would develop into a (plank) of hatred; because, if you happen to get angry with someone, you would wish for him to get back to the truth; whereas if you hate him, you would not¹!

St. Augustine

“Know then that God has put me in the wrong, and has surrounded me with his net” (Job 19: 6).

‘Job’ probably intended to say to his friends that, since God allowed for his life to be broken up, and for his person to fall into a net like that of a hunter, from which there is no escape, It is then up to Him, and not to them to judge him.

Some see in this a reference to what the Persians, the Romans, and the Gothic, used to do in their battles, where warriors used to go in pairs: one holds a sword and a shield, while the other holds a net and a spear. The latter throws his net over the head of the enemy and nails him with his spear to the ground; Then the other soldier would easily slay him with his sword².

“Though I cry, ‘I have been wronged’, I get no response; Though I call for help, there is no justice” (Job 19: 7).

‘Job’ feels that God has taken a position against him; that there is no explanation for what dwelt upon him; that he is being treated unjustly; and that he is calling God, who does not listen to him. He as though says to his friends: ‘Why are you disturbing and crushing my soul? Let me keep crying out to my God; He may probably explain to me the reason for what I am passing through¹

❖ ***“Though I cry, ‘I have been wronged’, I get no response” (7).*** That reminds us of the Lord Christ, who said to the officer who struck Him on the face: *“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?”* (John 18: 23). It is obvious that the verdict against Him then, was not right or just; because despite the numerous judges and witnesses, no one of them uttered the truth.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

Job’s cries here are probably symbols of that uttered by the Lord Christ amid his passion on the cross: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* (Psalm 22: 1; Matthew 27: 46; Mark 15: 34).

❖ In His very gentle Manhood, and through His form as a servant, we come to learn what we should not care for in this life, and what we should hope for in eternity. In His passion, which his haughty enemies thought as victory, He uttered the words of our weakness; As our sinful nature was crucified together with him (Romans 6: 6); to break down the body of sin, saying: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* ...; the same words sung by the Psalm, long ago, as a prophecy about His passion, and as a proclamation of the grace by which His believers would be saved and liberated³.

¹ Sermon on the Mount 2:63.

² James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 211.

³ Letters, 140 to Honoratus, 5.

- ❖ Having adopted a human soul, the incarnate divine Word, adopted as well the feelings of that soul. Although as God, He was not suffering, Yet as Man He was indeed prone to it; And in a human voice He cried out: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* As Man He suffered passion on the cross, bearing our terror; Because during difficult times, as humans, we count ourselves as being forsaken; As Man, He also went through passion, cried, was crucified, and died¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ He was forsaken, because His Manhood had to pass through death. It should be taken into consideration that He delivered His Spirit through a **loud voice after He was given**, by a Roman soldier, a sponge filled with sour wine, put on a reed, to drink (Matthew 27: 46); Meaning that He took from the bodies of the Gentiles, the sins that destroyed humanity; He transferred our sins to Himself, to unify us by His eternal nature².

St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitier

2- GOD ALLOWED FOR HIS TRIBULATIONS:

“He has fenced up my way, so that I cannot pass; and He has set darkness in my paths” (Job 19: 8).

He comments on the bitterness that God allowed for him to pass through, in the hope that they may feel some compassion on him, and leave him alone. He portrays God as though blocking his way, not allowing him to pass, even through death, and as though setting darkness in his path, that he does not know where to go. He admonishes God, and asks Him for the reason behind all those events.

Amid all that cruelty of their hearts, and all their deadly words, ‘Job’ hoping to find a little compassion from them, intends to provoke them to stop their aggression and to have some mercy on him.

- ❖ *“He has fenced up my way, to keep from me any chance to escape”*. The soldiers sent by Pilate, together with the crowd of Jews, *“fenced”* the Lord Jesus, by orders from Pilate (Matthew 27: 26-27). Some spat on His face (Matthew 27: 30), and others struck Him with their hands (John 19: 3); Yet He did not try to escape from those who *“fenced”* Him.

“He has set darkness before my face”. There was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour; to keep the creation from looking at the bare countenance of the Creator.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Those who surrounded Him ridiculed Him; He became their laughingstock; *“They bowed their heads and kneeled before the Lord”*; Even in their ridicule they unknowingly acknowledged His royalty! Before crucifying Him, they clothed Him with a crimson robe, and put a crown over His head. Why did they put on His head a crown, even though of thorns? Being a king, He was symbolically crowned by the soldiers. The Holy Book says in the book of the Song of Songs: *“Come out, O daughters of Jerusalem, to see King Solomon with the crown given to him by his mother”*. Here, for the Lord Christ; being the One who forgives the sins, and takes away the curse, it was a secret crown

Like Adam who got the verdict: *“Because of you, the earth is cursed, thorns and thistles it will produce for you”*;

¹ *Of the Christian Faith, 2: 7: 56.*

² *On Matt., 33: 6.*

It was befitting for Jesus, the second Adam, in order to cancel that verdict, to receive the thorns; and to be buried in the earth, that was cursed to receive the blessing¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

❖ **The crucifiers** like the shearers, took off His clothes; Yet He, like a goat, did not utter a word!

He forsook His garment, to clothe with it those who were driven out naked from paradise!

He gave up His garment, and stayed ridiculed; because He knew that it would be better cover the naked Adam!

They took off His clothes, and adorned the slain Groom with a crimson robe with the color of blood!

❖ **As a Judge, they put in His hand a scepter**; and for their sake, He had to write down a certificate of divorce from their mother, the daughter of the Hebrews who hated Him!

She gave Him the scepter to write down the certificate of her divorce, because she saw that He loves holiness, as much as His Father.

❖ **They blindfolded Him, ridiculed Him, and struck Him with their hands**; saying: ‘Prophecy, who struck You!’

When with the reed they struck the high head, the angels trembled!

By all those evil and corrupt deeds they madly rewarded Him!

They madly intended to cover the face of the Sun of Righteousness; lest it shines for the world to see their corruption!

The ignorant bride covered the Groom’s face, lest He sees her corruption and filth!

They covered the face of the physician, lest He bandages their wounds and heals them!

Look how much the Lord Christ bore from the transgressors!

Look how that ignorant slave dared to spit on His blessed face!

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head” (Job 19: 9).

It is as though God has taken away from him his wealth, his honor, and his royal crown; to leave him completely helpless.

There is no doubt that, under the violence of such temptation; and not in pride and haughtiness before God’s ordinances. ‘Job’ uttered these words in grief and bitterness of heart that is why, although they might seem to include some daring words, Yet God looked at his meek spirit. And as said by **Pope Gregory the Great**: [Although he who stops his righteousness, because of grief, would not be righteous; Yet the blessed ‘Job’, with his meek spirit, did not err, despite his seemingly harsh words. If we say otherwise, we would let Satan realize his goal when he said to God: *“But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You in Your face”* (Job 2: 5).

❖ **“He has stripped me of my glory” (9)**. As there was need for the words of Isaiah to be realized, saying: *“He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him; He is despised and rejected by men”* (Isaiah

¹ Catechetical Lectures, 13:17-18.

53: 2, 3). “*And taken the crown from my head*”; to set for Him a new crown of thorns (Matthew 27: 29).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ He says: “*He has stripped me of my glory*”; Man’s glory being his righteousness; the way a garment protects against cold, righteousness protects against death. It is befitting to liken righteousness to a garment, being said by the prophet: “*Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness*” (Psalm 132: 9).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ “*They twisted for Him a crown of thorns*”; Which is befitting for our Lord, having come to take out the thorns from the earth!

By the crown put over His head, he bore the curse of the earth; and mightily, He carried the weight of the whole world!

Sins, iniquities, passions, pains, and strikes, were all twisted to form the crown that was put over His head!

By the thorns, the curse of Adam was dissolved! He became a curse, to give blessing to the returning heirs!

By His crown of thorns, He uprooted the cursed seed of the serpent!

By the thorns of His crown, and by the curse of the earth that destroyed generations, He took away Adam’s curse and sweat!

By His crown of thorns, He broke down the crown of Satan who intended to become a god over creation!

By His crown of thorns, He twisted a crown for the daughter of the Gentiles, whom He betrothed from among the idols, and let her bear His name!

- ❖ **The Great Savior was struck with reeds**; And according to the ruler’s verdict, He was taken out to be crucified.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him, but drove Him out in ridicule!

When He was taken out to die without guilt, Judas – the lamp that was extinguished from among his brethren – was remorseful because of his evil deed.

He, who delivered Him, regretfully gave the silver back to those who took the Lord, and confessed that he delivered an innocent Man ...; to which the crucifiers said: “*What is that to us? You see to it*” (Matthew 27: 4).

The pure blood brought terror and horror over those who shed it.

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“He broke me down on every side, and I am gone; He (cut) my hope like a tree” (Job 19: 10)

He did not only leave him on a dead-end road, nor like a humiliated slave, but he also broke down his whole being on every side, as though he is an uprooted tree. Satan heard that complaint; he who said that God made a hedge around ‘Job’, around his household, and around that entire he has on every side (Job 1: 10).

- ❖ “*He broke me down on every side, and I am gone*” (10); when the disciples who were around Jesus forsook Him and fled (Mark 14: 50). As for Him, He delivered Himself to those who put Him under arrest; and was gone!

“*He (cut) my hope like a tree*”. He did not say that He has uprooted it from its roots, but just (cut) it. As a tree when cut above the root, from the root a new tree or trees would grow.

Once Christ was crucified, many people lost the hope they had, despite the fact that He has told His disciples beforehand about His crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 16: 21). When they got disturbed by His passion, they despaired concerning Him as a Savior.

That is exactly what ‘Cleopas’, one of the two disciples whom He encountered, on the road to Emmaus said, “*But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel*” (Luke 24: 21). That was when the Savior firmly rebuked him for reaching such an extent of despair, saying: “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken*”. And to confirm that there was no need for losing hope, He added: “*Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*” (Luke 24: 26).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

‘Job’ was almost broken down by despair when he was surrounded by temptations on every side, and became like a tree, although (cut), yet its root remained alive to produce little shoots to grow. Concerning the Lord Christ, all were aroused against Him, was condemned to death, and those around Him almost lost hope in what they hoped for: that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.

Nowadays, as tribulations surround the church, and some weak fall; some assume that it has failed in her mission. But God, who allows for her to pass through such troubles, to the extent that she seems like a (cut) tree; Is a Support for her, working in her by His Holy Spirit, to gain in weakness a multitude, and to stay in the world like a leaven which may look like dead in the dough, which would all be leavened! Therefore, it is befitting for us not to lose hope, but always to rejoice in those who join her to enjoy eternal salvation, through the living word of God.

- ❖ The church is broken down on every side when certain weak members perish - those who used to appear as strong - when the crown is taken away; namely, when the eternal rewards are disregarded by those who occupy the position of the head; hence, concerning the fall of the weak, he adds: “*My hope was (cut) like a tree*”.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Like the leaven which, although a tiny portion, yet it would hold together the whole dough, and would soon give to it all its characteristics; the Word of God works in us in a like manner; as when we receive it inside us, we become holy and blameless¹.

St. Cyril the Great

“He has also kindled His wrath against me, And He counts me as one of His enemies” (Job 19: 11).

The wrath of God against ‘Job’ became like a fire that flares up to consume him; and make him cry out together with the Psalmist, saying: “*Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand*” (Psalm 39: 10).

That was symbolized when God commanded Moses, saying: “*I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink. Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel*” (Exodus 17: 6). It is said: “*Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank*” (Number 20: 11); Hence the Psalmist says: “*He opened the rock, and*

¹ Commentary on Luke, Sermon 98.

water gushed out; It flowed through the desert like a river” (Psalm 105; 41); “Who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water” (Psalm 114; 8).

And that was what the prophet Isaiah saw in the Lord Christ on the cross, and said: *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, **Smitten by God**, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53: 4-5).*

❖ *“**He has also kindled His wrath against me**”; by condemning Adam, the new (Adam) came (1 Corinthians 15: 45), to wipe out the debt (Colossians 2: 14) of the old Adam; Hence ‘Job’ says: **“And He counts me as one of His enemies”**; namely, He sought from me the debt that the rebel owed.*

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ To be sure that He was the One seen by Moses; Listen to the testimony of Paul, saying: *“All drank the same spiritual drink; For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10: 4)¹.*

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

❖ For those concerned, water gushed out of the rock; whereas for us, blood gushed out of Christ. For them water was just enough for sometime; But now, it will eternally fulfill your thirst².

Father Ambrose

❖ I count the Word of the Creator, and liken Him to the rock that followed the people of Israel in the wilderness. Yet, the Word who made the creation out of nothing -- was not like that rock, a source of water that flowed over them like glorified rivers, but He was rather like mighty oceans of water³.

St. Ephram, the Syrian

❖ The cloud was lifted up, and led them to another place (Exodus 17: 1- 7), that was equally barren, with burning sand, and without a drop of water. Here again, when the people were exhausted by thirst, Moses struck a rock with his staff, and from it water gushed out abundantly, more than enough to fulfill the need of such huge congregation⁴.

❖ It is not difficult to conform between the historic sequence and the spiritual meditation. Man, who left the Egyptians behind, dead in the water; was purified by the tree; enjoyed the springs of the disciples; and found comfort in the shade of the palm trees; is actually capable of receiving God. The Rock, according to the apostle is the Lord Christ; A Rock, although solid, and opposing to the non-believers; Yet if man uses the staff of faith, this Rock would gush out water for the thirsty, and would flow over those who receive the Lord Christ; who says: *“My Father and I will come to him, and make our home with him” (John 14: 23)⁵.*

Father Gregory of Nyssa

❖ The rock was struck twice to gush out water; and as the cross has two bars, all those things were proclaimed to us as symbolic⁶.

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 10:7.*

² *The Mysteries 8:48.*

³ *Hymns on Paradise 5:1.*

⁴ *Life of Moses, 1:35.*

⁵ *Life of Moses, 2:136.*

⁶ *In Ioan., tr. 28: 9.*

St. Augustine

“His troops come together and build up their siege ramp against me; they encamp all around my tent” (Job 19: 12).

As the attack of the troops was allowed by God, he calls them ‘God’s troops’ or ‘His troops’. They came to ‘Job’, encamped around his tent unopposed, like an invading army building up a siege ramp around a city to let its inhabitants perish from hunger and thirst.

- ❖ It often happens that evil spirits, on top of the strikes that come from outside, bring certain evil thoughts into the hearts of those who suffer, which warrant the wrath of God; Those troops of evil spirits build for themselves a siege ramp in the hearts of the sorrowful to seek their death; Hence ‘Job’ added: ***“They encamp all around my tent” (12).***

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ It is strange how ‘Job’ talks about those invading troops as ‘His’, referred to “Him”. In this concern, we should discern between the authority of the evil spirits and their will. He calls them ‘the troops of God’, as, although the evil spirits are always running around seeking to harm us; Yet they have no authority over us, unless they are allowed by the “Supreme will”. They long to harm us unjustly; Yet, by the will of the mighty God, they are unable to do anybody any harm, except through justice.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The Devil plans, not just to draw us away from the blessings we have, but even to draw us to a rocky high cliff; But God in His compassion did not fail to care for humanity.

To the devil, He reveals how foolish he is in his attempts; And to man, He reveals the greatness of His divine care: By death, He granted him the eternal life. While the devil drew man out of paradise, God led him to heaven; the benefit surpassed the loss¹!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Satan’s temptations are more directed against those sanctified; as he longs more to gain conquest on the righteous².

St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitier

3- RELATIVES TURN INTO STRANGERS:

“He has removed my brothers far from me, and my acquaintances are completely estranged from me” (Job 19: 13).

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to this world to reject the Jews – His own – But through their lack of faith, He opened the gates of hope before the Gentiles.

- ❖ ***“Our brothers were removed far from me; they recognized the strangers more than me” (Job 19: 13 LXX).*** To this the grace of the gospel testifies ... John says about the Lord: *“For even His brothers did not believe in Him”* (John 7: 5). When they said to Him: *“Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing”* (John 7: 3-4); They said that because they did not recognize His might, ***“They recognized the strangers more than Him”***.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ *Baptismal Instructions, 2:7.*

² *In Matt. hom. 2.*

- ❖ Meditate into the words of John: “**He came to His own**”; Not for the sake of Christ’s need; As it is impossible for the divine Being to be in need; But He came for the sake of doing good to His own.

John made his rebuke to the Jews more stinging by saying: “**And His own did not receive Him**” (John 1: 11). And they even drove Him out of His vine and killed Him.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ “*He came to His own, And His own did not receive Him*” (John 1: 11). “His brothers were removed far from Him; and His acquaintances were completely estranged from Him”; Namely the Hebrews who, despite having the law, and having been given the prophecy, When He was there among them, they did not recognize Him.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ He did not come to reveal the Jews’ lack of faith; But, through His prior knowledge of what was going to happen; and by His amazing divine ordinance, He used the denial of the Jews to call the Gentiles through Christ to faith; to the Kingdom of God, despite being strangers from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2: 12)¹.

The scholar Origen

“**My relatives have failed, and my close friends have forgotten me**” (Job 19: 14).

God allowed for his relatives and acquaintances, not only to fail giving him love; but even to deny him the spirit of brotherhood, friendship, and compassion; to give him the back and not the face; to forget him as though he never existed in their life; and to disregard every blood relationship or old friendship. They failed him, and were not moved by the tribulations that dwelt upon him.

- ❖ ‘Job’ found no one to soothe his pains; That, out of the bitterness of his grief he says; “**My relatives have failed me; ... My servants talked behind my back; ... I called my own sons, and they disregarded me**” ... Some of them mocked, others rebuked, and still others ridiculed. ...; Not only the enemies, but the acquaintances, and even the servants, went so far to abhor him; ... not just for two days, three days, or ten days, but for several months; ... He did not find comfort even at night; the horrors of the night, in his sleep, exceeded those of the day; that made him say: “**You scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions**” (Job 7: 14). ... What man of iron or a heart of steel could bear such tragedies²?!

St. John Chrysostom

“**Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight**” (Job 19: 15).

No one of them stretched his hand to serve him during his painful sickness. If he calls one of his servants and ask him for something, he or she would not respond, forgetting how he used to be a merciful master who never denied them any request or favor.

- ❖ “**Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, count me as a stranger**” (15). This is a prophecy about the incarnate Lord, whom the Jews, despite being told about Him long ago by the words of the law; they refused to recognize or to honor Him.

¹ *Contra Celsus* 2:78.

² *Resisting the Temptations of the Devil, homily* 3:6.

“I am an alien in their sight” (15). Our Redeemer, not recognized by the synagogue, became as though an alien in His own house.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“No prophet is accepted in his own country”*** (Luke 4: 24). ‘Anathoth’, Jeremiah’s hometown (Jeremiah 11: 21) did not receive him well; So it has been with Isaiah and many other prophets, who were rejected by their own people; namely, by those of circumcision ...; Whereas we, although strangers from the covenant of promise, contrary to the Jews who rejected Christ, and refused to testify to Him, We received Moses and the prophets who proclaimed Christ, with our whole hearts¹.

(The scholar Origen)

“I call my servant, but he gives no answer, I beg him with my mouth” (Job 19: 16).

He, the Master, calls and begs his servant, who does not respond, and gives no answer!

- ❖ ***“I call my servant, but he gives no answer”*** (16). It is obvious that (Christ) here is talking about ‘Judas’.

- ❖ ***“I beg him with my mouth”*** (16). Here (Christ) talks about His bride – Jerusalem – whom He betrothed for Himself to minister to the law. He often prayed for the sake of her salvation, and often begged her to change her ways; and even said: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”* (Matthew 23: 37).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Who are the Jewish people, but ***“a servant”*** who disobeyed God in loving His Son? ... God calls us through His gifts to us; And we respond to His call through worthily ministering to Him according to the benefits we get.

“I beg him with my mouth”. As though He more clearly says: ‘I, through the mouths of the prophets, gave commandments to be practiced, came to him incarnate, and begged him with my mouth’.

Telling us about the commandments that the lord delivered on the mount, St. Matthew the Evangelist says: *“He opened His mouth and said ...”* (Matthew 5: 2). He opened His mouth, He who previously opened the mouths of the prophets’.

The bride longing for His compassion also says: *“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth”* (Songs 1: 2).

Though all the commandments taught by preaching, it is as though the holy church receives His many kisses of His mouth. Now, it is well said: ***“I beg”***; having appeared in flesh, and having humbly uttered the commandments of life; it is as though He is looking for His servant, full of pride; hoping for him to come!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ O, Jews, when you come to Jerusalem and find it desolate, and turned into dust, do not cry like children; Do not grieve! But seek for yourselves a city in heaven instead of the one you are searching for on earth. Lift up your eyes, You will find above in the Highest, ***“the free Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all”*** (Galatians 4: 26).

¹ In Luc. hom 33:3.

Do not grieve for the absence of the temple here; Do not despair for being deprived of a priest; As there in heaven, you will find an altar and priests of the coming goodness, according to the order of Melchizedek, in a procession before God (Hebrew 5: 10). God's love and mercy have chosen to take away from you the earthly inheritance, to be given the chance to seek the heavenly¹.

The scholar Origen

“My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am repulsive to the children of own body” (Job 19: 17).

His own wife could not stand coming near him, nor smelling his sores; despite his past loving marital relationship, she abhors him

❖ ***“I am repulsive to the children of my concubines” (LXX 17).*** The same way we understand the children, as being the Jewish congregation, we do likewise with the children of the concubines; and those *“dwelling in my house”*, as the scribes and the Pharisees. The prophet Isaiah says: *“I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me”* (Isaiah 1: 2). I have often called upon them, comforting, mourning, and angrily chastening, to mend their ways.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ ***“My breath is offensive to my wife” (17).*** Who is this wife of the Lord, in a carnal concept, but the Jewish congregation submitting to Him through the covenant of the law? Now, breath is produced by the body; and the nonbelievers understand the incarnation of the Lord in a carnal way; counting Him merely as man!

❖ ***“I begged the children of My womb” (17).*** God, the Infinite, is so carnally called; ... How could we understand the ‘womb’ but as (His counsel)?

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The prophet Zechariah, with the spiritual harp, hastened before the Lord with the prophetic songs; and joyfully cried out, saying, *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion”* (Zechariah 2: 10); Rejoice and cry out; because, according to the prophecy, He is coming to dwell in your midst.

But the lowly bride (the Jewish congregation who refused to become His bride), did not rejoice as she was called, but His coming caused her grief.

Her heart was captivated by the golden calf, her lover; with whom she intends to negotiate.

She refuses to head the call of the prophet to rejoice.

She refused to go out carrying the olive and palm branches together with the children.

While the children glorify and bless the coming heavenly King, the old hag is preoccupied with cleansing her idols (the self-love and the pride of heart).

The prophets knock on her high gates to awaken her; but she is deep asleep in her love for her many friends.

She grieved for the coming of the Heir of God the Father; because she knew that He will expose her, she hated

Him; and was not happy to hear the children glorify Him.

As envy muted her mouth, she could not take part in the glorification; and was keen on muting those who did.

She was angry to hear the voices of those who glorified Him.

Isaiah cried out: *“Awake, awake, put on strength”* (Isaiah 51: 9).

¹ In Jos. hom. 17:1.

Zechariah cried out: “*Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for the coming King*” (Zechariah 2: 10).

The children cried out: “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*”

Yet she did not listen to the prophets, or to the children, but instead, their voices made her sad and angry.

O Jews, haters of the Light; How could you disregard such glorification that fills both the heaven and the earth?!

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“*Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me*” (Job 19: 18).

Here he probably means the children of his servants, born in his house, which he counted like his children; they, as well, despised him, and spoke against him. When he had authority over them, he gave them his whole love; and when he lost it, they insulted and ridiculed him.

❖ **“*I arise, and they speak against me*” (18).** It is as though the Lord gets close to the hearts of men, when He perform miracles for them; And as though He departs from them when He does not. But they speak against the Lord, as though He departed, when they refuse to submit to Him through faith ... Moreover, He adds that the scribes of the law and the Pharisees “*whom he loved, have turned against Him*”. Through not believing in Him, they turned against the belief in the Truth ... They even persecuted Him.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me*” (Job 19: 19).

Those who were around him have given him nothing more but hate; everything turned upside down.

4- NOBODY HAS COMPASSION ON HIM:

“*My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh; and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth*” (Job 19: 20).

Having complained for what God allowed for him: that He made his way narrower; surrounded him to have with no outlet; ignited the fire of His wrath upon him; provoked strangers and gave them power to invade his property; and let all his household, acquaintances, relatives, and even his servants hate him; Now he complains because of what came upon his body, which is about to dissolve; that his health, beauty, and strength have almost gone; that his bone clings to his skin; that he turned into a skeleton; and that he has nothing left but the skin of his teeth.

❖ **“*My body got corrupted under my skin*” (20).** It is to be understood from these words, that he speaks about the secret of the Lord; As it is befitting to call all humanity as “skin”, especially the churches and the meetings of their congregations; where, and for whose sake, the Lord’s body was not corrupted; As His body is not allowed to see corruption (Psalm 16: 10). But, concerning the fact of His descending from heaven for the sake of passion; and that He has partaken somehow in the food of the pious; Job’s talk does not concern corruption, but concerns the spiritual food; As Christ became food presented for our teeth. We would not be able to partake of the body of the Lord, if He did not intend to approach us, and let us taste His body.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

“Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me” (Job 19: 21).

After presenting that painful description of his physical condition, he seeks from his friends to pity him, for he has fallen under the wrath of God, which is the worst of all tribulations. He seeks from them to show him their practical love by praying to God for his sake, instead of persecuting him.

- ❖ Amid his tribulation, ‘Job’ was noble, when he said: ***“Have pity on me, have pity on me, O my friends” (21)***; a scream, not out of misery, as much as it is out of admonition to his friends who have unjustly rebuked him. They should have shown compassion, instead of attacking and crushing someone, whom they should have pitied amid his passion, for the sake of friendship¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Notice how he calls ***‘friends’*** those who insulted him; as for the pious minds, they count what is against them as for their own benefit. Any wicked man could change through the sweetness of the good, turn back from his wickedness, and become a friend. Although ‘Job’ was struck by Satan, yet he does not refer the strikes to Satan, but says: ***“The hand of God has struck (touched) me”***, which conforms to what Satan personally said to God: ***“But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and flesh, and he will surely curse you to your face” (Job 2: 5)***. The blessed man knew that what Satan did to him through his evil intention, was given the authority to do by the Lord.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Friendship could only be strong, if we attach ourselves to our friends, by the love poured by the Holy Spirit given to us.
- ❖ We should conform with everyone in order to gain everyone, following the lead of the apostle Paul who says: ***“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9: 22)***. Be sorrowful with the sorrowful, because there is nothing that would give comfort to a sorrowful man than to see someone partaking of his sorrow in the time of his affliction; And with the joyful be joyful; and with the weak be weak. **Yet this conformity is necessary to help save a fellow man of his evil, and not to partake of his evil.**

Notice how man bows to haul up the fallen; how he stands firm holding his feet fast on the ground; then stretch to him his hand, just far enough to help hauling him up, lest he would fall together with him.

Let this be a convenient lesson for us; we should bow a little, conform to their ways a little, in order to save the fallen, and gain them back for God. **Yet that commits us to hold our hearts fast, lest they may draw us along with them.**

St. Augustine

“Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh?” (Job 19: 22).

If God persecutes him, It would be for a reason not known to anyone. Would that not be enough? Why should they also persecute him? It is only God, with His exalted wisdom, who has the absolute authority over him; so why should they also practice affliction over him?

¹ *Duties of the Clergy, 3:22:130.*

If they rejoice over his tribulations, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which almost completely dissolved; Why should they also wound his spirit and break up his soul?!

- ❖ He does not say that God persecuted him in a way that contradicts his piety; As there could be ‘a good persecutor’, according to the words of the Lord Himself on the tongue of His prophet, saying: “*Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy*” (Psalm 101: 5). When a righteous suffers a stroke, he knows for sure that it must be for some evil he has unwittingly committed.

It is as though he says: Why should you persecute me for my weaknesses; as though you yourselves, like God, are with no weakness?!

He did well by adding: “... *and are not satisfied with my flesh*”; as the mind that hungers for persecuting others, definitely seeks getting satisfied by their flesh; according to the words of Solomon: “*Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat*” (Proverbs 23: 20). Seeking flesh to eat is like searching for what is bad in your neighbor’s attributes; and its punishment would be: “*The drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags*” (Proverbs 23: 21). As it is written, he who defames his neighbor will be uprooted; whereas the slothful (the drowsy), is as though covering him with rags, to make him a laughingstock, with nothing good in him.

Pope Gregory the great

Having spoken against judging our neighbor¹, **Father Dorotheos** meant our commitment not to take by force God’s right to judge, being the only One to know what is in every man, his strengths, intentions, talents, biological form, energies, and the circumstances surrounding him; And accordingly is in a position to judge or justify. We may probably know for sure that someone has committed a certain sin, in a clear way that needs no further investigation. Yet could we condemn someone for the sake of a single sin, or for sins that he has committed in a certain time, without taking into consideration his depths or circumstances?

- ❖ It is only God, being aware of the circumstances, possibilities, divergences, and talents, of everyone of us, can judge according to His unique knowledge: He may judge the bishop or a head of a monastery in a certain way, and a junior disciple who seeks to become a monk in another; and the sick in a way other than that of the healthy. Who could understand all these ordinances except the Creator of everything?

Father Dorotheos

- ❖ Notice, O brethren, how the servants’ job in the wedding feast of the king’s son (Matthew 22), was only to call both the good and the evil to the banquet; How the Lord did not say that they judged the guests and discerned between the good and the wicked; nor that they have spotted the one who did not have on a proper wedding attire; **But it was the king himself, the head of the house, who found him and drove him away.**

St. Augustine

- ❖ Judging others is considered as rudely robbing of the divine right; whereas telling someone off (without love) would break down his soul².

St. John El-Dargy

¹ Eric P. Wheeler: *Dorotheos of Gaza: Discourses and Sayings*, 1977, p. 131F.

² *Ladder 10:14.*

5- ETERNITY IS OUR HOPE:

“Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!”
(Job 19: 23).

The following phrases reveal the amazing life of ‘Job’, his hope, thoughts, and concepts; and would let us reconsider all his past talks, that, although they seemed as though they bore a harsh-worded admonition, and which were criticized by some interpreters as having crossed the line; Yet they have certainly come out of a heart that longed to see God.

In all the words of the debates that come in this book, between ‘Job’ and his friends, we do not see anything more eloquent than we have here within our hands! He amazingly tells us about the Lord Christ, and about heaven as a better home; he talks about his faith in God the living Redeemer; and about the resurrection from the dead, and life in the age to come.

While in his previous talks, you may smell despair and loss of hope; here, the Spirit of God lifts him up; enlightens his insight; and grants him life-giving words.

Some, noticing that from these moments on, we see no murmur nor complaint against God, as he did before, They believe that the Spirit of the holy God, who is aware of the faithfulness of his servant’s heart, and the trueness of his intention and faith, comforted his soul amid his sufferings, lifted him up, and tore before him the veil, to recognize the secret of salvation, and the exalted love of God; **and to completely change the tune of his talk.**

Although he was before as faithful and true; Yet, having concentrated his sight, heart, and mind on his friends, he went through some kind of despair, and got preoccupied with defending himself against the accusations of his friends. **Now, the Spirit of God has lifted him up, as though to heaven, and has brought him on, as though to the throne of grace, to see the Savior Messiah coming; and his soul became comfortable in him.**

Starting with an enjoyable introduction that reveals his exalted heavenly peace, that he wishes for every believer to share, he says: *“Oh, that my words were written; Oh, that they were inscribed in a book”* ; As though he says: ‘I wish that everyone forget what I previously said, which came as fruits of my human wisdom, and weakness. But now, that the Spirit of God is guiding me, ... I wish everyone hears His voice with me; and partake of what I enjoy, ... Being unable to express what I feel in words; ... I shall inscribe it in a book, that would probably be more convenient.

❖ What prophecy could be more eloquent than that? No one since the days of Christ talked with such clarity about the resurrection, as did ‘Job’ long before Christ. ... He longed that his words would stay forever, and not to be wiped out with time; ... He wished they would be inscribed on a sheet of lead, or engraved on a rock (Job 19: 23). He hoped for resurrection. No, the wrestler of the church, seeing Christ, his living Redeemer alive, rising up from the ground, says: *“I shall again put on my skin, And shall see God in my body”*, I do not think that he is speaking as though he loves his own body that dissolved and got corrupted before his eyes; but his miserable present was enlightened by confidence of his resurrection, and through comfort in his future¹.

St. Jerome

“That they were engraved on a rock, with an iron pen and lead forever!”
(Job 19: 24)

¹ To Pammachius against John of Jerusalem, 30.

He wishes his words to remain as a document for mankind forever; as a testimony to God's work in the believer along the generations; engraved on a rock, with an iron pen, then to have lead poured in it, to resist the wear and tear of time, and to draw the attention of every eye.

Documents used to be kept in three ways:

1- **By being inscribed in a book of cloth, skin, or plant leaves**, like papyrus (a word from which the English word 'paper' was derived); or sometimes of **the inner cortex of trees**, Liber in Latin (a word from which the word 'library' is derived)

2- **On lead plates**, a very old way. In the year 1699, 'Montfaucon' of Rome, purchased a very old book, made of lead, formed of a group of lead plates bound together with lead nails and hinges. This book included some Egyptian Gnostic figures, together with Greek and Etruscan inscriptions.

In a temple of the city of Cnidus, there was found a memorial depicting Hell, that goes back to the fourth century B.C., portraying women presenting thin lead plates on which are inscribed the names of those whom they hate, together with a list of their evil works, and the curses that they hope to dwell on those who did them wrong. Several of those plates were discovered in the year 1858 A.D., during the excavations that took place in the ruins of the temple; They are kept in the British Museum.

3- **On rock memorials**: The law of God was engraved on two tablets of stone, written with the finger of God (Exodus 31: 18); Then on two other tablets of stone, engraved by Moses by a divine command (Exodus 34: 4, 8). And Joshua, wrote on stones a copy of the Law of Moses in the presence of the Israelites (Joshua 8: 32).

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth" (Job 19: 25).

"For I know that my Redeemer lives". He believed in the coming Redeemer; who will be his life. ***"And He shall stand at last on the earth"***. He anticipates the Messiah, the Word of God, coming incarnate in the fullness of time, to walk among us on the earth.

Yet some believe that he is speaking here of the ultimate coming of the Lord on the clouds, to encounter us humans as earthly creatures, and to bring us over into the fellowship of His glories.

The word "***Redeemer***", as it came in (Leviticus 25: 25), is the one who has the right to (redeem) a piece of property that his next of kin has sold or pawned. After our heavenly inheritance was sold because of sin; there came the One who would redeem it to us by His precious blood. Our Christ is alone the living Redeemer capable of paying back our debt, of canceling the pawn, and of giving us back our eternal inheritance.

He will come on the clouds, as He did on earth; to command the dead to rise out of their tombs; and to bring them over to no death and non-corruption.

❖ ***"I know that He is eternal, He who saves me on earth, setting up my skin that would endure all these things" (25).*** That is why 'Job' says: ***"Oh, that my words are written (for the coming generations)"***; As after passion, they will experience resurrection; It is positive that the body which receives passion will rise again.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ ***"I know that He is eternal, He who saves me on earth" (25).*** This means that it is God who guides me, here on earth. Now, If God is eternal, Why do you wish for these words to be written in such a way that their memory would eternally remain?

Notice the attitude of those in affliction; ... How they wish, not only for contemporary eye witnesses, but for those who will come later to testify as well to their tribulations; ... How they wish to get sympathy on all sides. This reminds us of the rich man mentioned in the gospel (Luke 16: 19), who wished for those who used to know him in the days of his prosperity on earth, to know about his anguish and horrible condition after he died.

- ❖ **“And I shall rise again on the last day on earth” (25).** That is because the resurrection proclaimed by the Lord Christ in His Person, He will also, one day, grant to us ... For which He has given us an advance payment that the members of His body would follow in the glory of their Head (Christ). Our Redeemer has gone through death, that we would not fear death; Has revealed resurrection, that we would have a steadfast hope, that we shall resurrect as well¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ That man has truly abstained from every evil deed; has not allowed the sin in him to have authority on him; and in case an unbefitting thought would get into him, has not allowed it to ascend to his head, and consequently, has not allowed himself to practice it. As the existence of sin is something, while not abiding to its lusts is something else².

St. Augustine

“And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19: 26).

While ‘Job’ was sure of the ultimate destruction of his body, he still talked uncaringly about it. **“And after my skin is destroyed”**; meaning, that without this body I shall see God. It is as though he is saying to them: This body of mine, with all its misery, on which you have concentrated your sight, I know for sure that it will become food for the worms; and so also will be my skin; Yet what makes my soul rejoice, is that I shall see God.

St. Augustine believes that the word ‘skin’ refers to our acceptance of death³. The destruction of our skin refers to our getting rid of the condition of inner mortality, and inner corruption; to receive the resurrection and non-corruption of the soul. By that we can enjoy seeing the eternal, all-holy God. In other words, we would take off, by the Holy Spirit of God, the works of our inner man, until he is no more; and put on the works of the new man, who is in the image of his Creator, for our Christ to transfigure before our inner insight.

“Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19: 27).

By the spirit of prophecy, he saw the coming of Christ, the incarnate Word of God; who could be seen by the eyes of the body; although He, Himself, in His Deity, could not be seen by them; Yet to Him, the depths of the soul would yearn.

“Whom I shall see for myself”; Namely, I shall see Him, and would rejoice in Him; As He is the secret of the happiness of my soul.

“I see Him as He is”, and not another. On the last day, we shall see the Messiah, who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever; He, for whom my soul inside me moans in yearning.

¹ *Homilies on 2 Cor., homily 3.*

² *On Nature and Grace, 72.*

³ *On Ps. 104 (103).*

- ❖ Every mind would rise and be conformed in prayer according to its purity. If he cares for material things on earth, he would keep bearing this look before his inner eyes, as far as seeing the Lord Jesus is concerned; whether it is when he humbly came in flesh, or when He will come in His glory. Such people would not be able to behold the Lord Jesus coming in His Kingdom; as long as they hold fast to that kind of Jewish weakness (namely, the material look); And would not be able to say together with the apostle: ***“Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians 5: 16).***

But those, who rise above the lowly earthly works and thoughts, and ascend up to the exalted mount of loneliness (seclusion), liberated from disturbance by any earthly trouble or thought, secure from the interference of sins, and glorified by strong faith; would be able to behold by pure eyes to His deity; And, in the heights of virtue, **would discover His glory, and the portrait of His exaltation..**

The Lord Jesus could be proclaimed to those in cities, villages, and farmlands; namely, to those who have their daily preoccupations; Yet not in the splendor by which He appears to those who ascend together with Him up the previously mentioned mount of virtue ... In loneliness (seclusion), God appeared to Moses, and spoke to Elijah¹.

Father Isaac

- ❖ Be sure to keep the purity and peace of your heart, to be able to behold the Lord your God.

Mar. Ephram the Syrian

6- A WARNING TO HIS FRIENDS:

“If you should say: ‘How (or why) shall we persecute him?’ Since the root of the matter is found in me, (Job 19: 28).

Be afraid of the sword for yourselves; For wrath brings the punishment of the sword, So that you may know there is a judgment” (Job 19: 29).

‘Job’ tells them to ask themselves: ***“Why should we persecute him?”*** Why should we grieve him and make him mad by our criticism of his ordinance; since the root of the matter is in him?

Having revealed his joy in beholding his Redeemer, for whom his soul yearns, He warns them to fear the day of His coming, lest they would be judged on account of misjudging their brethren (Matthew 7: 1; James 2: 1).

- ❖ ***“You say: ‘What shall we say before Him; since the root of the word is in Him?” (Job 19: 28 LXX).*** It is obvious that through the spirit of prophecy, ‘Job’ says this about the scribes, the Pharisees, and the other rulers of the Jewish people, as they search for something to say against the Lord (Matthew 26: 29). It is as though they are told by the lord Jesus: ‘If you are looking for some excuse to criticize or to blame Me, whether for My words or

My deeds; Beware of deceit! As, since I am able to reveal what is hidden, and to proclaim the secrets, beware that your own words and thoughts will make you worthy of many chastisements’.

“For, when wrath dwells on the transgressors; then they will realize their real worth” (29). Who would be as transgressor as the Jewish people, who crucified the Giver of the law, among the breakers of the law; who killed Him between robbers

¹ St. John Cassian: 10:6.

(Matthew 27: 38)? Wrath dwelt upon them; when the city was burned with fire; the temple was destroyed; and their pride was extinguished.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

**AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 19
WHO CAN SUPPORT ME BUT YOU?**

- ❖ I believe that You are the Almighty God;
Nothing will happen without Your knowledge, and your permission.
- ❖ Amid my anguish,
I see how, even my household have turned into enemies.
I cry out to You from my depths.
Have You become my enemy, to deliver me to such anguish?
How difficult it is for me to see my own becoming my enemy!
- ❖ Amid my temptation, I expected to find compassion from my beloved.
But their hearts were shut tight.
Yet, when I find the gates of Your heaven open before me;
Amid my temptation, I find sweetness in enjoying Your care.
- ❖ If the tongues of my friends have become very stinging;
The tongues of Your own have turned into deadly swords,
They aimed their charges like spears against You,
When my friends stand against me, I shall always remember how You stood
against You, O Savior of the
Whole world!
If my friends were haughty against me, I the dust and ashes!
The dust has been haughty against You, O Creator of heaven and earth!
If the nets got around me, and the snares were put on my way,
The leaderships together with the people! Have plotted against You!
- ❖ When I often suffer from feeling lonely;
I hear You, the One with Your Father, cry out in my name:
My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?
In place of the glory, You have forsaken through Your own will, for my sake,
They put on Your head a crown of shame; And despised You.
If they wish to kill me; I behold You hanged on the cross; and buried in the grave;
Carrying me in You, O the First fruit of those who repose;
To make me cross over by You to the bosom of Your Father.
- ❖ Finally, I praise and glorify You;
You, who turned my bitter temptation into the sweetness of meditating in You.
With every anguish, You carry me by the two wings of the Spirit.
To see You, Then my soul would rejoice.
To You is the glory, O who turn the crucible of temptation, into a new Mount of
Tabor.
Where I see You transfigure; Not preoccupied except with talking about the cross.
To let me ascend by it to You.

CHAPTER 20

A HORRIBLE PORTRAIT OF THE WICKED

Zophar began his talk by violently attacking ‘Job’, referring to a fact, well-established by man since he was placed on earth, that the wicked shall perish by their own sins; stating that Job’s sins in particular will bring on him a double perdition.

He intends to say that, as ‘Job’ has clothed himself with hypocrisy, pretending piety and generous giving, while practicing horrible wickedness; heaven would never listen to him; and earth would abhor him as a wicked man; Namely, that, as both heaven and earth testify against him, utter desolation will dwell on his tent.

Zophar’s talk reflects a well-known Israelite conviction, that the triumph of the wicked is short, and that their perdition is inevitable. Yet, in his talk, Zophar’s did not refer to the fact that the wicked may eventually repent, return, and restore the pleasure of God. His main concern was to say that ‘Job’, as testified by the miserable condition of his body, his lost wealth, his dead children, and his corrupt reputation, is a wicked man!

It was expected that Job’s last talk would reveal to his friends his faithfulness of faith, and his exaltation even over passion; Yet they did not heed anything he said, but persisted on their accusation against him; as is clear by Zophar joining the debate, started by his two other fiends.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem believing that Zophar and his friends cared for Theological debates, devoid of spirit and piety, says:

[Plowing the soil, would produce flowers and fruits; while meditation in the divine law would produce virtues.

That is why a zealous practice of the commandments of the law is sought (Psalm 119: 40, 47, 48); **not by clothing them with words, but by keeping them; And not by debating the language of the divine words in a lifeless way, but by walking and working according to them.** As knowledge glorifies reading; Translating knowledge into action, would give it more splendor.

What would be the use of a vineyard, where no vine are planted, or served?!

Would it not be in vain for a knight go to battle, mounting an untrained horse?!

Anyway, ‘Job’ did not act that way; but from the beginning he armed himself with virtues and piety. The more prosper he became, the more sacrifices he daily offered to God (Job 1: 5). Before the daylight shines, he used to greet the unseen Light. Once he gets up from his sleep, he used to hasten to the Grantor of sleep, with praise over his lips (Psalm 127: 2); He used to start his daily activities by approaching the Creator of the day.

How often did ‘Job’ manage to shut up the mouth of Eliphaz, who intended to boast his eloquence?

How often did this true soldier of righteousness, through his well chosen words, void the haughtiness of Bildad?].

1- A heated introduction	1 – 3
2- The triumph of the wicked is short-termed	4 – 9
3- Misery of the wicked	10 – 29

1- A HEATED INTRODUCTION:

“Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said: ‘Therefore my anxious thoughts make me answer, because of the turmoil within me’ (Job 20: 1, 2).

Zophar got very offended by what 'Job' said; and assumed that he is justifying himself, although he is positive of his wickedness.

Getting frustrated that 'Job' speaks of his hope in heaven and salvation, as though he is righteous and good, Zophar violently attacked him, saying that he cannot keep quiet, but has to respond to what he said.

Zophar admitted that he is overwhelmed by the turmoil of thoughts within him; here he expresses the extent of anger inside him and his friends that shuts the ears from hearing the truth, and the eyes from seeing it. Because they only saw in 'Job' a lump of evil, that he covered by hypocrisy, vain giving, and false compassion; Zophar, in his turn, resorted to stinging criticism, cruel rebuke, and bitter threats, of what would dwell over 'Job' of tribulations.

- ❖ Anger would make tongues loose, and talks with no control; would lead to ridicules, reviles false accusations, and violent confrontations¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ The sick mind does not control its ordinances; and wrongly assumes that everything he thinks in anger is the only truth²!

Pope Gregory the Great

"I hear a reproof that reproaches me, And the spirit of my understanding inspires me to reply" (Job 20: 3).

Job's friends counted Job's answer to their rebuke as an insult, and saw that he is not worthy of talking to him, or to give him counsel. They probably put in their hearts to stop their debate, on account that it is of no use with such a wicked man; Yet the turmoil that Zophar felt within him made him answer.

2- THE TRIUMPH OF THE WICKED IS SHORT-TERMED:

"Do you not know this of old, since man was placed on earth?" (Job 20: 4).

Zophar resorted to the knowledge of 'Job' himself, before the temptations dwelt on him; assuming that it conforms to what they say, which he refuses now to accept. It is a well-established principle, which was previously often mentioned by Job himself, and was confirmed by the experiences of the generations of old, since the beginning of creation, that **"the wicked perish by their wickedness"**.

- ❖ *"Do you not know this of old, since man was placed on earth?"*. By saying that Zophar reviles 'Job', counting him as ignorant of, or disregarding the truth; although 'Job' proclaims it in his words to follow.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ It is obvious that, feeling haughty because of his knowledge, and with the sole intention of rebuking the blessed 'Job', Zophar distorts the words he uttered against the wicked; Because he saw that 'Job' first walked straight, then went astray, and became worthy of punishment; By that he counts all what 'Job' practiced as out of hypocrisy; dismissing the possibility that a truly righteous man could possibly fall in such anguish by the just God!

Pope Gregory the Great

Since the fall of our early parents Adam and Eve, we know that we are in need of the work of God to destroy every evil in us, and to build what is befitting of His righteousness. We should not marvel that God's call on His men is to root out and to

¹ *Sermons 10 FC 86, P. 74.*

² *Lessons in Job 5: 78. PL 79: 1096.*

pull down, to destroy and throw down the wicked peoples and the corrupt kingdoms that represent evil; And to build and to plant what is God's; According to what God said to the prophet Jeremiah when he was called to ministry (Jeremiah 1: 10): Wickedness has to be destroyed before righteousness is set; And in case the wicked persist on their wickedness, they have to be destroyed together with their wickedness.

We have only two choices: Either to turn our depths into a divine paradise, carrying the fruits of the Holy Spirit that brings pleasure to the heart of God; Or into a dwelling place and a playing ground for the devil. Either to turn our hearts into a temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell in; Or into a stage on this the devil practices his evils.

❖ ***“To root out and to pull down” (Jeremiah 1: 10).*** There is either a building of Satan, or a building of God. The one set “on the sand” is that of the devil, as it is not set on a solid steadfast foundation; Whereas the one set ***“on the rock”*** is of God; According to what is said to believers: ***“You are God's field; You are God's building” (1 Corinthians 3: 9).***

God's words to Jeremiah were: ***“I have set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw away”***; If we root out, and yet did not destroy the things we rooted out; It will stay; And if we pull down, and did not throw away the ruins, what we pulled down would stay. Of the signs of God's goodness and His love, is that, after He roots out, He destroys; and after He pulls down, He throws away what He has pulled down.

Read now, how the things rooted out and pulled down should be destroyed: ***“Burn down the chaff with an non- extinguishable fire, and gather the tears and cast them in fire”***. The corrupt building pulled down because of leprosy, has to be turned into dust, and be dumped in a place outside the city (Leviticus 14: 41); So that not a single stone of it would remain; according to the words: ***“I shall wipe them out like the mire of the streets”; or “I shall level them to the ground”***.

Corrupt things should never be left altogether; their remains should be destroyed to avoid being used for setting new buildings by Satan; who should not as well, find in them new seeds to plant anew; to plant the tares together with the wheat.

That is why the first thing we should do is to root out and pull down everything evil in our souls; As God would not build a new, where there are still corrupt and evil buildings; As ***“What fellowship is there between truth and vanity, or between light and darkness?”***. Evil should be fully pulled down from its foundation in our souls; so that God's words would take over the building and planting in us.

I cannot understand that phrase in any other way: ***“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over... to root out and to pull down”***. Yes. They are words that root out nations; ... words that pull down kingdoms; But not the material kingdoms in this world; ... The meanings of these words should be understood in an exalted way.

Then, a power would be granted from God; according to what is written: ***“The Lord gives a word of greater power to preachers”***; a power to root out the lack of faith (hypocrisy) or evil; a power to destroy and pull down any idols remaining inside the heart; so that in the place of the idol which is destroyed, a temple for the Lord would be set, where the glory of God would appear and manifested; No more tares would grow; But a paradise of God in the temple of God; In Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory forever to the age of ages. Amen¹.

¹ عظات للعلامة أوريجينوس على سفر إرميا، ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي، عظة 1: 15-16.

The scholar Origen

What a great difference between the plantation of the devil, and that of the Lord; between the building of the devil, and that of the Holy Spirit! The devil plants grass that as soon as it appears it dries up, to have the portion of being consumed by fire. The Lord quietly plants in us His cross, the tree of life, plants it on the streams of water of the Holy Spirit, to produce eternal fruit.

“The exulting of the wicked is short” and temporary; Whereas that of the righteous is hidden; being surrounded by temptations, that make their crowns glitter more, to become shining stars, in the company of the Sun of Righteousness in the same heaven.

“That the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless is but for a moment” (Job 20: 5).

The exulting of the wicked would not last long; they may rejoice, but for a moment; then their exulting would turn into wailing and mourning. They may succeed, feel secure, and appear triumphant, boasting their wealth, authority, greatness, and success; but all that would be for a moment, and would soon be over in this world.

Although this is a sound principle, Yet God has His own ordinances which differ with everyone according to his status. On another aspect, Zophar was not pure in thought, nor was he defending a certain theological principle, as much as caring only to confirm the wickedness of ‘Job’.

❖ ***“The exulting of the wicked is a sign of falling, and the joy of the godless is a sign of destruction!” (LXX 5).*** In this phrase, Zophar is insolently reviling, backbiting, and distort Job’s reputation, as his other two friends did before him.

According to Zophar, from the beginning, since man was placed on earth, there was joy and exulting for the fall of the wicked, and destruction of the godless; among who is ‘Job’!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

The wicked would not only lose their vain worldly exulting, and be deprived of their true joy; but even the land, because of them, would mourn and wail (Jeremiah 12: 4); nature would moan; and heaven with its angels would grieve!

❖ ***“How long will the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, for the wickedness of those who dwell there” (Jeremiah 12: 4).*** Here, the prophet speaks as though the land is a living being, saying that it mourns for the wickedness of those who walk on it.

The land for each of us, may either **mourn** for our **wickedness**, or **exult** for our **virtues**. What is said of the land could also be said of everything else. I can say for example, that the angel responsible for the water¹ would either mourn or exult.

We should know that, for the sake of organizing and controlling the whole universe, angels are assigned for particular tasks: there is an angel responsible for the land, for the water, for the air, for the fire, for the beasts, for the plants, and so on. If you lift up your mind to meditate in the system controlling the heavenly bodies, you will find that there is an angel responsible for the sun, another for the moon, and another for the stars².

¹ للعلامة أوريجينوس آراء خاصة بالملائكة سبق لنا نشرها في كتاب "الملائكة عند العلامة أوريجينوس" تختلف عن فكر كثير من آباء الكنيسة.

² يفكر أوريجينوس مثل بقية الفلاسفة الذين كانوا في عصره أن الكواكب حية، وترجع حياتها إلى ملاك يسكن في كل كوكب منها.

All these angels who accompany us all along our journey of life on earth; either exult for us when we do good, or mourn over us, when we err.

When Jeremiah says that the **land would mourn for the wickedness** of those **dwelling in it**; he means by the word 'land', the angel responsible for it; As it is also said: *"The idol made with hands is accursed, and so is the one who made it"* (Wisdom 14: 8); Not that the curse will come over the lifeless thing itself, but, by the word 'idol' he means the devil that dwells in it, and gives it its name. In the same way I can say that the 'land' in Jeremiah's verse means the angel responsible for the land. The 'water', as well, means the angel responsible for the water; on which it is written: *"The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid; The depths also trembled. The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about"* (Psalm 77: 17-18)¹.

❖ You should, O sinner, taste this great bitterness now, which God brings on you, to change your ways and be saved².

The scholar Origen

"Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the clouds" (Job 20: 6).

Zophar assumes that the haughtiness of the wicked may mount up to heights beyond the imagination of man, even up to the heavens, and his head may appear to reach the clouds; that no one could approach him or oppose him.

❖ In case you commit a sin, Your adversary will be the word of God It would be the enemy of your will, until it becomes the security of your salvation. What an enemy it is! Both faithful and helpful³!

St. Augustine

"Yet he will perish forever like his own refuse; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'" (Job 20: 7).

He, who reaches to such greatness, will *"perish like his own refuse"*. Those who looked in awe at his indescribable greatness would look for him, to see him no more; He has utterly perished! All what remains of him is his terrible and unbearable stink.

❖ About the haughtiness of the hypocrite, it is said that he mounts up to the heavens; His head would seem as though reaching to the clouds, when he assumes that his leading body member, his haughty mind, seems as though leading him to the heavenly life, and equal to the worthiness of the saints who preceded him. Yet *"he ultimately perishes like refuse"*; as when he dies, and is led to torture, being loaded with the refuse of evil habits, he falls beneath the feet of the evil spirits. The pleasures of the present life, thought by the wicked as great goodness, are seen by the righteous as refuse. That is why it is written: *"The idler is like the filth of dunghills; anyone that picks it up will shake it off his hands"* (Sirach 22: 2). Whoever do not follow God, would become an idler in the love of eternal life.

"Those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'" (7). this happens when the life of the hypocrite is ultimately revealed to everyone, to become the object of eternal judgment. Those who have seen him prospering in their days, will say when he

¹ عظمات للعلامة أوريجينوس على سفر إرميا، ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي، عظة 10: 6.

² عظمات للعلامة أوريجينوس على سفر إرميا، ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي، عظة 12: 3.

³ Sermon 109: 3 FC 94, p. 149.

dies: *‘Where is he?’*; As he is no more seen here, where he lived at large; nor he is in the eternal comfort, where he was expected to be.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Notice how those ungodly haughty people are like an ox, referred to, in the Holy book in (Proverbs 7: 22); prepared for the slaughter, left for some time to wander around freely, until his day comes¹ ...
- ❖ Those who prosper in the pleasures of this world would perish in the power of God. They prosper up to a moment, and then eternally perish. They prosper in unreal goods, and perish in real tortures².

St. Augustine

“He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; yes, he will be chased away like a vision of the night” (Job 20: 8).

With all the greatness, wealth, and honor, that he reached, he will pass away like a dream that man looks for, and finds no trace of it when he wakes up; he would be like a vision of the night, chased away.

- ❖ Like that, is our life, brethren, we who live a temporal life; and the game we play here on earth! We came to being out of nothing; and we shall ultimately dissolve to nothing! We are like dreams with no essence; like visions beyond apprehension; *“like a ship that sails through the billowy water, and when it has passed no trace can be found, no track of its keel in the waves; Or as when a bird flies through the air, no evidence of its passage is found”* (Wisdom 5: 10-11) We are like a grain of dust, like vapor, like morning dew, and like a flower that grows in a moment and withers in a moment. *“Man’s days are like grass, As a flower of the field, so he flourishes”* (Psalm 103: 15).

David inspired by the Spirit, expressing our weakness, says: *“Lord, make me to know, what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed You have my days as handbreadth”* (Psalm 39: 4, 5)³.

St. Gregory the Nazianzen

- ❖ Zophar insolently likens ‘Job’ to a dream or a night vision.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ What is the life of a hypocrite but a vision (a wake-up dream); because he feels as though he possesses something, while he actually does not; he is likened to a dream, from which he wakes up.

In *“the vision of the night”* (8), It so happens that a poor man dreams that he became rich; with honors, riches, and plenty of food pouring on him; and dressed in a beautiful attire Then, all of a sudden, he sadly wakes up to find out that it was all nothing but a dream. It is the same with a hypocrite, who, believes the exaggerated commendation by others, and falsely imagines that he has actually become famous.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The Lord teaches us that he, who delivers himself to shameful works, would be bared, not of a woolen robe, but of living virtue, as the robe of virtue is not temporal, but eternal⁴.

St. Ambrose

¹ On Ps. 73 (72).

² On Ps. 54 (53).

³ On His Brother St. Caesarius, Oration 7:9.

⁴ Letter 27 (58): 16.

“The eye that saw him will see him no more, nor will his place behold him anymore” (Job 20: 9).

Those who saw him as a very prominent person, prosperous, rich, and of authority, will see him no more; they look for him to find out that his usual place as completely empty.

- ❖ Although Zophar says that about the wicked as a whole, not referring to someone in particular, Yet, it is obvious that he is referring to ‘Job’; who, as he assumes, have been forsaken in despise by the ‘eyes’ of friends and acquaintances.

“His place” means those who were originally with him, and in his hometown, but recognize him no more, and are shocked to see the extent of his sorrows.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ What is the ***“place”*** of the hypocrite but the hearts of those who flatter him, where he finds his comfort But as long as he lives, he keeps on instructing his followers the same thing he practices; And through the daring of his wrong way, he (gives birth) to others, and raise them up on his same vain deceit.

Pope Gregory the Great

Evil takes man away from the ***“place”*** of his comfort, to become no more. That is what happened to ‘Korah’ and his group, who, in their evils, dared against the divine commandment, and intended to take priesthood by force, to be swallowed up by the earth and become no more (Numbers 16: 32).

- ❖ Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, separated themselves from the holy congregation, to be swallowed up alive by the earth, as a seen symbol of an unseen punishment¹.

St. Augustine

3- THE MISERY OF THE WICKED:

“His children will seek the favor of the poor, and his hands will restore his wealth” (Job 20: 10).

Here he presents to us examples of the evil ways, secretly practiced by the hypocrite in this world, and the punishment he gets for them:

- a- Carnal desire (11 – 14)**
- b- Love of the world (15 – 16)**
- c- Love of vain glory (17 – 18)**
- d- Oppression of the poor (19)**
- e- Greed (20 – 21)**

- ❖ ***“I wish the ‘lowly’ destroy his children” (LXX 10).*** Zophar probably means the devils; being lowly as compared to men, having fallen from up high in heaven. Those are the ‘Sabeans’ who destroyed the house where Job’s children died (Job 1: 19).

“And his hands ignite the fires of sorrow”; as ‘Job’ scraped his painful boils with a potsherd.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ ***“His children will seek favor of the poor”***. As it is written: ***“Wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul”*** (Wisdom 1: 4); And: ***“The young lions (the rich) lack and suffer hunger”*** (Psalm 34: 10); So **will be the children of the hypocrite (10)**; Because those who are born in hypocrisy, not getting the essence of truth, will end up as nothing, and will suffer the poverty of heart.

¹ City of God 10: 8.

“And his hands will restore his (sorrow)”. What is meant by the *“hands”* but the works or deeds? His hands will restore his sorrow; because, out of his evil life, he will harvest a just eternal judgment.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ In case someone says that he does not wish for the kingdom of God, He just wishes for an eternal comfort; he would be deceiving himself; as there are only two places: If someone is not qualified for reigning together with Christ; he will certainly perish together with the devil¹.

Caesarius, Bishop of Ar

a- Carnal desire:

“His bones are full of his youthful vigor, but it will lie down with him in the dust” (Job 20: 11).

He falls a victim of his youthful lusts that fill his bones, hold fast to him, never to let him go until he dies.

- ❖ Zophar believes that Job’s corruption will extend to his bones and dissolve his body, to take away the beauty of his **youthful vigor**. His bones will lie down with him in the dust of the heap of trash on which he sleeps.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ What is the *“youthful vigor”* of the hypocrite, but the start of the evil of his youth, when he desired and longed for embracing the vain glory ... The evil he started with, would increase every day, and would become stronger through habit, according to the proverb: *“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22: 6). These same bones, full of his youthful vigor, will lie together with him in the dust; As his evil practices will stay with him until they draw him down to the dust of death.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The body in itself is not an obstacle; Yet, because of our evil, we cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven².

St. John Chrysostom

“Though evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue” (Job 20: 12).

He so enjoys carnal desires, that evil turns sweet in his mouth, hides it under his tongue, and its pleasure would never depart from him.

- ❖ *“Though evil is sweet in his mouth ... Yet, it cannot support him” (12).* In these words, Zophar warns ‘Job’ against enjoying his evil through the words by which he expresses himself. In other words, he warns him against covering it up and hiding it by his way of talk ... because he would not be able to support himself; and the tribulations that dwelt upon him, would show him as evil.. He rebukes him for his futile attempts to cover up and hide his evil ways.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ *“When evil becomes sweet in his mouth, he hides it under his tongue” (12).* Evil is sweet in the mouth of the hypocrite; he enjoys it in his mind; which is the mouth of the heart; according to the words: *“With flattering lips and a double heart they speak”* (Psalm 12: 2). The sweet evil in the mouth of the *hypocrite* is hidden under

¹ Sermons, 47: 5.

² homilies in, Corinth; 42: 2.

the tongue; as the violence of the evil deeds lies hidden in the mind, under its smooth garment.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Although sins do more harm to the soul than that caused by the worms to the body, Yet we do not realize the extent of their danger; and we do not feel the necessity of purifying ourselves from them. Just like the drunk who is unable to recognize the disgusting taste of the wine taste; that the rational man can easily do. It is the same with sins; He who leads a dignified life can easily recognize the corruption of the mire; while he who leads an evil life, would be like a drunkard who does not realize that he is sick. The worse aspect of sin, is that it does not allow those fallen into it to realize the extent of the danger of the sickness they are in; They are like drunkards, while lying in mire, think that they are enjoying the fragrance of perfumes; and consequently would not have any intention of getting up. Because they think of the worms devouring their flesh as precious stones, they have no intention of killing the (sin), but of flourishing and doubling them, until it brings them over to the worms in the life to come¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Though he spares it and does not forsake it, but still keeps it in his mouth” (Job 20: 13).

Once the pleasure gets a hold on him, he hides it under his tongue; to become like the harlot about whom it is said: *“She multiplied her harlotry in calling to remembrance the days of her youth”* (Ezekiel 23: 19).

Hiding the pleasure under the tongue refers to the effort the hypocrite exerts to conceal his highly beloved lust. Yet He, who knows what is in the heart and the mind, knows as well the pleasure that the wicked hides under his tongue.

- ❖ ***“He spares it and does not forsake it, but still keeps it in his (throat) ²” (13).*** Because he spares the evil that brings him pleasure; and feeling no remorse, he hides it inside him. It is added ***“He does not forsake it”***; as, if he has any intention to forsake it, he would not spare it, but would rather elaborately chase it away. ***“He keeps it in his throat”***; namely, he keeps it hidden in his thoughts, and does not utter it in his talk.

Pope Gregory the great

“Yet his food in his stomach turns sour; It becomes cobra venom within him” (Job 20: 14).

As the lust becomes his daily food that fills his stomach, it turns into deadly venom within him. While thinking of pleasure as the secret of his life and his happiness, and that without it, he would have no life; it kills him by its venom that he hid within him.

- ❖ ***“His food in his stomach turns into cobra venom within him” (14).*** Zophar calls the venom of evil, ‘cobra venom’, As once cobra venom gets into the stomach, it could never be treated, but would certainly kill its victim; which is something well known to everyone. That is how the venom of the evil acts in those who hide it within themselves.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ Homilies on Rom., 40.

² التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

- ❖ There are two kinds of food: One that serves salvation; while the other leads to perdition It is befitting for us not to abuse the gifts of God the Father We should use them faithfully, and keep them under our control; according to His commandment to be masters and lords of our food, and not slaves to it¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Filling the stomach with food is like the fulfilling the mind with earthly pleasures. Thus, let the hypocrite be satisfied now to the full with the commendation he cannot resist; let him enjoy the vain honors.

“His food in his stomach turns into cobra venom within him” (14). As fulfillment with temporary pleasures turns into bitterness on the day of the ultimate judgment. What is considered here as great commendation, would be revealed as ‘cobra venom’; namely, (boasting of evil spirits) Joy in temporary enjoyments may be sweet as it is chewed here with the teeth; But it would turn into bitterness in the stomach, once the joy passes by, and leads to destruction.

Pope Gregory the Great

b- Love of the world:

“He swallows down riches; And vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly” (Job 20: 15).

In his love for the world, he collects riches and stores them, as though, in immense hunger, he swallows food with great greed, with no satisfaction nor limit. As it is said: *“The leech has two daughters: Give! Give!, they cry. Three things are never satisfied, four never say, ‘Enough’”* (Proverbs 30: 15). He would be like him, who fills his stomach, to vomit what he ate, and stays hungry all the time.

- ❖ **“The riches he collects through oppression, he will vomit”** It would never become of benefit to him. *“He who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong he has done (in the life to come)”* (Colossians 3: 25). What he collects through oppression, he will vomit, with great screams, and great perdition of the soul, in the ultimate judgment.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ Although the hypocrite may wish to know the proclamations of God, Yet he does not practice them. He may wish to utter wisdom, Yet he does not live wisely. That is why, through not practicing what he knows he should do, he loses even what he knows; And through not connecting the pure practice to his knowledge, despising the purity of true practice, he would end up losing knowledge itself; And the riches of the holy law, he ‘swallowed’ by reading, he would vomit through forgetting it; And **“God casts them out of his belly” (15).** Not caring to keep the practical practice, Through a just verdict, God will root it out from his memory; God’s commandments will not be kept on his tongue, as long as he does not keep them in his life; According to God’s words through His prophet, saying: *“What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth?”* (Psalm 50: 16).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The wicked will be sifted out as light tares; but the righteous will be saved as heavy wheat. Notice what the Lord said to Peter: *“indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat, But I have prayed for you, that your faith would not fail”* (Luke 22: 31). Those who are sifted out as tares would perish; But he who would

¹ *Pedagogus*, 2: 9.

not, is like the seed that falls, grows, and yields a crop, a hundredfold (Luke 8: 8) Evil is likened to chaff that easily burn and turn into ashes¹.

St. Ambrose

“He will suck the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue will slay him” (Job 20: 16).

Through his great love of the world, the hypocrite sucks the poison of cobras that nothing can heal, and nothing could be deadlier. This is what the lover of the world would collect for himself; he would have in his depths, the viper of sin that would end up slaying him.

❖ **“The serpent’s tongue will slay him” (16).** The serpent that from the beginning has submitted Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 4-5); and keeps on enslaving sinners, by instructing them how to find pleasure in evil practices.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **“He will suck the poison of cobras; The viper’s tongue will slay him” (16).** The unclean spirits start by gentle infiltration; then draw them violently. It is the same with the sucked poison of cobra, which starts by causing a little disturbance in the heart, to be followed by slaying the captive soul by the violent venom of the temptation.

Pope Gregory the Great

c - Love of vain glory:

“He will not see the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream” (Job 20: 17).

❖ They will not see a benefit from their pasturing flock; they will not get cream or butter in the age to come; being unable to enjoy the pleasures of the things they boast having here. Those people should listen to the words of the Lord: *“You fool, this very night your life is being demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, whose they will be?”* (Luke 12: 20).

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **“He will not see the streams flowing with honey and cream”² (17).** The Lord says in the gospel: *“He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7: 37). Then the Evangelist goes on to say: *“This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive”*. Thus, the streams or rivers are the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love is a stream; faith is a stream; and hope is a stream.

Therefore, the hypocrite, having the glory of the world as his goal, who does not love God or his neighbor, will never see the streams, and will never be watered by the flow of love.

The Only-begotten Son of God the Father; who is God above all, became Man among all; and having provided us with the sweetness of His divine nature and with the secret of His incarnation, He fulfilled us with honey and cream.

Pope Gregory the Great

Evil offer honey, cream, and butter, that conceals deadly poison; Whereas our Christ, the Forgiver of sins, offers us the sweet honey of peace; inner peace with ourselves, as well as with God, His angels, and His saints. Salvation from sin by the

¹ *The Prayer of Job and Daird, 2: 5: 18.*

² التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

work of redemption would bring us over, not to the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, Nor to Canaan that flows with milk and honey, But to the exalted reconciliation with heaven.

- ❖ “Whoever seeks peace, seeks Christ, who is our Peace” (Colossians 1: 20); “*Who has made both one*” (Ephesians 2: 14), making peace by the blood of His cross, both on earth, and in heaven¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ When earth was severed from heaven; angels became enemies to mankind, by whom they saw the Lord being insulted.

On the cross, the Lord Christ brought the sinning human nature that was in the bondage of the evil one, up to heaven. By that, He actually, not only brought peace to those on earth, but He also brought on to the angels, those who were their enemies. Peace became very deep. ... Angels re-appeared on earth; as humanity in its turn, appeared in heaven².

St. John Chrysostom

“He will give back the fruit of his toil, and will not swallow it down; From the profit of his trading, he will get no enjoyment” (Job 20: 18).

Expecting to take from the world, as though from streams and rivers that produce honey and cream; he keeps on laboring day and night, in order to accumulate the riches of the whole world. But he will soon discover that he is still poor, and does not possess what he hoped for; and will even lose his enjoyment in everything he acquired.

Whoever collects riches through oppression, will, willingly or unwillingly, give back what he collected; will lose everything, and will become penniless.

- ❖ ***“He labors in vain and for no benefit from the wealth he will not use” (LXX 18).***
What is the use of a magnificent palace, if its wicked owner will be buried six feet under ground? And what is the use of many and diverse garments for someone who will be barred by bugs?!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

The wicked will discover one day that he exited the world naked, not being clothed with Christ, our righteousness. His nakedness will be revealed on the Day of Judgment, and will go forth, together with the devil, who bared himself, his hosts, and his human followers, all of whom have lost what would joyfully clothe them.

- ❖ Joseph was robbed of his robe (Genesis 39: 12), yet he was not naked, as he was still clothed with the robe of purity.

No one is naked, but he whose sin is exposed.

In the old days, Adam, having disobeyed God’s commandment, and was thus condemned of a serious sin, became naked, and said: “*I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself*” (Genesis 3: 10). He confirms that he became naked, because he lost the adornment of the divine protection; and he hid himself, because he no more had the cover of faith which he cast aside by his disobedience.

¹ Homilies 16: 10.

² Homilies on Colossians, 3.

You see here an important fact: Adam was naked, although he did not lose any clothes; Whereas Joseph, although robbed of his robe, which he forsook in the hand of the harlot, yet he was not naked¹!

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

d- His oppression of the poor:

“For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor, He has violently seized a house which he did not build” (Job 20: 19).

In his love of the world, he walks with the spirit of cruelty and oppression; crushing and forsaking the poor; seizing houses he did not build for himself; the way Ahab took possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kings 21); and subsequently took possession of death and disgrace for himself.

When greed prevails over man, he does not only refrain from giving from what he has to the poor; but he also, violently and without shame, breaks down and rob the houses of the poor, and seizes what belong to others.

Whoever gives alms from what he oppressively took from the poor, bears in his giving, neither spiritual love, nor even human love; As he gives one and oppresses the other.

❖ If you offer God a part of what you acquired through oppression, He will not accept your gift.

You should rather give mercy and love to whom you have oppressed. God would never partake of your greed, and would never share robbers; as He is capable of feeding the poor whom he entrusted to us; But He seeks the fruits of righteousness and love of neighbor.

Pope Athanasius the apostolic

❖ What would be your excuse, If you rob someone of his money, and then give it to another?! To realize the extent of evil you have done, Listen to the words of Solomon, saying, that offering a sacrifice from the money of the poor, is like killing a son before the eyes of his own father!

St. John Chrysostom

e- Greed:

“He will have no respite in his belly; In his greed, he cannot save himself” (Job 20: 20).

In all his consistent strife, his depths (belly) will know no respite (no fulfillment); But anxiety would always prevail on him. He may gain much, but he, himself would never be saved!

❖ We should control our belly, and keep it under the direction of heaven; God, as the apostle says, will ultimately destroy everything related to the belly².

St. Clement of Alexandria

“Nothing is left for him to eat; Therefore his prosperity will not last” (Job 20: 21).

Whatever he has got, he will lose; as though he eats, but would never get fulfilled, because he vomits what he eats.

❖ Because the wicked eats without thanking God (Romans 14: 6); tastes without blessing; and there is no place for the poor on his table (Luke 16: 21); he will,

¹ Sermon 92: 3.

² Paedagogus 2:5.

according to David, save nothing for himself: *“The remains of the wicked completely perish”*. Because his goods are without origin, and they produce wicked fruits; *“His prosperity will not last”*.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

- ❖ *“His prosperity will not last”* Because, running after everything, with no fear of the divine Judge; When he departs from this life, he will go naked to judgment.

Pope Gregory the Great

“In full sufficiency he will be in distress; All the force of misery will come upon him” (Job 20: 22).

Having described the confusion that dwells upon the cruel oppressor, Zophar refers to his utter perdition. Together with gaining everything he desired by some way or another, Every force of misery will come upon him; What he did to others will be done to him; The same way his own oppressive hand was upon others, the hands of the wicked will be upon him.

- ❖ *“Together with the fullness of his hand, he will be in distress”¹ (22).* He starts by hastening to accumulate things by greed; Then having collected in great abundance; Together with the fullness of his hand, he will be in distress! Getting worried how to keep what he got safe; his fullness becomes the cause of his distress. This reminds us of the parable mentioned by the Lord Jesus about the rich man who collected a huge crop; and when he realized that his storehouses were not spacious enough to accommodate it, he thought within himself, *‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’* So he said, *‘I will pull down my barns and build greater’* (Luke 12: 17, 18). That is an example to show that too much goodness could present as much pressure as too little of it.

- ❖ *“He will be consumed by the heat (of distress), and all kinds of woes will come upon him” (22).* After getting all what he desired of wealth, fear and worry will dwell upon him to keep safe what he labored hard to acquire. He would see a robber in every poor he meets. Every kind of fear will prevail on him from every side: Fear that what he has done to others would be done to him; Fear that he may face violence from someone stronger than him;

Fear that those things which he acquired may be lost by negligence; and above all that, he will suffer a great fear of a probable punishment for his oppression.

What an amazing feeling of security for the heart that does not seek what is not his, but feels satisfied with what he has got!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“When he counts himself fulfilled, he starts to fall into distress” (LXX 22).* A fruit would start to corrupt once it reaches maturity.

As we have already stated; what Job’s friends said, was not meant to be against the wicked and transgressors, as much as it is to shake the perseverance of the blessed man.

Yet, seeing that the wrestler has endured the sorrows that dwelt upon him with a great soul, and a confidence in the benefits that would come through perseverance; Zophar warned him that the future will be worse than the past!

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

- ❖ Indeed, Life of man is not set upon the abundance of his possessions, but he is counted as blessed, and has glorious hope, who is rich in God¹.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

- ❖ We greatly rejoice when we gain one cent; and become overwhelmed with grief when we lose half a cent².

St. Jerome

“When he is about to fill his stomach, God will cast on him the fury of His wrath, And will rain it on him while he is eating” (Job 20: 23).

There is nothing that brings God’s fury on a wicked man, like his oppression of his neighbor. While being preoccupied with filling his stomach with it, God’s fury would rain on him fire and brimstone (Psalm 11: 6). He will even bring it down on him during the moments he enjoys eating in his banquets. Zophar is probably referring here to the death of Job’s children while celebrating a banquet.

Here it also refers to what the Lord Christ said about what happened in the days of the great flood: *“They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all”* (Luke 17: 27-29).

- ❖ **“Let him fill his stomach; God will cast His fury on him, And will rain His war on him”³ (23).** “God’s rain of war” is striking the hearts, haughty on Him, and wounding the hateful souls by the arrows of His ordinances. When it was befitting for the greedy to remind himself of how he coveted what is not his; he will surely grieve for departing from this world and leaving everything back.

Pope Gregory the Great

“When he will flee from the iron weapon; A bronze bow will pierce him through” (Job 20: 24).

His perdition will be inevitable without any possibility of getting away. **“He will flee from the iron weapon”**. Fleeing refers to iniquity; when, instead of thinking of humbly confessing his sins before God, to reconcile with Him; the wicked only thinks of how to flee from God’s revenge that chases him. But it would be in vain; as, if he manages to get away from the iron weapon, **“A bronze bow will pierce him through”**. It is as though God uses the iron sword, against which they assume they would be able to fight with their strength, or the bronze bow from which they think they can flee by their craftiness. Whoever assumes that he is able to flee from one kind of punishment, will find another kind chasing him.

- ❖ This means that God will overwhelm him with sufferings. What are these sufferings? **“If he, by any way flees from the iron sword, he will be wounded by the bronze bow, and stabbed by the arrow. Stars will come down over his house; and fear will dwell on him” (LXX 24-25).** Yet, ‘Job’ did not fall under these strikes; As God did not allow Satan to kill him; None of the iron, bronze bows or arrows, of the hired hosts of Satan could approach him ... Nor any fire from outside the earth; As Satan have no authority to move the wrath of heaven against him.

¹ In Luc Ser. 89.

² Ep. 43: 2.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

Although Zophar, in his attempt to put fear in that wrestler's heart from every side, warned him against all these things; Yet 'Job', being sure of his righteousness, did not enquire, how, or from where these things would come upon him.

Father Hesychius of Jerusalem

❖ **“If he flees from the iron weapons, he will face the bronze bow”¹ (24).** Greed would sometimes infiltrates into people through pride, and other times through fear. Some would seek to appear with great authority, and would long to get what belong to others. Others, fearing that they may, one day become in need of the necessities of life, and imagining that what they have would not be enough for them, they deliver their minds to greed seeking what belong to others. Now, the term 'iron' may refer to those 'necessities' of life, that cruelly press on the life of the needy; namely, to the painful need for the necessities of life.... *“His neck is put in iron”* (Psalm 105: 18). **And because iron is easily corrupted by rust;** while bronze is more resistant; Iron refers to the temporary present necessities; while bronze refers to the eternal destiny.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ If you want to build your city well? *“Better is a little with the fear of the lord, than great treasure with trouble”* (Proverbs 15: 16). Man's riches are to commit oneself to the salvation of his soul, and not to its perdition. Riches would be for salvation of man, if it is well used; and would be a trap for him, if he does not know how to use it properly (See Proverbs 13: 8). As what would be the benefit of man's wealth, if it does not support him on his journey²?

St, Ambrose

“It is drawn forth , and comes out of the body; Yes, the glittering point comes out of his gall; Terror will come over him” (Job 20: 25).

Perdition would be complete when the bow pierces the wicked, and comes out of his gall; Great fear and terror would then dwell upon him; and the sufferings of his death would be intense, giving him its taste of bitterness.

❖ **“Terrifies would come and dwell on him” (25).** Who are those “terrifies” but the evil spirits, whom the pious minds should fear and avoid? It is believed that to each of those evil spirits, certain sins attach.

When a wicked man forsakes a group of sins for a moment, and starts committing another group; the new ‘terrifies’ would come and dwell on him; namely, when the soul of the wicked forsakes certain evil habits, it would be captivated by others.

You may often see a worldly man on whom, some violent spells of anger usually prevail, during which he does unthinkable deeds. Then once his anger quietens down, he may come under the influence of lust; and when this eventually comes to an end, he may be delivered to an exaggerated wave of self-esteem, and tends to pretend being violent and a source of terror! Such would be a man whose mind is taken over by a certain iniquity, then to become replaced by another, and so on “when terrifies come and dwell on him”.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Total darkness is laid up for his treasures. An unfanned fire will consume him and devour what is left in his tent” (Job 20: 26).

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Letter, 15.

The darkness by which the wicked is clothed is hidden; an utter darkness that is not pierced by a single ray of light; an inner darkness that comes to him, in a 'hiding place' where he assumes to be safe, and no one can reach him. By the 'hiding place', he probably means his conscience; As the wicked suffers from darkness that dwells in his depths, he find himself in confusion, from which no one can save him except by his return, through repentance, to the true Light. The Grantor of peace.

Inside him, a perishing fire ignites; an unfanned fire; namely, without a sound. Everyone sees that the wicked is being destroyed and consumed, without knowing the cause; the way Jonah saw that the bush has withered, yet he did not see the worm that caused it to wither (Jonah 4: 7).

By saying "*an unfanned fire*", he refers to the fact that the fuel of the perishing fire of sin, is so inflammable, that it needs no fanning. "*All the proud, yes, all who do wickedly, will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up*" (Malachi 4: 1).

"*And will devour what is left in his tent*". His evil will infiltrate into his tent; namely, he will become the cause of perdition to many in his household.

❖ "*Total darkness is hidden in his secret places*" (26) ... That is because he does not parade all the wickedness in him in public.

"*An unfanned (unmade) fire will consume him*". These few words describe the fire of hell in an amazing way. The material fire to start, needs material fuel; And in order to continue burning, it needs to be provided with wood and fuel on a continuous basis. Namely, It would not start, nor continue to burn, unless it is served with fuel. On the contrary, the fire of hell, although it is a fire that consumes the sons of perdition who are physically cast in it, Yet it is not made by human effort, nor continue by providing it with fuel on a continuous basis; But, once it is there, it remains un-quenchable, need no refueling, and its heat would never diminish.

The justice of the Almighty, who knew beforehand the events to come; Since the beginning of the world, He created the fire of hell, that had to be there to punish the wicked; that would never need refueling, nor its heat would ever diminish.

It is said by the Psalmist: "*You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger. The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath*" (Psalm 21: 9). So the Holy Book reveals that the lost would burn both internally and externally. It testifies that, while they are consumed with fire, they turn into a fiery oven. By fire, they are physically tortured; and through grief, they spiritually burn.

"*His tent would partake of his tribulation*"; having put all his pleasure in his carnal life, he is said to dwell in the tent of the body.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Why was it that Satan did not enter in Peter, James, and John, or in any of the other blessed apostles?

Why did he enter only in Judas Eschariot? What did Satan find in him?

Satan could not approach anyone of those mentioned above, because their hearts were upright, and their love for Christ was steadfast. The traitor, on the other hand, had a place in him for Satan; having been under the authority of an ugly sickness – greed; about which the blessed Paul says, it is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6: 10).

Satan, being crafty, as far as evil is concerned, When he has the possession of someone, he does not fight him by a common sin; But, in order to victimize him, he rather searches in him for a specific sin that he knows would best suits him¹.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ To Abraham, three men came (Genesis 18: 1-2) in the heat of the day; Whereas in the case of Sodom, two angels came in the evening (Genesis 19: 1). **The good things are likened to the light**, and the evil things to the night. The Sun of Righteousness shines on the righteous *“The path of the just is like the shining sun”* (Proverbs 4: 18; Matthew 13: 34); whereas the punishment of the wicked is night and darkness².

Father Theodor, Bishop of Messisa

- ❖ To those on the left hand He says: *“Depart from Me, you cursed”* (Matthew 25: 41). He does not say that they will be cursed by God the Father; but it is their own works that brings the curse over them. Concerning the kingdom, He says to those on the right hand: *“Come inherit the kingdom”*; then adds: *“prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25: 35). I did prepare the kingdom for you; whereas the everlasting fire, I did not prepare for the wicked, but for the devil and his angels; it is the wicked, which cast themselves in it; referred it to themselves³.

St. John Chrysostom

“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him”
(Job 20: 27).

God of heavens, who sees the hidden things, will proclaim the evils of those who persist on their wickedness; and the earth will expose their iniquities, and take revenge against them. *“The earth will also disclose her blood”* (Isaiah 26: 21). Heavens cannot stand iniquity, and the earth rises up against it; The wicked would find no place here or there, but will settle down in hell.

- ❖ ***“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him”***
(27). What do we understand by the **heavens**, but the righteous; And by the earth, but the sinners?

In the Lord’s Prayer, we say: *“Thine will be on earth, as well as in heaven”*; meaning that the will of our Creator, as it is realized in the righteous, I wish it is also realized in the sinners. About the righteous, it is also said: *“The heavens declare the glory of God”* (Psalm 19: 1). And to man, when he sinned, the verdict was: *“Dust you are, and to dust you will return”*. Likewise, when the wicked is taken to the horrible judgment, it is said: ***“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him”***. He who had no compassion here on the good or bad; on the horrible day of his judgment, the life of the righteous and the sinner will both testify against him.

“The earth” could also refer, not only to the hateful life of sin, but also to those who preoccupy themselves with the earthly things; Then, through giving alms and shedding the tears of repentance, they gain the eternal life; About whom the Psalmist. Proclaiming the coming of the Lord for judgment, says: *“He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people”* (Psalm 50: 4). He shall call to the heaven from above, when those forsake all what they possess, and

¹ *Commentary on Luke, Homily. 140.*

² *Catena on Genesis, 3: 1110.*

³ *Homilies on Matt., 79: 2.*

hold fast to tendency toward the heavenly life; They will be called to sit together with Him for judgment; and will come with Him as judges.

Nothing of what the wicked has done will be hidden on the day of judgment; If many things are now concealed through deceit, on the day of judgment it will come to light.

Pope Gregory the Great

If the heavens declare the iniquity of the wicked, And the earth resist and expose him, It is befitting for the church to teach the believers to separate themselves from the wicked who persist on their evil; and not from the sinners who need someone to testify to the gospel before them.

St. Cyprian demonstrates, not only what will dwell upon the wicked, who persist on their evil, of great divine punishments, but he also provokes the children of God to ‘turn away’ from them, lest the wrath of God would dwell upon them as well.

We find this very clear in the book of Numbers, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged Moses and Aaron, and claimed their right to offer sacrifices to God. The Lord commanded Moses, saying: “*Say to the congregation to turn away from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, or you will be swept away for all their sins*” (Numbers 16: 26)¹.

❖ Do your best to turn away from the wicked; as when you do, Christ will come to dwell among you².

The scholar Origen

❖ While you despise gold; there is another who loves it.

While you despise wealth, there is another who eagerly chase it.

While you love silence, meekness, and the private secret life, there is another who find pleasure in talking arrogantly in public places and streets.

Do not be together with him under the same roof. Do not depend on your past chastity; you are not holier than David, or wiser than Solomon...

In case, during your priestly work you are committed to visit a widow or a virgin, do not go to her alone. Do not ever sit alone with a woman in a secret way with any witness with you. If she intends to reveal something private or secret, she can do that to a nanny, a house-keeper, or any other female companion; ... She could not be without friends, to choose you as her counselor³!

St. Jerome

“*The possessions of his house will be carried away, dragged off in the day of God’s wrath*” (Job 20: 28).

His seeds, which are the possessions of his house, would be carried away, as death dwells upon them prematurely, or would have to flee away from their land, and be scattered.

The way riches would easily come to the wicked through oppression and deceit, it would also be scattered the same way, when God’s wrath dwells upon him.

❖ When the wrath of the divine Judge is proclaimed, the wicked would be delivered to its fire, and would be deprived of beholding Him. As in this life, he did not intend to rise with his mind up to the high things; being dragged down by his sins, he will fall from the face of the divine Judge into the depths of punishment.

¹ Letter 67: 3.

² Commentary on Cor. 2: 26: 57-59.

³ Letters, 52.

Now, as it is the day of mildness, and not the day of wrath, the divine Judge sees and endures the sinner in his sins, because He anticipates that everyone would probably repent. But as the hypocrite remains consistent on his evil ways and not chastened with scrooges, he would be cast away in the day of wrath, and would be severed from the face of the eternal Judge.

Pope Gregory the Great

“This is the portion from God for a wicked man, the heritage appointed to him by God” (Job 20: 29).

What the wicked has gathered for him would not be the wealth he has temporarily acquired; but the wrath that would eventually dwell upon him. That would be his permanent portion, and his eternal inheritance in the fire of hell.

Although Zophar’s statement here, bore some truth; Yet he was mistaken to assume that all that would necessarily come upon the wicked while still in this world; And to think that any affliction that would dwell on someone in this life, would necessarily refer to his wickedness.

Although Zophar presents a sound interpretation for the work of evil in the life of the wicked, Yet he is mistaken for being prejudiced against ‘Job’, doing his best to confirm that he is a hypocrite, and applying what he says on him.

Yes indeed, evil is horrible, and sin is very sinful; yet we have no right to condemn and judge others according to our human view.

❖ If someone, while here in this life, cares to walk upright, his portion would be the fellowship with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven. But if he chooses to submit to evil lusts, his portion from the Lord would be to be delivered to torture.

The righteous would not covet to get a portion from the Lord, now and here; but to gain the Lord Himself as his portion; That is why the prophet prays, saying: *“God is my portion forever”* (Psalm 73: 26). The wicked, on the other hand, not seeking to have the Lord as his portion, he would have fire instead; And as he is taken away from the face of the Lord, because he does not seek to find joy in him, he would be found not worthy of the Lord.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Those who find pleasure in iniquity would not have a portion together with the eternal¹.

St. Anthony the Great

❖ Let us now see what God commands us to do; He says: ***“Give glory to the Lord your God, before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, while you are looking for light” (Jeremiah 13: 16).*** He demands from us to give glory to the Lord in the presence of light; because God’s glory could not be proclaimed when darkness comes. When does darkness come; and when does it not? “Work as long as the light is in you”. The light is actually in you as long as you carry the Lord Christ inside yourself, He who says about Himself: ***“I am the light of the world”***. So, as long as this light is in you, give glory to the Lord. But you should know that darkness may eventually come; and you should not wait for it to come; but give glory to the Lord before it does.

❖ We can understand this issue more clearly with help from the words of Christ, saying: ***“Work as long as it is daylight; Night will come when no one can work”***.

¹ الفيلوكاليا: 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 13.

By the daylight he means our present time, and by the night and darkness he means the end of the world, and the punishment of the wicked. The prophet Amos says: **“Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to You? It will be darkness and not light!” (Amos 5: 18)**. If you get to know the extent of grief and anguish at the time of perdition of the world, when most of the human race would be punished for their sins; You would realize how dark it would be, when no one can give glory to the Lord. Even the righteous, God commands, saying: **“Go my people; Get into your houses and shut the door behind you; hide yourself, until my wrath comes to an end”¹**.

- ❖ As what God prepared for those who love Him is beyond imagination; so is what He prepared of torture for the wicked, It is also beyond imagination².
- ❖ Everyone of us would bring upon himself a punishment for sin; the size of which would differ according to the kind and nature of the transgression... The debt collector is coming to do his job; and I should not oppose him ... I know that if I am absolutely not in debt, he would have no authority on me. But If I am, he would send me to jail³.

The scholar Origen

¹ عظات للعلامة أوريجينوس على سفر إرميا، ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي، عظة 12: 9-10.

² عظات للعلامة أوريجينوس على سفر إرميا، ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي، عظة 19: 15.

³ *Homilies on Luke, 35: 10: 13.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 20
YOUR VOICE PUTS OUT THE FIRE OF MY EVIL

- ❖ My soul moans inside me.
Your sweet voice quenches the fire of my evil, and pours the water of Your righteousness inside me.
- ❖ Since the fall of Adam, we were taught that the tree of evil should be pulled out, so that you may plant in us the tree of your righteousness.
Let the temple of the devil with its abomination be pulled down, so that You may set in us by your Holy Spirit Your holy temple.
Let all what is not Yours in us be cut off and pulled down, so that You plant and set what is yours.
Let me become Your holy paradise, and Your holy temple.
- ❖ Pull down, O Lord, every leprous foreign building, Cast away its stones.
Because I am Your holy city, Let no unclean stone remain in me;
Uproot from my heart all thorns, and plant in me Your paradise; Your beloved vineyard.
Let me offer You what is Yours, from the fruits of Your Holy Spirit.
So that You may invite Your heavenly friends, and say:
“Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply! O beloved ones! (Songs 5: 1).
Come, O Lord Jesus, Dwell in my depths, Your joyful paradise, and Your holy temple.
- ❖ I know that the devil offers pleasures; Yet, they are full of poison.
The joys of the prince of this world will not last.
The passions that we thankfully receive from Your hands, are sweeter than all the pleasures of the world.
- ❖ My sins are destroying me! Sometimes, in my vain pride, I do not care what I am doing.
And sometimes, I get depressed and overcome by despair.
I know that my sins created animosity against Your word and commandment.
Yet Your word, in the sweetness of its love, chastens, not to destroy me, but to bring me back to You, to enjoy Your salvation.
- ❖ My evil destroyed every goodness in me; Its abhorrent odor is apparent inside me.
As though in a dream I live; All the pleasures given to me by my evil will not last.
I wake up to find out that I have gathered wind; and got hold of a shadow.
My evil took my peace away from me; because there is no peace for me, but in Your divine bosom.
My evil corrupted my soul; more than what the worms will do to my body.
- ❖ Why am I keeping my evil as a precious treasure? Why am I hiding them as though for fear of losing them?
When they are the cause of my eternal perdition?
When they pour their venom inside me; and provide me with eternal bitterness?
- ❖ My evil became for me a deadly food;
Instead of enjoying the heavenly manna -- Your body and Your blood, the Grantors of the eternal life;
My evil deprived me of the sweetness of the true life.

Let me come back to You, O Forgiver of sins; to enjoy You, for You are the Life.
Bring me back, not to the garden of Eden, nor to the promised land, but to the
divine bosom.

Let me be fulfilled by the sweetness of Your love. Let me rejoice in the union with
the heavenly creatures.

- ❖ You are the whole love; You long for the salvation of all;
It is my evil that condemns me; Yet You are above all evil.
Grant me Your righteousness, to live with You, for You, and by You.
Let me encounter You on the clouds, to enjoy the glory You prepared for me since
the foundation of the world.

CHAPTER 21

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED IN THIS WORLD

Now, that his three friends have presented their case, each in his turn, 'Job' responds to the second talk of Zophar. Yet, his response bears no more of the same old tension, but, he objectively deals with the state of the wicked in this world: Are they always in misery and affliction? Are temptations a sure sign of the evil of those who fall under them?

Job begs his friends to listen carefully to his speech, with no interruption; and to consider their listening as their consolation to him. In his turn, he promises not to interrupt them when it is their turn to speak.

Yet, he proclaims to them that his complaint is not presented to any one; but is presented to God, to be the judge between him and his friends.

'Job' actually finds difficulty when he searches for the secret of the prosperity of the wicked: Their homes are secure, their flocks increase, their children see happy days, and when their time comes, they peacefully die, without suffering any painful sickness; Although they reject God, yet they prosper; and yes, their prosperity comes from God. However, 'Job' rejects the principles of the wicked, and says: "*The counsel of the wicked is far from me*" (16).

Finally, 'Job' pulls down the foundation of their criticism against him; by stating that the perdition of the wicked is kept to the other world; although they may keep prospering, up to the end of this world (27-34).

1- A gentle talk to his friends	1 – 5
2- The prosperity of the wicked	6 – 13
3- The wicked say and do wrong against goodness	14 – 16
4- God's longsuffering on the wicked	17 – 21
5- The wicked and the divine care	22 – 26
6- The wicked and the eternal perdition	27 - 34

1- A GENTLE TALK TO HIS FRIENDS:

"Then 'Job' answered and said: 'Listen carefully to my speech, and let this be your consolation" (Job 21: 1, 2).

'Job' asks his friends to listen to him with the spirit of love; putting in their mind to realize his intentions, instead of hastening to judge him. Using the language of friendship and peace, he is asking them to consider their listening to him with a good spirit, amid his passion, as their consolation. He probably also means that when they see that listening to him brings him comfort, they may, in turn, feel comfortable and consoled. It is as though their listening to him would have double and mutual benefit for him, as well as for them.

Listening to the in pain indeed has benefit to both sides; as, on one aspect, the one in pain feels the compassion and care of his brethren, even by mere listening to him; and on another aspect, as the one in pain feels consoled, his brethren would be a little comforted by his consolation.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the suffering church – in the person of 'Job' – calls on the heretics and the people of the world, to listen to her; being able by her crucified Christ, to offer them through thankful passion, exalted divine consolations. St. Paul draws the attention of those suffering, to the cross of Jesus the

Lord of glory; not only to get filled with comfort, but to become as well, the source of comfort to others. He says: “*Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*” (2 Corinthians 1: 4); and: “*As you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation*” (2 Corinthians 1: 7).

The suffering church follows the example of her crucified Christ; “*For in that he Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted*” (Hebrew 2: 18). Abiding in Him, we enjoy the fellowship in His sufferings; be crucified together with Him; to become by Him the source of unlimited consolation.

- ❖ Paul rejoices in his sufferings, by seeing the amazing fruits brought to the congregation by the sufferings; like what happened to the Corinthian Christians¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Bear with me that I may speak, And after I have spoken, keep mocking” (Job 21: 3).

He begged them to bear with him, and not to interrupt him; Then if they intend to mock him, they may, if they choose to do. So he says, hoping that their listening to him with a true intention may be a good beginning for them to accept his words, and to be convinced of his defense, and change their attitude.

‘Job’ was not preoccupied with the mocking attitude of his friends; as much as with their listening to him and bearing with him for the sake of their salvation and comfort. The same way, the church is not preoccupied with her temporal dignity, nor with justifying herself, as much as with the salvation of every soul, even from among her adversaries and persecutors; as love does not seek what is hers, but what is for the others.

- ❖ It is obvious that, when someone advises another, and at the same time he suffers more than the one he advises; He is doing this, not to cause grief to the other, but to present to him deep love. Whereas he who does that without such attitude, is actually treading with his feet upon the feelings of his brother².

Fathere Ambrose

- ❖ In (2 Corinthians 1: 4), Paul appears to suffer, not less than those who erred, and may be even more than them.

It is very difficult for him to endure the sufferings that the Corinthian have caused him by their doing³.

St. John Chrysostom

Like her Groom, the feature of the church is the practical true love, desiring, if possible, for the whole world to enjoy the fellowship of the eternal glory.

Although the mocking of the people cannot break the believer down, nor harm those who mock; Yet, with the spirit of humility, ‘Job’ begs his friends to bear with him, to gain them to God, and avoid bringing harm upon themselves.

The Psalmist enduring the mocking of the haughty, that failed to shake his depths to divert from the law of God, says to God: “*The proud have me in great derision, Yet I do not turn aside from Your law*” (Psalm 119: 51); And the wisdom cries out, saying: “*How long, you simple ones, will you love being simple? For scoffers delight in their scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?*” (Proverbs 1: 22); putting the ‘simple ones’ together with the ‘scoffers’ and the ‘fools’ at the same level; As all

¹ Homilies on Cor. 40:3.

² Commentary on Paul’s Epistles (2 Cor 1:4).

³ Hom. On Cor 4:3.

of them acquire perdition for themselves. In this concern, the wise Solomon confirms: **“If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you are scoff, you alone bear it” (Proverbs 9: 12).**

It is so amazing how in the middle of their attacks on him, he talks with the spirit of humility, begging them to bear with his words; and promising on his side to accept any mocking directed against him. For their mutual benefit, he is asking them to keep their peace.

- ❖ It is as though he is saying to them: [You may count me as wicked; Yet, I have not benefited from your remarks. Although I know that you mock me, Yet, I shall not surrender! No one can deride me; as I am not wrestling against man!].

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Job is begging his friends to bear with his words, because he utters what is for his benefit as well as theirs. But, talking, not from the lectern of a teacher, but in such a peaceful spirit while on a heap of trash; he will surely get a benefit for himself.

- ❖ When the good talk, they commit themselves to two things: Either their talk is for their benefit, as well as for that of their listeners; or, if this is not possible, it would be for their benefit alone. In case the good issues they utter is heard with a good spirit, both sides can benefit from them; But if their listeners mock and scoff them, they would, at least, have the benefit of not keeping silent on what is wrong. .. Therefore if Job’s friends wish to be taught, they have to listen; and if they intend to keep on mocking, let them bear with what is said! As the teaching presented in humility to a haughty mind, has its own serious weight.
- ❖ He says, **“(I beg you) to bear with me”**, showing humility to those who are swallowed by pride against him; in order to provoke them to consider the teaching of the saving truth. The saints in the fold of the catholic church, are ready, not only to teach what is right, but also to endure what would be practiced against them, and would not mind being ridiculed.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Humility draws God’s grace to the soul ... Which in turn, would spare her of two serious sufferings; namely our anger on others, and the anger of others against us. Because, what would be more serious than getting angry against your brother, or making him angry against you?! But what should I say? Will humility spare the soul of just these two sufferings? No, It spares her of every suffering (lust), and of every temptation.

When **St. Anthony** saw the nets that the devil has set for him, he sighed and asked God: ‘Who can escape from them?’ To which God answered: ‘the humble can And they cannot approach him’.

Do you see the power of this virtue?! There is indeed nothing greater than humility; nothing can overcome it. In case some sorrows come upon a humble man, he would hasten to blame himself, on account that he deserve them; and would never blame or rebuke anyone else. By such complete peace, he would endure anything that may come over him, without getting disturbed or grieved; and would consequently, avoid getting angry, or making others angry.

Father Dorotheos

‘Job’ was not preoccupied with being mocked by them, saying: **“And after I have spoken, keep mocking” (3)**. The apostle Paul, as well, having seen how his Lord

received mockery and scoff with joy, for the sake of the salvation of the world (Luke 23: 35; Hebrew 13: 13), says about the prophet Moses: “*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*” (Hebrew 11: 24, 26); And about the apostles, he says: “... *as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men*” (1 Corinthians 4: 9); ... “*being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the dregs of all things to this very day*” (1 Corinthians 4: 13).

- ❖ The Lord Christ commands us to endure insults with meekness, in order to grow in virtue, and make our adversaries in disgrace (Matthew 5: 10-12); which could be realized, not by rebuking them, but by holding our peace¹.
- ❖ Paul says that the main point, is not that he and his fellow apostles would suffer; as that is something common to all; But it is rather, that they would suffer without despair or anger; and on the contrary, while being filled with joy; By that, they would confirm that the evil that dwell on them would turn into good².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Those who love Christ are not fools as is thought by the world (1Corinthians 4: 10)³.

Father Amroseaster

“*As for me, is my complaint addressed to mortals? And if it were, why should I not be impatient?*” (Job 21: 4).

‘Job’ confirms to his friends that if his complaint is addressed to mortals, it would not be of any use; But it is addressed to God, to whom he also appeals the verdict; He is the Judge; who searches the hearts and minds; and before whom all men equally stand; He listens to all, and cares for all.

He confirms to them that, if his complaint was addressed to mortals, his spirit would be disturbed within him; As a mortal, not caring for his fellow mortal, and being not aware of what goes on inside his heart and mind, may tend to issue an unjust verdict; Whereas God, on the other hand, is longsuffering, listens to man, and deals with him with compassion.

The believer addresses his complaint to God, not to seek revenge against his adversaries, but to bring pleasure to God. Concerning this the prophet David says: “*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer*” (psalm 19: 14); And the apostle Paul says: “*Am I now seeking human approval, or God? Or am I trying to please people? For if I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ*” (Galatians 1: 10).

- ❖ “*Am I now seeking human approval, or God? For if I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ*” I wish we do not assume that the apostle is teaching us, through following his example, to despise or disregard the views of others But in case we can manage to please both the people and God; Then let us please the people But saying “*now*”, he intends to reveal that people, are or are not pleased, according to circumstances, and not according to the truth⁴.

¹ Homilies on Cor. 13:2.

² Homilies on Cor. Hom. 13:2.

³ Homilies on Cor. Hom. 12:6.

⁴ Epistle to Gal. 1:1:10.

St. Jerome

- ❖ When someone pleases the others for the sake of truth, then it is the truth who is pleased, and not the party who proclaims it¹.

St. Augustine

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, Job's admonishment to his friends, on account that their debate with him grieved his heart, and made him impatient, is a confession of his human weakness; As for him, who concentrates his sight on God, grief would never infiltrate into his heart, nor impatience into his spirit. God, the source of Joy, would rather lift his heart up above grief, whatever its source may be, and would grant spaciousness to the spirit.

- ❖ Whoever seeks to please God; being offended by people would never cause him grief. If one thinks that pleasing man would not please God; Or that it does not please both God and man together, grief should not dwell on him; because otherwise, it would confirm that he is an alien to the exaltation of wisdom. Now, that the blessed 'Job' admits that he has not pleased God amid his tribulations, his mind got back to grief.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Look at me and be astonished; Put your hand over your mouth” (Job 21: 5).

Every time 'Job' thinks about his case, he stands in astonishment and in terror. Whenever he remembers those successive events which occurred in an extraordinary pace; and the strikes that dwelt on him on all sides, he trembles, is confused, and is not able to interpret what came upon him.

- ❖ 'If you look at what I have gone through, and marvel at the strikes I suffered, you will ***“put your hand on your mouth”***'. It is as though he says to them: 'Knowing the good things I have done, and seeing the sufferings I am going through; You should beware not to err with your words, and should fear for your own wounds!' ... That is why the Psalmist says: ***“Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle”*** (Psalm 144: 1); by the hands he refers to the work and by the fingers to reasoning.

Pope Gregory the Great

The church demands from the people of the world to look at her, and not to hasten to judge her. If they commit themselves to think quietly and reasonably; They will see that behind the great afflictions she endures, and the persecutions pouring on her; the exalted peace of God that fills her being, His amazing plan for her, and His work through her passions, to realize her mission and her testimony to His joyful gospel. The church demands from those outside her, to “put their hands on their mouth” in astonishment before the amazing fact: God's exalted work in His suffering church.

- ❖ Paul says: 'Being happy with these wounds, ***“I bear in my body the marks of my Lord Jesus”*** (see Galatians 6: 17)'. In all his troubles, he readily submitted to his weaknesses, where the power of Jesus is consummated in virtue (See 2 Corinthians 4: 10; 12: 9)².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

¹ Epistle to Gal. 5 PL 35:2109.

² Oration 12 on Song of Songs 5:7.

- ❖ How beautiful are the chains of Paul¹!
- ❖ Suffering for the sake of His enemies, was an offering with a sweet aroma, an accepted sacrifice. And as for you, if you suffer for the sake of your enemies, as a sweet offering, you will become an accepted sacrifice; even if you die. That is what he means by saying: “*Be imitators of God*” (Ephesians 5: 1)².

St. John Chrysostom

The holy fathers talked much about the work of enduring passions, insults, and scoffs, with joy; not only in the life of the one who does, but also in the life of the scoffers themselves. **St. John Chrysostom** applied this to the relationship between the husband and his wife, who causes him to suffer; saying: [Even if it comes to giving your life up for her sake, do not hesitate. And if you are committed to bear troubles without limits for her sake, do not refuse. Because, even if you do all that, you are still far from what Christ has done for the sake of the church. When you see her looking at you in despise; and hear her unending complaints, You still can gain her back by your great love and compassion³].

2- THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED:

“Even when I remember I am terrified, and trembling takes hold of my flesh” (Job 21: 6).

“Why do the wicked live and become old, yes, becomes mighty in power?” (Job 21: 7).

While the three friends spoke in length about the tribulations and misery that would dwell upon the wicked, ‘Job’, on the other hand, becomes terrified, and trembling takes hold of his flesh, when he sees how the wicked enjoy prosperity until they become old; how they become mighty in power and in practicing arrogant authority over others; how they live in peace (1 Samuel 25: 6); how their life may reach old age; how they may have children and grandchildren, and how they may collect huge wealth. In the book of Isaiah we hear: “*The sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed*” (Isaiah 65: 20).

Some of the wicked may misunderstand God’s longsuffering over them, against which the Holy Book warns us, saying: “*Do not say, ‘I sinned, yet what has happened to me?’ , for the Lord is slow to anger*” (Sirach 5: 4). “*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance*” (Romans 2: 4)

- ❖ If we do not fall under chastisement, and still keep on our bad behavior; Let us heed the words of the apostle, saying: “*The goodness of God leads us to repentance; But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath*” (Romans 2: 4-5)⁴.
- ❖ “*Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance; But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring for yourself wrath in the day of wrath*” (Romans 2: 4-5). Because your punishment is postponed, and you are not stricken on the spot, Your heart becomes as hard as that of Pharaoh, over whom ten plagues were sent, not from an angry God, as much as a warning from a compassionate father. After apostatizing from his repentance (after

¹ Hom. On Ephes. 9:4:1-3.

² Homilies on Ephesians, homily 17:4.

³ Homily on Eph. 20:5:25.

⁴ Homilies on John, homily 28:2.

each plague); the ultimate punishment dwelt upon him when he chased the people of God in the wilderness, and arrogantly entered into the sea behind them. He had then to face the wrath of God who is feared even by the elements of nature¹.

St. Jerome

St. Jerome uses this phrase in (Romans 2: 4) in his response to the followers of Pelagius, to confirm how God sanctifies and cares for the freedom of human will. Although He is aware of the wicked who despises His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering; Yet He shows him great compassion and mercy; and in longsuffering, He gives him the chance to repent. However, when the wicked despises that, It would not be because of God's prior awareness, but because of his persistence on his wickedness².

St. Ambrose asks us to refrain from judging others according to the goods that are given to them through the mercies of God, who cares for everyone; because this does not mean that God does not care for their behavior, or that he is not aware of their doings, or of what goes on in their consciences. This rather confirms that, despite the flood of goods granted by God to the wicked; yet they are miserable and do not know happiness³.

“Their descendants are established with them in their sight and their offspring before their eyes” (Job 21: 8).

Believers, and even nonbelievers, often wonder how God allows the wicked to have health, wealth, and long age, enjoy authority and leadership, and see their descendants partake of all these temporal blessings! Man, because of his short life, assumes that God's justice should be fulfilled in this world; rather than wait for the great day of the Lord, to see the realization of the divine justice. It is equally difficult for the human mind to appreciate the longsuffering of God, who anticipates the return of the wicked from their wickedness to the divine bosom.

❖ ‘Job’ proclaims to his friends: [If I am suffering this way because of my sins; Why do the wicked live; grow old in riches; have descendants before their eyes according to their pleasure; their houses prosper without fear; and the rod of God does not fall on them⁴?!].

St. Ambrose

“Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them” (Job 21: 9).

While Zophar refers to the continuous fears and the perpetual worries of the wicked; ‘Job’, on the other hand, refers to some of them who enjoy houses secure from fears and danger; and God's rod is not upon them.

Having their hearts preoccupied with houses built of mud and stones, with the furniture they include, and the treasures they keep; God would give them the desire of their hearts of temporal and temporary peace, and would not let anyone approach their possessions. The righteous, on the other hand, being only preoccupied with the heavenly mansions and the high dwelling places, God would also give them the desire of their hearts. The former would get in abundance temporal blessings and temporary security; whereas the later would get an eternal heritage: an incorruptible, unending, everlasting heavenly glory; And to rejoice, as they hear the divine voice, saying: *“I go to prepare a place for you; And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again*

¹ Letter 147:1.

² cf Against the Pelagians, Book 3:6.

³ cf Duties of the Clergy, Book 3:12.

⁴ Duties of the clergy, 1: 12.

and receive you to Myself; That where I am, there you may also be” (John 14: 2-3). About that, the Psalmist says: **“He shall give you the desire of your heart” (Psalm 37: 4)**; and, **“You have given him his heart’s desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips” (Psalm 21:2).**

“Their bull breeds without failure; Their cow calves without miscarriage” (Job 21: 10).

Some wicked are rich, with increasing possessions; Even their bulls breed without failure; and their beasts reproduce in abundance, live long, and are never sick.

While the desire of the heart of the wicked is that his beasts increase in number, without a single miscarriage; That of the children of God, on the other hand, is to have many children in the Lord, without a single perdition. They anticipate the day of the Lord, to sing, saying: **“Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me” (Isaiah 8: 18).**

There would be no barren among the children of the Lord, but all will be productive. Because of one sermon by the apostle Peter on the day of the Pentecost, about 3000 received faith, joined the new church, offered repentance, and enjoyed the new birth through baptism. In a single day, the apostle Peter gave birth to thousands of children by the gospel of Christ. And what do we say about the apostle Paul, who, almost every day, through preaching by his flaring fiery heart, brought many new members into the hold of faith; and kept on begetting, even while in his chains; to say about ‘Onesimus’, the fleeing slave and robber, **“whom I have begotten while in my chains” (Philemon 10).**

If the beasts in the Holy Book mostly refer to the flesh, People of this world are always preoccupied with things of the flesh and not of the spirit.

While the wicked is preoccupied with the birth of his beasts; the true believer, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the spiritual birth of men, to become the children of the holy God; on the expense of chains, prison and even death.

❖ ‘Onesimus’ was worthy of such a great honor, having been begotten in the midst of Paul’s struggles and tribulations for the sake of Christ¹.

❖ Notice how Paul’s heart was on fire! He kept preaching while in chains, and under scourges. Oh, Paul! How blessed are your chains! How hard was your strife! How did you manage to beget children in such difficult circumstances?!

How greatly inexpressible are the glory of those chains! How great is the splendor they grant, not only to him, but also to those he has begotten under such severe conditions²!

St. John Chrysostom

“They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance” (Job 21: 11).

“They sing to the tambourine and harp, and rejoice to the sound of the flute” (Job 21: 12).

They live well, they and their little children, who multiply and are sent forth like sheep without count; who spend their time joyfully dancing, while their parents play music on several instruments; and are never preoccupied with teaching their children to keep the way of the Lord -- as Abraham did with his children (Genesis 18: 19) -- but only with the enjoyment of temporal pleasures.

¹ Homilies on Philemon, 2.

² Homilies on Ephesians, 8.

St. John Chrysostom often warned parents against slothfulness in raising their children, revealed the extent of danger of this very serious sin, which he even calls '*a murder of children!*'

- ❖ The corruption of children does not come from void, but from the folly that often dwells upon their parents. Being only preoccupied with their earthly interests, while counting everything else as of little value, they become shamefully slothful in raising their children. I can honestly say (and let no one think that my words are spoken in anger), that these parents are actually worse than murderers; who only manage to separate the body from the soul; while these parents, through their slothfulness, end up casting both the bodies and souls of their children in hell. Death, according to the system of nature, is something imperative; but this other destiny could be avoided if the parents are not that slothful. Carnal death could end in a moment with the resurrection; while there is no reward for the lost soul that would never enjoy resurrection, but go through everlasting sufferings. Therefore, it could not be unjust to call these parents murderers of their children, as nothing could be equal to the value of the soul¹.

St. John Chrysostom

The wicked assume that they enjoy life through having a multitude of descendants, disregarding their behavior, their inner life, and their enjoyment of eternal glory. The righteous, on the other hand, feel that they, together with their household, are surrounded by a thin heavenly cloud of saints; have a fellowship with the early fathers, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, both those who departed or the ones contemporary to them; and even with the heavenly hosts. ... Their life is an incessant heavenly banquet, and an exalted joyful feast! ... Their hearts and thoughts turn into spiritual harps, played by the Holy Spirit, that make heaven and the heavenly creatures exult with songs of spiritual joy.

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave"
(Job 21: 13).

Despite that, they keep on their successful, and spend their days in prosperity, with no place in them for poverty or need. Yet, as a fruit of their wickedness, they, in a moment, and without prior notice, will go down to the grave. He probably means that, in their death, they may not suffer from serious or painful sickness; As the Psalmist says: ***"For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more. Indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more"*** (Psalm 37: 10); and as said by the wise Solomon: ***"When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, But the righteous has an everlasting foundation"*** (Proverbs 10: 25)

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the talk here does not necessarily imply the immediate fall of the wicked, their collapse, and their loss of temporal goods in a moment; but implies that, however long their life may be, what they enjoy is as though for a moment; As their whole life passes by in a moment, to find themselves before the divine Judge, having prepared for themselves a way to the pit; namely to the eternal Hades.

- ❖ Yes, O blessed 'Job', Having profusely described their life of pleasure, How would you now proclaim that they, in a moment, would go down to the grave; except because all that long time of their present life would be counted as only a moment, once the end is there.

¹ راجع مقاله عن "تنشئة الأطفال والمجد الباطل" في كتاب "الحب الأخوي".

3- THE WICKED SAY AND DO WRONG AGAINST GOODNESS:

“Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of your ways’” (Job 21: 14).

The wicked abuse all what they are given, of riches, authority, or success; and may go even further to challenge God Himself, and to reject His commandment. *“They say to God, ‘Depart from us’”*; not desiring to be disturbed by being all the time under His eyes; Or to let their fear from Him come in the way of their own thoughts. They feel no need for Him; and reject His knowledge, in which they find no pleasure; as it always tend to rebuke them on their behavior.

Concerning this the Lord Christ says: *“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come to the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed”* (John 3: 19, 20).

On the day of the Lord, He will give them their heart desire, saying to them: *“Depart from me”*, because I do not know you (Matthew 25: 41). Whoever does not bear to see God by faith here in this world, will not be able to see Him on the ultimate day of judgment.. *“They shall say to the mountains, ‘Cover us’, and to the hills, ‘Fall on us’”*, from the face of the One sitting on the throne (Hosea 10: 8; Luke 23: 30). *“They will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him”* (Zechariah 12: 10).

While the true believer will rejoice with all his being to see the One whom he coveted to encounter face to face (1 Corinthians 13: 12); the wicked, on the other hand, does not bear to stay before God, but his deeds would take him out into the outer darkness.

The wicked finds no pleasure in knowing the ways of God; And God, on His part, finds no pleasure in their ways. As the apostle says: *“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”* (2 Corinthians 6: 14).

❖ *“They say to God, ‘Depart from us’”*. Not even the foolish would dare to utter such words; and yet **all the wicked say it to God by their behavior, and not by their words**. Those who practice what is not according to the will of the Almighty God, are actually shutting themselves off from Him? As thinking about God’s commandments is entering of man into Him; Opposing His commandments is keeping God away from dwelling in the heart.

“For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways”. They actually do not care to have His knowledge.

The Truth says: *“As to that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself, or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few”* (Luke 12: 46, 47). Some choose not to know what they should do, with the assumption that they would then be beaten less!

However, not knowing is something; while choose not to know is something else. Some may want to know, yet they are not able to do; these do not know. But he who intentionally distances his ears away from the voice of the truth, so as not to know, Such a person is not ignorant, but slothful.

Now *“the Way”* of God is peace; humility, and longsuffering; But the wicked do not care for all that, and say: *“We do not desire the knowledge of Your ways”* (14).

They boast in haughtiness in this life; and they are swallowed by their love of honors, until they acquire them, disregarding the ways of God in the thoughts of their hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Whoever sits in the darkness of the night does not go after the sun light as long as he does not see it. But once dawn comes, and the splendor of the sun shines on him, he would right away go after it.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face”* (1 Corinthians 13: 12). That is how the angels see, those who are called ‘our angels’, meaning, that once we are saved from the power of the darkness, have the advance payment of the Spirit, and get into the kingdom of Christ, we shall then be referred to the angels¹.

St. Augustine

“Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?” (Job 21: 15).

In an unbecoming dare, they protest against Him, saying what Pharaoh once did: *“Who is the Lord that I should heed Him?”* (Exodus 5: 2). In God they see an unknown character, to whom some refer power; while, according to them, he profit them nothing; that is why they do not want to have anything to do with Him.

Looking at worship as a heavy burden, or as a kind of hard slavery, they say: *“that we should serve Him?”* They look at themselves as strong capable masters, who refuse submission; *“Why do My people say, ‘We are Lords; We will come no more to You?’”* (Jeremiah 2: 31).

They say: *“It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances?”* (Malachi 3: 14). There is no need to resort to God, and there is no profit in praying to Him, It is rather a waste of time and energy!

The wicked, although they may realize by their minds the might of God, and may know the possibility of His work in the life of men; Yet, through their enjoyment of, and their preoccupation with carnal pleasures in this world, they suppress their consciences, by claiming that God disregards the needs of humanity, and thus showing Him as though weak and helpless to support them. From another aspect, as the time for them is very precious for the sake of collecting riches and gaining temporal honors; any worship of God would be a waste of time. Beside all that, they keep on murmuring because God often postpones responding to their demands, in order to grant them according to His own divine thought, to acquire Him, as the Grantor of all gifts and goods!

- ❖ As man miserably directs his mind toward carnal pleasures, he does not go deep, and cannot think about the unseen. As it is written: *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’”* (Psalm 14: 1, 53: 1)

It often happens that men concentrate their goals on serving their fellow men, which they can see by their material eyes, rather than on serving God whom they cannot see. In all they are doing, they only extend their sight to what their eyes can reach; and being unable to reach God, they either despise serving Him, Or if they happen to start doing that, they become filled with anxiety.

But once what is seen is taken away from before them, their material eyes, although still open, yet they cannot see or comprehend they end up losing their feeling of patience, because He who dwells in them has forsaken them, and their bodies

¹ City of God, 22:29.

became empty The unseen Spirit that used to see through the windows of the body has already departed.

That is why, the unseen things, being better than the seen, It is befitting for all men to reach the right decision for their own sake; And by the (ladder) of meditation they should ascend to God, the unseen, yet continuing to be exalted and unrealized.

There are some who, although they have no doubt that God is there, and cannot be realized; yet they, instead of seeking Him, they only seek His outer gifts.

“What profit do we have if we pray to Him?” During praying, if God Himself is not the Object of our supplication, our minds would be instantly disturbed. ... **God longs to be Himself more sought than the things He has created; And that we should seek the eternal things and not the temporary ones; according to what is written: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6: 33).**

Pope Gregory the Great

“Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me” (Job 21: 16).

Not believing that what in their hand is a gift from God to them; and thinking that everything they have are their own doing, and the fruit of their labor, cleverness, and planning; they consequently close their hearts against their needy brethren, and count giving, as robbing them of their possessions which they have labored to collect.

❖ The rich usually imagine that he is not doing anything wrong, as long as he does not directly rob the poor; Yet his sin lies in not sharing his wealth with them. Keeping all of it to himself, is actually a kind of robbery, because all the riches, being from God, they are equally the possessions of everyone ... The proof of this is all around us.

Look at the nice fruits incessantly produced by the trees.

Look at the abundant crops annually given by the fertile soil.

Look at the sweet grapes that unfailingly give us wine to drink.

The rich may probably claim that, as long as they possess the land on which all these are produced, everything should be theirs. But as it is God, and no one else, who let the seed grow, mature and produce the fruits; the rich are committed to share the crop of their land with those working them, and with everyone in need¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Leave this same vain spirit to their descendants after them, ‘Job’ proclaims: **“The counsel of the wicked is far from me” (Job 21: 16).**

4- GOD’S LONGSUFFERING ON THE WICKED:

“How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, the sorrows God distributes in His anger?” (Job 21: 17).

Having spoken profusely about the success of the wicked in this world, ‘Job’ again wonders, saying: **“How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?”** Do not you see how, after the lamp keeps on burning, its element is exhausted, and is automatically put out?

How often do you see them come to their destruction? Or how often God, in His anger, brings pain on them?; Do not you see how their joy and prosperity rarely go on up to the inevitable end?

¹ ترجمة الدكتورة نورا العجمي.

- ❖ While the righteous usually die at the climax of his simplicity, and in complete authority over his will; the wicked, on the other hand, even when he is in the apex of his prosperity, with the fragrance of sweet perfumes coming out of him, his life will eventually ends in the bitterness of his soul; and he departs from this world without taking with him anything of the goods that he enjoyed, but taking only the wages of his evil¹.
- ❖ The blessed 'Job' answers, saying, 'Do not assume that, as God's strokes have not dwelt on you in this world, that you indefinitely, are going to keep on enjoying your pleasures; because ***"The lamp of the wicked (will be) put out"***'; Although it may continue shining for a certain time, Yet it bears no everlasting light.

And although the world usually favors such people, on account that they are actually fulfilling the will of the 'prince on this world' (See John 14: 30). Yet, once the turning moment of events comes, and the sorrows of the wrath of heaven finally dwell; the wicked will be sifted ***"like straw before the wind"***, and the righteous "like wheat". Listen to the words of the Lord to Peter, saying, ***"Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat, But I have prayed for you, that your faith would not fail"*** (Luke 22: 31, 32)².

St. Ambrose

The believer treasures the word of God, as the lamp that lightens the way for him, through which he crosses over to the bosom of the Father, to enjoy the glories on an eternal level. The wicked, on the other hand, sees in the riches, the authority, and the enjoyment of carnal pleasures, his lamp that would bring him over, not to the kingdom of light, but that leads him astray, and brings him over to the kingdom of darkness. And according to the apostle Paul, even Satan can appear like an angel of light, in order to deceive the believers, and to take them captives under his authority, to become the children of darkness.

Yet the deceits of the devil will never hold fast before the men of faith, but will scatter, and be put out like a lamp!

- ❖ The wicked often assumes that the earthly resources for him are like a great lamp of light; but once destruction dwells upon him, he would lose the riches that he loved more than himself.

Pope Gregory the Great

"They are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away" (Job 21: 18).

'Job' proclaims that his talk about the prosperity of the wicked does not mean that they are actually prospering; as they are ***"like straw before the wind, and like the chaff that the storm carries away"***. They are nothing; they are prone to destruction, which they will face in the climax of their glory and authority.

- ❖ When the wicked is seen in his might, with nothing that can control or oppose his violent works; the weak may think of him as strongly and hopelessly anchored in this world; Yet, once the firm verdict by the divine Judge is issued, ***"The wicked will be like straw before the wind, and like chaff (or ashes) that the storm carries away"***. In the sight of the Almighty God, the wicked is like chaff that may look green for a moment, then would eventually be put aside for eternal combustion, and would be carried away by the storm. About this it is written: ***"Our God shall come,***

¹ Duties of the Clergy 1:12:4.

² St. Ambrose: The Prayer of Job and David, 5: 17, 18.

and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him” (Psalm 50: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great

The wind which is indispensable for the fruition of the trees is the same wind that scatters the straw and carries away the chaff. What edifies the believer, would destroy the wicked!

The wind that refers to the Holy Spirit, by which the birth of the believers, as children of God in the water of Baptism, is realized; and by which they are renewed, to become truly the icon of Christ; is the same fiery Holy spirit, before which the thorns of sin cannot stand, but will be consumed.

“They say, ‘God lays up one’s iniquity for his children; Let Him recompense him, that he may know it” (Job 21: 19).

Although God sometimes let the wicked succeed; Yet they leave after them, an inheritance of failure for their children; who, together with the wealth, that came as a result of oppression and iniquity, they inherit curse and destruction.

To those who probably wonder: What is the guilt of children, to inherit the sorrowful evil after their fathers? We say:

1- God is not unjust to punish the children for the wickedness of their parents. The soul that errs will be the one to die. But God wishes for the repentance of the parents to store for their children the divine righteousness. We should not deny the impact that the life of the parents may have on their children: Some of the wicked had after them, saintly children, whose crowns were counted especially great, having not consummated the evil measures of their parents, but received God as their Father, and walked according to His Holy Spirit. There were, as well, wicked children who came out of saintly parents. Those had the holy life of their parents, a cause for a greater judgment on them.

2- God may warn the wicked against what would dwell upon their children because of their wickedness; on account of that man, even if he does not seem to care about what would dwell upon him; yet he would strongly grieve for what would dwell upon his children. That warning is meant therefore for the parents to repent for fear of the probable perdition of their children.

❖ We know that it is written: *“visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children, and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34: 7);* And that it is also written: *“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’. As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; **the life of the parent as well as the life of the child are mine; It is only the person who sins that shall die**” (Ezekiel 18: 2-4).* These two phrases, despite the difference in meaning between them, yet the listener’s mind should learn how to search carefully for a way of discernment.

Having inherited the serious old sin after our early parents; unless we are absolved from it by Baptism, We shall continue to carry them; on account that we are one with them.

Anyway, this could also be understood in another way: That he who continues to walk along the way of evil of his father, would also be bound to his sins. But he, who keeps himself away from the evil ways of his father, would not bear the weight of his sins.

Therefore a wicked son of a wicked father, would not only be committed to his own sins that he added, but also to those of his father; having, not only practiced his wicked works, which he knows that they offend God; but did not fear to add to them his own wickedness; By which it is well said: “*to the third and the fourth generation*”; As it is possible, to the third and the fourth generation, for the children who testify to the life of their parents, and follow their lead; to have the wrath extend even to them.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*Let his eyes see his destruction, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty*” (Job 21: 20).

The wicked, having intentionally closed his eyes, so as not to see the grace of God; and having kept his insight not open to His mercies; he filled his cup by his rebellion and disobedience.

The wicked oftentimes closes his eyes to what would dwell upon him or upon his children because of his wickedness; but he will surely open them on the day of the Lord, to see his eternal perdition dwelling upon him. He will drink from the wrath of the Almighty, as a portion of his cup, which he filled during the days of his sojourn in the world.

- ❖ If man, during his presence in this life, opens his eyes on his sin, he would not later on “*drink of the wrath of the Almighty*” (20). But he, who turns his eyes here, away from seeing his iniquity, would not avoid the ultimate judgment.

Pope Gregory the Great

God, in many ways, calls on us to enjoy the enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, to open our eyes to see the evils that have corrupted our beings; while seeing, at the same time, the exalted work of the Almighty God, to the forgiveness of sins, and the enjoyment of the unity with Him.

If we see our perdition while we are still in this world, we would escape to God Himself, who, alone, is capable of keeping us from the eternal wrath. Whereas he who does not intend to realize the truth of his evils, would fill his cup with the divine wrath, to drink from it on the great day of the Lord.

“*For what does he care about his household after him, when the number of his months is cut off*” (Job 21: 21).

Although ‘Job’ has spoken in length about the prosperity and success of some wicked; Yet he makes it clear that this success, even if it extends all their days on earth; Yet they would only be counted as few months; After which he, all of a sudden, would open his eyes, to find himself fallen under the divine wrath.

In the proverb of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 25), the Lord Christ revealed to us how the rich man, while in torment in Hades, worried about his household, when he realized that his riches that he enjoyed his whole life on earth, could not cool his tongue; And his grief got doubled when he realized that his own five brothers would follow in his steps.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the wicked, even in the coming world, would not forget his household; The Lord Himself told us about the rich man who lifted up his eyes while in Hades, to ask for the sake of his five brothers (Luke 16: 25-28). Yet that supplication, being much too late, did not benefit them.

Our duty – being bearers of the Lord Jesus – the Source of joy – is to be joyful, and be the cause of joy to our household. As if we rejoice here in our Christ dwelling in us, heaven would rejoice in us, and so would many; to become like members in an

almost heavenly family, whose feature is the true joy. Then, even after coming out of this world, we would keep asking for the sake of our households; which we practically notice when we see the saints in paradise asking for the sake of the joy of the whole world through their return to God, and their enjoyment of the divine joy.

5- THE WICKED AND THE DIVINE CARE:

“Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He judges those who are on high” (Job 21: 22).

No man can realize the knowledge of the divine Judge of heaven and earth; ... He who judges the fallen angels and humans on the Day of Judgment; ... Whose ordinances are far from being searched, and His ways from being investigated. He alone can decide whether the wicked would succeed here on earth; and whether his success would extend or fail to the end of his days. By His divine wisdom, He would ordain what man cannot realize. Since we are unable to realize God’s knowledge, wisdom, and plans; we then, have no right to judge any man, whether he is righteous or wicked, through the troubles that dwell upon him, or the temporal blessings he enjoys. Instead of judging our brethren, we should rather love them and pray for the sake of their spiritual edification and growth, and for the sake of their repentance; So that God may grant us, together with them, a true repentance, and a true spiritual growth.

❖ The ordinances of the Almighty God on us, are both very secret, and are never unjust. But if we lift the (inner) eyes of our minds up to the high places, we would see that we have nothing to complain about, concerning the justice. The Almighty God, discerning the worthiness of the angels, have set some of them to dwell in an eternal light without falling; Whereas He let some others fall, through their own will, from their well-established high positions, to the wrath of eternal judgment God does amazing things, beyond our comprehension; and It is obvious that He ordains all what concern us with His perfect knowledge.

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“One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and secure” (Job 21: 23).

God alone is the One who decides whether someone would die while in temporal peace and vain glory, despite being consistent on his sins; while another would die in bitter sufferings, and in misery; when both of them are going to encounter each other in the outer darkness.

The wicked may die in the perfection and the fullness of his strength, without sickness or frailty, ***“wholly at ease and secure”***; not fearing death, because he never get to think about it nor anticipate it.

The Word of God came to us incarnate, and dwelt among us, to grant us His true peace, and the advance payment of the glory that He has set for us since the foundation of the world; Peace and glory that could fulfill the soul; not like the false peace and the vain glory of the world, that would deceive man just for a moment then go away.

Here, it is befitting for us to seek the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, to be able to discern the kind of peace we are already in; as there are several kinds of peace:

a- Peace that deceives the wicked who drink iniquity like water, and foolishly say: ‘As there is neither God nor judgment, ***“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”***’ (1 Corinthians 15: 32).

b- Peace that comes with friendships and fellowships with others; like partaking of their joyful and sorrowful occasions; but not preoccupying ourselves with

the salvation of their souls and of ours. This peace is only temporary; on which the Lord Christ says: *“Peace I leave with you”* (John 14: 27); As though He says: ‘This kind of peace, I will not take away from you, but will leave with you; to be sanctified by My peace that I will grant you’.

c- The divine peace promised to us by the Lord Christ: *“My peace I give you”* (John 14: 27); A divine gift, we enjoy through our fellowship with Him, His dwelling among us, and our perpetual companionship throughout the journey of our life. *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28; 20).

“His pails are full of milk, And the marrow of his bones is moist” (Job 21: 24).

This is interpreted by some as “His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moist with marrow”; And in the interpretation of the Jesuits it came as: “Fat covers his forehead; and moistens his bones”; Meaning that he is in good health, with strong body, has no care for anything but to live a long life with joy and pleasure, and His hopes in this life are broad, until death comes suddenly on him! They probably challenge death within themselves, as though it is far from becoming their portion.

Job’s friends look at him as someone who has lost all his riches, honors, and possesses; and counts this as an indication of his evil. They assume that he is going through a great inner need; and is suffering a void that could never be filled. As for him, on the other hand, he sees many wicked who are rich, with temporal authority and honor; Who count their (breasts) as full of milk, like a mother nourishing her suckling infant with the milk of her breast; And their bones as moist with vitality, and would never get dry. These feelings that prevail on such wicked people, originate from their temporary riches and vain honor; until the divine Judge comes, when they will realize that they were in a dream that came to an end.

There is a great difference between the (milk) that comes from the temporary riches, and the (bones) filled with power and vitality, because of temporal honors, on the one hand; and the unfeigned (milk) provided by God to His children through His life-giving word, and the strong bones granted by His grace, that will make the believer as steadfast as a rock that no wind of this world would shake; on the other hand.

❖ **“His body organs will be covered with fat and his bones moist with marrow” (24).** As fat comes from excess of food; so is pride that comes from an abundance of goods; both of them would cover the mind with the fat of an abundance of riches; and the spirit with arrogance.

There may be some who, although lacking the necessary means to acquire riches in this world, yet they covet them; and seek to be glorified. Despite feeling helpless to get what they covet, on account of the fact that they have neither wealth nor honor to support their wicked lust, yet their inner conscience proclaims their weakness before the divine Judge

Notice that, because, for the same reason, the rich rejoices with an arrogant heart, It is well said: **“They lie down alike in the dust, and worms cover them” (Job 21: 26).**

However, the blessed ‘Job’ neither got proud when he had the riches; nor anxiously coveted it when it was taken away from him; Or perished, because of his outer losses.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Another man dies in the bitterness of his soul, Never having eaten with pleasure” (Job 21: 25).

He who dies after passing through bitter sufferings and miserable condition, would encounter with the one who spent the moment of his passing away from this world in temporal riches and glories. No riches, glories, or even sufferings could save the wicked on that day, as long as they did not return to the Lord.

God may allow for some wicked to have temporal blessings until their last breath in this world, to motivate them to present a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Grantor of gifts, to return to Him, and to enjoy a fellowship with Him. He may also allow for some others to suffer, to spare their souls from getting attached to the love of temporal things, and to make them long for crossing over to God, to enjoy the glory He has set for His beloved ones. But unfortunately, there are many who neither benefit from the gifts, nor learn from the sufferings!

Temporal blessings would make God’s children offer incessant sacrifices of thanksgiving; and the sufferings would justify them in receiving them as a fellowship of passion together with their Savior.

“They lie down alike in the dust, and worms cover them” (Job 21: 26).

In the grave, the healthy would encounter with the sick, and the rich with the poor. If a wicked man dies in a palace, and another in a cottage, they would together join the congregation of the dead; and their portion would be the fruit of their wickedness; namely, the worms which would never die, and the fire that would never be put out.

- ❖ As the joy of the wicked would deliver them to woe; And the woe of the righteous would bring them over from grief to joy; It is thus not befitting for the soul to be lifted up by the riches, nor to be disturbed by the poverty. The blessed ‘Job’, in the midst of his material losses, did not receive any harmful thoughts; While those who despised him, while being under the strikes of the rod, he rebuked, saying: ***“Look, I know your thoughts” (27).***
- ❖ How could the outer losses harm the one who did not lose the God he loved inside him?!

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6- THE WICKED AND THE ETERNAL PERDITION:

“Look, I know your thoughts and the schemes with which you would wrong me” (Job 21: 27).

Once again, ‘Job’ admonishes his friends, saying to them that he knows that they are holding fast to their point of view that tribulations would chase the wicked. He says to his friends: I know you will not accord with me; and I also know your intention toward me. How can I convince you, when you are so prejudiced against me? By listening to their talk, ‘Job’ realized their intentions; and felt that debating with them is futile.

- ❖ ***“Look, I know your thoughts and the schemes with which you would wrong me” (27).*** And as it is written: *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2: 11) ... Yet, the spirit of man would not be known to others, unless it is revealed by words or deeds; as it is also written: *“by their fruits you will know them”* (Matthew 7: 20). What is inside is revealed by what happens outside; according to Solomon’s words: *“As water*

reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man (or, as it comes in King James' version : (is reflected to the wise)) (Proverbs 27: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

“For you say, ‘Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?’” (Job 21: 28).

It is as though he says to them: I know you will answer me, saying: ‘Where is the house of the oppressor? Where is the tent of the wicked? And by this you mean me as the oppressor and my children as the wicked’.

If we exclude the evil intention of Job's friends, and their exhaustive attempts to disrupt his person; what they say truly applies to the oppressor and mighty princes who, even if they live their whole life in riches, honor and authority, they will eventually die and return to their dusts. Then, it will be well said: *“Where is the house of the prince”*, who assumes that the whole world is his well-established house, on which he prevails and control, as though he lives forever, and nobody is capable of driving him out of it, nor of pulling it down?! All along the generations, a multitude of princes, who counted themselves as gods, died, became dust, and their kingdoms were utterly destroyed. In ignorance, they lived in this world, as though in an unstable tent; and behold, their tents are wiped out, and with them their own authority.

❖ About the wicked, after they die, it is said: ***“Where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?”*** If we look carefully at this, Can you deny that there is recompense by the divine Justice? The heart of the righteous will be overwhelmed with joy; while that of the wicked, by misery. The former, by his own testimony, is innocent of guilt; while the later is guilty. The former is happy with his departure from the world; while the later is sad. Who can vindicate the guilty in the eyes of his own conscience? It is said: ***“Where is the cover of his tent?”***; ***“His memory will be no more”*** (See Job 21: 28). The life of the wicked is no more than a dream; even the comfort in which they live here, is but an illusion; they are already in hell; as they go down to Hades while still living¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ The weak covet success in this world; fear the probable strikes; and get offended by the punishment of those they see stricken.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Have you not asked those who travel the road? And do you not accept their testimony?” (Job 21: 29).

“For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; They shall be brought out on the day of wrath” (Job 21: 30).

Because ‘Job’ knows for sure that any debate with those who bear no true and faithful intention, is futile; he seeks from them to ask any impartial person; even to ask those who travel the road!

He does not say, *‘Ask the holy ones’*, as Eliphaz did (Job 5: 1); the matter does not even need their experience, but is well known to all men: that the wicked would not necessarily meet their recompense here in this world; But it may probably be postponed until the great day of the Lord. ***“When all the workers of iniquity flourish, It is that they may be destroyed forever”*** (Psalm 92: 7).

By his call to ask those who travel the road, ‘Job’ probably means, to look for anyone who realizes the truth of this temporal life; that it is just a road for passing by;

¹ *Duties of the Clergy, 1:12:44.*

he would surely utter the truth in wisdom and honesty; Man's realization of this fact, would grant him an actual, wise, and true judgment of the temporal life, as well as the coming eternal one.

- ❖ He calls him, ***“One who travels the road”*** (29); he who puts in his mind that his present life is just ‘a road’ and not ‘a home’; who counts it a lowly thing to have in his heart to covet such a passing-by state; and who longs, not to continue being preoccupied with such temporary things, but to reach with his heart to the eternal world.

Seeking the glory of heavenly meditation, **Moses** said: *“I must turn aside and look at this great sight”* (Exodus 3: 3). As unless man draws his feet away from the love of this world, he would not be able to comprehend the exalted things.

And supplicating for the grief of his heart, to be taken into consideration, **Jeremiah** says: *“All you who pass by, Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me”* (Lamentations 1: 12). As those who pass by through this present life, not as though it is just a road; but consider it their home, would not have the experience to behold and see, with the eyes of the mind, the sorrow of the hearts of the elect; whom the prophet Jeremiah beseech to behold and see his sorrow!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Who condemns his way to his face? And who repays him for what he has done?” (Job 21: 31).

The wicked embraces a kind of dare and might; and does whatever he likes unopposed, with nobody to confront, to rebuke, to punish for his deeds, or to put terror in his heart. Yet it is going to be according to what the wise Solomon says: *“The complacency of fools will destroy them”* (Proverbs 1: 32); those who count themselves above the law; whom nobody can provoke to repentance, and to return to the true God.

Pope Gregory the Great noticed that Job's talk changed from the plural tense, by which he refers to the human race, who turned to be member's of the body of the devil; to the singular sense, by which he refers to the devil, being the head of the wicked. The same way the believers are the members of the body of Christ, the Holy Head, the wicked are likewise, the members of the body of the devil, the wicked head.

- ❖ ***“Who condemns his way to his face? And who repays him for what he has done?”*** (31). Talking about the wicked as a whole, ‘Job’ abruptly turns his words to the head of all the wicked. At the end of the world, he sees Satan enter into a man, called by the Holy Book ‘the anti-Christ’, and supports him to exalts himself haughtily, by miracles and wonders, to reveal false signs of sanctity, that no man can dare to rebuke him or to ***“condemn his ways to his face”***; except only for Elijah, Enoch, and all the elect, who would have the authority, not by their own power, but by the divine grace, and with God's help; to despise him, about whom it is said: *“Whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming”* (2 Thessalonians 2: 8).

“Who repays him for what he has done?” Who else, indeed, but the Lord who alone will recompense that cursed man for what he has done, by an everlasting judgment?

Pope Gregory the Great

“Yet he is carried to the grave, And a vigil is kept over the tomb” (Job 21: 32).

Although the wicked knows for sure that he is going to die like anybody else; Yet he makes great plans for himself even after his death: He sets a memorial on his tomb, and makes preparations for a great funeral procession!

While many wicked preoccupy themselves with temporal honors even after their departure from this world, caring for their dead bodies, for magnificent graves, and for an elaborate vigil in their memory; The righteous, on the other hand, are only preoccupied with setting forth to meet Christ, the heavenly Groom; which, for them, is far better than anything else that may seem of value!

❖ ***“He is carried to the grave; and a vigil is kept over (a heap of dead bodies)” (32).***

In the world, there is a scarcity of good people and a multitude of the wicked; described well as: “a heap of dead bodies”. *“For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it”* (Matthew 7: 13). Satan keeps a vigil over a heap of dead bodies, through practicing the deceits of his evil in the hearts of the children of perdition.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The clods of the valley shall be sweet for him; everyone shall follow him, as countless have gone before him” (Job 21: 33).

Referring to the representative of Satan; the evil anti-Christ who sets himself as god in the temple of the Lord, ‘Job’ sees him only as just a dead man who turns into dust and ashes.

By saying: *“The clods of the valley shall be sweet for him”*, ‘Job’ considers that, as far as the anti-Christ is concerned, having forced himself on the divine glory; counted himself as eternal; persecuted and rebelled against the church of the Lord Christ, his death and his return to the dust would be better for him than his life!

He also probably refers to how the wicked prepares everything concerning embalming his body, and pouring perfumes over his corpse, although he is of no more value than the clods of the valley in which he is buried! To how he learns no lesson from death; And to how he does not take into consideration, that he would not be the only one to confront death; countless have preceded him, and countless will follow! All with no exception will die!

❖ ***All men follow him, And a countless throng goes before him (job 21:33)*** In this place, the word "person" means a taste of things human... The old enemy enters the human loss; pull each body who find them under the luminous of his dominion.

Pope Gregory the Great

“How then can you comfort me with empty words, since falsehood remains in your answers?” (Job 21: 34).

Again ‘Job’ goes back to the plural tense; to say that what would dwell upon the wicked of destruction and perdition, would not relieve them of the judgment; and that claiming their intention to comfort those who suffer, is vain!

‘Job’ rejects their debate and their proofs, that originate from unfaithful hearts, and bear the spirit of betrayal to friendship; and refuses their claims as vain that concentrate on his repentance, as a way to enjoy a probable return to the state of prosperity that he had before the tribulations dwelt upon him.

There is no place for the comfort which originates from hearts that bear no love.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the debates of those friends have caused him more pain; and, instead of bandaging his wounds, they increased their inflammation. On one aspect, the righteous man suffered; not on account of their

accusations, but rather because of their lack of loyalty, unfaithfulness, and betrayal of the old friendship, that used to be between them.

He felt more bitterness, because he loves the truth, and longs for the salvation of everyone. The smell of the sin of death that comes out of their depths makes his soul moan over their perdition.

❖ ***“How then can you comfort me, When your responses show as being against the truth?” (34).*** Job’s friends, accordingly, could not comfort him. By calling him a hypocrite or wicked, they commit the sin of lying; besides adding to the troubles and wounds of that righteous man. The minds of holy men, being submitted to the truth, suffer because of the deceit of others. Being strongly convinced of the seriousness of the crime of vanity, they hate, not only to do it themselves, but also to see it done by others.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 21

MY SOUL TREMBLES FOR THE PERDITION OF THE WICKED

- ❖ There are many who are preoccupied with wondering: Why does God let the wicked prosper in their ways?
As for me, what preoccupies me more is their eternity!
Yes, the wicked may prosper and flourish!
They may enjoy having positions of power!
That makes them feel as though secure!
That they are above the law!
And that everything around them grant them comfort and peace!
- ❖ My soul grieves, not because of their success;
But because they despise the longsuffering of God;
Because they count serving Him a waste of their time and energy; and,
Because they assume that their life is not in the hands of the Almighty!
I expect their lamp to be put out all of a sudden.
- ❖ My heart moans; seeing them like straw before the wind!
And like chaff before the storm!
When their life comes to an end, like a passing moment;
Their tents will utterly collapse.
- ❖ I wonder how they will stand before the throne of judgment!
How miserable they will be; having lost the glory!
How they will ask the mountains to fall over them;
And the hills to cover them!
Together with the prophet Jeremiah, I cry out, saying:
“My heart is faint in me”
“Wax is dissolved in me”
“My evil only gives me a temporary pleasure, followed by destruction of my whole being”

CHAPTER 22

The second round of debate can be summarized as follows:

Friend	His point of view	Chapter	Job's response	Chapter
Aliphaz	God is pure; He destroys the wicked	15	But I am innocent	16 – 17
Bildad	God' judges uprightly and If He judges uprightly, destroys the wicked	18	He will vindicate me	19
Zophar	Prosperity of the wicked Prosperity of some of them Is short-termed	20	lasts till the end in this world	21

START OF THE THIRD ROUND OF DEBATE A PROGRAM FOR THE WAY OF REPENTANCE

In this chapter, Eliphaz attacks 'Job' for the third time; followed by Bildad; whereas Zophar takes no more part.

Unfaithfully, Job's friends gave his words a twisted interpretation; Having made it clear to them that the wicked do not necessarily fail in this world, and may often succeed and grow in power and authority, until perdition dwells upon the in the coming world; They still twist his words; count him insulting God's plan and care and complaining against God's ordinances.

In the third debate, only Eliphaz, with his deep religious experience, could talk with profusion. His attack against 'Job' in his last two talks would be considered relatively moderate; but here, he talks about specific sins.

Eliphaz diverting the significance of Job's attempts to defend himself before God accuses Job of assuming that the unseen God, either cannot manifest Himself, or does not wish to do. Comparing 'Job' to the wicked people in the days of the great flood (15-16), Eliphaz asks him to repent.

In his attempt to interpret the reasons behind Job's sufferings, Eliphaz claims that his goodness was not intended to seek God's pleasure, as much as giving God a favor!

Being perfect in Himself, It would not benefit God to reveal that 'Job' is wicked or righteous. The secret behind Job's sufferings therefore, would not be in God, but is rather in 'Job' himself (2-5).

Eliphaz confirms that Job suffers because of his sins. According to him, because 'Job' used to harass the one in debt, the poor, the weak, and the hungry; and to disregard the widows and the fatherless; all those tribulations dwelt upon him. And in an attempt to prove that the wicked would ultimately perish, he mentions two famous examples in history; namely, the great flood in the days of Noah; and the devastation by fire and

brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah. And to bring comfort and pleasure to the righteous, God sent all those calamities on 'Job' (10-11).

He finally incites 'Job' to follow reason, and seek reconciliation with God, in order to get back the days of relief and happiness (21-30). Some believe that Eliphaz, is doing his best to bring peace to Job's soul; that what he says concerning God is correct; and that his present talk is considerably better, compared to his past cruelty. On one aspect, by introducing the horrible end of the wicked, he hopes that 'Job' would fear and repent. And on another, by referring to the happiness that would come to the righteous, he intends to comfort and encourage him to repent; which is a sound way and a good counsel, in order to get the following benefits:

a. To grow in wealth; to get abundant temporal blessings; and the Almighty God would come to his defense.

b. To get rich in spiritual blessings; and the best of all is to enjoy the Almighty God Himself.

c. To get a perpetual fellowship with God; and to enjoy an abundance of joy and hope, even in his difficult days.

A program for a way of repentance:

Finally, Eliphaz provides us with a living portrait of a program for a way of repentance, with both its positive and negative aspects; according to the principle, saying: ***“Depart from evil, and do good”*** (Psalm 34: 14). Disregarding his real intentions against the righteous 'Job', we shall find that he clarifies the necessity of acknowledging the sins and of confessing the iniquities; together with returning to God, and enjoying a fellowship with Him. He actually introduces a magnificent and beautiful portrait of the blessings of repentance.

1- Accusing 'Job' of criticizing the ordinances of God	1 – 4
2- Accusing 'job' of being dangerously wicked	5
3- Accusing 'Job' of brutality	6
4- Accusing 'Job' of opposing the work of goodness	7
5- Accusing 'Job' of partiality	8
6- Accusing 'Job' of insulting the widows and of crushing the fatherless	9
7- Accusing 'Job' of setting snares all around him	10-11
8- Accusing 'Job' of practical atheism	12– 14
9- Comparing Job's ways to those of the wicked men of the old world	15– 20
10- Repentance is to acquaint oneself with God	21
11- Repentance is a personal enjoyment of God's word	22
12- Repentance is a return to the Almighty God	23
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17- By repentance we can intercede on behalf of our brethren	30

1- Accusing 'job' of criticizing the ordinances of god:

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: ‘Can a man be of benefit to God’ (Job 22: 1).

“Can even the wisest be of benefit to himself?” (Job 22: 2)

Job’s three friends, finding no sin to hold against him, have already accused him of hypocrisy; they assumed that he must be a hypocrite, who secretly practice evil; and that the sign of his hypocrisy is the successive tribulations that God has brought upon him. Now Eliphaz is introducing a series of new charges, through distorting Job’s words during the debate, and interpreting them according to their point of view. The first of these charges is that ‘Job’ is criticizing and complaining against God’s ordinances, and is accusing God of injustice; which is a vain and an unjust accusation.

If we put aside the intention of Eliphaz to accuse ‘Job’, we find that his talk may bear some true aspect; namely, that God is not in need of man’s goodness; That all the benefit would come to man, who is the object of God’s love, interest, and care; And that wisdom is for the edification of man; and its source is God.

“Wisdom helps one to succeed” (Ecclesiastes 10: 10); “Godliness is profitable for all things” (1 Timothy 4: 8); and “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself” (proverbs 9: 12).

❖ **“Could man be compared to God; even if he has a perfect knowledge¹?” (2).** Those who reach the lowest level, vainly accusing others, and contradicting the words of truth; would sometimes resort to say things which are well known to everyone; Lest, in case they say nothing, they may look as though defeated in debate. That was the way, Eliphaz behaved!

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ A wicked man only scoffs himself; and “*he alone will bear it*” (Proverbs 9: 12). He is always depressed; his thought are always complicated; whether concerning what he hears or what he says; and always intends to accuse others².

St. John Chrysostom

“Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?” (Job 22: 3)

Man in his weakness, and with his limitations, could not be of any benefit to God, who is the whole perfection, and to whom nothing would be added. Would a candle be of any benefit to the sun? Or would a drop of water add anything to the ocean?!

If our ways become completely blameless, could they benefit the Almighty God; And what would be His pleasure, if we are righteous? He is the source of peace, beatitude, and joy. And if He tells us in our human language, that He finds pleasure in us, It would only be to reveal His love for us, and His longing for our salvation and glory; which would not benefit Him in any way!

❖ **“Would it be of any benefit to God if you are righteous; Or is it gain to Him if you make your ways blameless³?” (3).** In case we do, it would be for our own benefit; That is why it is said: “O my soul, you have said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; My goodness is nothing apart from you’” (Psalm 16: 2). He is indeed our Lord; And He is surely in no need of anyone to serve Him; Any goodness presented to Him does not

² Homilies on Acts, homily 7.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

³التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

benefit Him, but would benefit those who present it. He will say when He comes for judgment: “Just as you did it to any one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25: 40); which He says in exalted compassion for the members of His body.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If He does not love us, why did he create us? Does He need us? Do we provide Him with any service that He needs? Listen to what the prophet says: “*You are my Lord; My goodness is nothing apart from You*” (psalm16:2)¹.
- ❖ He is in no need for our services, the way masters need of their servants; Our works would return to us for our own benefit; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*My goodness is nothing apart from You*” (Psalm 16: 2). Tell me: Would it be of any benefit to God if I am righteous, Or would it do Him any harm if I am wicked? His nature is incorruptible; would never be harmed; and is above any suffering².

St. John Chrysostom

“Is it for your piety that He reproveth you, and enters into judgment with you?”
(Job 22: 4)

When God reproveth us, to make us pious, He does not do that because of any harm done to Him; But, as a Father, He wants us to enter into a fellowship with Him, and to become a living icon of Him; for our own benefit. And when He enters into judgment with us; It would be to give us a chance to debate with Him, to feel His condescending love, and His care for our salvation.

- ❖ ***“Would He reprove or enter into judgment with you, out of fear from you³?”*** (4). Who would be so foolish to think so?! Yet those who, like Eliphaz, do not know how to measure their words, would descend to such level of vain talk,

Pope Gregory the Great

2- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF BEING DANGEROUSLY WICKED:

“Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end?” (Job 22: 5)

The three friends, every now and then, hinted their accusations to ‘Job’; But now, for Eliphaz it is not any more a time for hinting, but for a straightforward confrontation. He pleads to Job’s conscience, to condemn himself, not just as a hypocrite, but as one of great wickedness and of endless iniquity! It is as though he says to him: ‘My language does not help me anymore to portray your horrible wickedness’!

- ❖ ***“Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end?”*** (5). Notice how, from a dead heart, such vain words emerge; how words develop into horrible lies and slanders; and how an uncontrolled tongue unceasingly slide into such a deeper level!

Pope Gregory the Great

3- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ WITH BRUTALITY:

“For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothes” (Job 22: 6)

¹ Homilies on Ephesians, homily 19.

² Homilies on 1 Timothy, homily 16.

³ التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

Here, Eliphaz goes so far to portray 'Job' as a brutal person who knows no mercy, and lacks any human feeling. He does not only take pawns from his neighbor as a surety to pay what he owes him, but takes him personally, and keeps him as a humiliated and a captivated slave!

In a painful and a dangerous exaggeration, he portrays 'Job', as someone who strips the naked of his clothes! Namely, instead of covering his nakedness to keep him warm; or even disregarding his pitiful condition, he strips him of his scant clothes!

Eliphaz here, accuses 'Job' of breaking both the natural law, and the Mosaic law (Exodus 22: 26; Deuteronomy 24: 13); that forbids taking someone as a (pawn), putting him in prison, until he pays his debt, Or stripping him of his clothes!

To portray him in a more horrible way, he accuses him of doing what he does, not only to a stranger, but to a neighbor, a member of his own family or race!

However, Eliphaz did not mention the names of any specific person against whom 'Job' has committed such a violent act. If that claim was true, God would not call him an "upright" man.

❖ ***"For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing" (6).*** In the Holy Book, the word "*pledge*" (pawn or deposit), is used to refer to the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and sometimes to the confession of sin. It is used to refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as according to the apostle Paul: "*He gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit*" (2 Corinthians 1: 22). We are given the deposit, as a confirmation of the promise given to us. The gift of the Holy Spirit is called a "pledge" or a "deposit", when our souls are strengthened through the confirmation of the inner hope.

The word "pledge" is also used to refer to the confession of sin; as it is written in the law: "If your neighbor becomes indebted to you,, and you took something from him in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down" Exodus 22: 26). Our neighbor becomes indebted, when he sins against his fellow creature. We call sins "debts" (Matthew 18; 32); and in the Lord's Prayer, we say every day: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6: 12).

❖ ***"And stripped the naked of their clothing" (6).*** How could they be referred to as naked, then they are stripped? It is necessary to know, that he who enjoys the purity of heart and mind, is considered as "naked" of the robe of deception (with two faces). Among heretics, there are some who truly have such purity of heart and mind, to be considered in this sense as "naked"; and yet they hold fast to corrupt dogmas in their teachings.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- ACCUSING 'JOB' OF OPPOSING THE WORK OF GOODNESS:

"You have not given the weary water to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry" (Job 22: 7)

After portraying 'Job' as a brutal human being, who enslaves his neighbor, and strips the naked of clothing he does not have; he further portrays him as someone with no feelings; who gives no water to the weary; although water is a common human possession. And in case he sees somebody giving bread to the hungry, he forbids him of

doing such a work of mercy. Namely he does not himself do well; and does not let others do it.

❖ ***“You have not given water to the weary, and you have withheld bread from the hungry¹”*** (7). Even the heretics give water to the weary, when they present the cup of their heresies to those who are under their earthly burdens.

They consider themselves not withholding bread from the hungry, when they miserably respond with pride and boldness, even when asked about things unseen and un-comprehended; and when they present themselves as more learned than anyone else.

The holy church, on the other hand, on seeing someone hungry for something that she knows is not for his own benefit; She would either respond with preservation; Or would humbly admit not to know the answer; preaching her children *“not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly”* (Romans 12: 3). By that, the holy church keeps those of limited capacities from going deep into serious issues beyond their natural comprehension.

Pope Gregory the Great

5- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF PARTIALITY:

“The powerful possess the land, and the favored live in it” (Job 22: 8)

After distorting the image of ‘Job’, showing him as a dangerous wicked man, with iniquities of no end, brutal, enslaves his neighbor, does not practice goodness, and keep others from practicing it; he accuses him now of partiality, who would not mind If someone rich or great commits an oppression.

❖ ***“...You should observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality”*** (1 Timothy 5; 21). **When you judge people, do not look at faces;** do not preoccupy your mind beforehand with anyone; or take sides²!

St. John Chrysostom

❖ We should always have love for our neighbor; should do nothing with partiality; And, as ministers of God. should love the poor, and visit them³.

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ ***“For where envy and self-seeking exists, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy”*** (James 3: 16, 17). What blessing would man gain, if he prays seeking this wisdom from the Lord⁴?

St. Augustine

6- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF INSULTING THE WIDOWS AND CRUSHING THE FATHERLESS:

“You have sent widows away empty-handed, And the arms of the fatherless you have crushed” (Job 22: 9)

This charge is particularly serious, counted as being directed against God Himself. Even before the divine law, It was probably realized by believers through the law of

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Homilies on 1 Timothy, homily 16.

³ Concerning Virginity, attributed to him, chapter 12.

⁴ Grace and Free Will, ch. 46 (24).

nature, or tradition along the generations, that whoever despises the widow, or crushes the arms of the fatherless, would put himself in an awkward position with “*the Judge of the widows, and the Father of the fatherless*”, as God was called in the Old Testament.

This charge also bears a symbol of the heretics, like the Gnostics, who refrain from marriage, as being defilement, and from eating certain food created by God, like meat, as being unclean (1 Timothy 4: 5); Intending by that to break down the sanctity of marriage, to defile the good creation of God; to turn the souls into widows, who lost their heavenly Groom – our Lord Jesus Christ; to take away from them their rejoice and joy of the Spirit, and their fellowship with the Savior; Beside depriving men of the heavenly food of angels; to become like orphans with broken arms, not strong enough to practice the spiritual duties.

Then came our Lord Christ to bring us back from our state of widowhood and orphan hood; have become for us the spiritual Groom and the heavenly Father. Whereas the devil is working through his wicked disciples to bring us back to those states.

7- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF SETTING SNARES ALL AROUND HIM:

“Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you” (Job 22: 10)

This is a new charge; that it was befitting for ‘Job’ to refrain from complaining of what has dwelt upon him, as being the fruit of injustice on the part of God against his person; As all those tribulations, according to Eliphaz, are the fruit of the snares, he has set around himself, by his oppression of others; and his disregard of the poor, the widows, and the fatherless; All his troubles are the fruit of the works he himself has practiced!

Pope Gregory the Great believes that a similar accusation is directed by the heretics against the church along all the generations. Claiming that they alone know and enjoy the truth; they despise the true believers who practice the daily repentance, that they are vainly terrorizing themselves, and are setting for themselves deadly snares.

❖ **“Therefore, snares are all around you; and sudden terror overwhelms you” (10).**

That is how the heretics see the believing congregation, that they are setting snares all around them!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Or darkness so that you cannot see; and an abundance of water covers you”
(Job 22: 11)

Here, Eliphaz refers blindness to ‘Job’: That before the tribulations dwelt upon him, he has been in darkness, and having set snares all around himself, he fell into them, and could not set himself free. Temptations are pouring like waterfalls over him, and nothing would save him out of them.

❖ **“And you think that you have not seen darkness, and that you have not been swept by raging waters” (11).** Here Eliphaz calls the temptations and sorrows ‘raging waters’; that go forth, one after the other like one group of successive waves of the sea.

Pope Gregory the Great

8- ACCUSING ‘JOB’ OF PRACTICAL ATHEISM:

“Is not God high in the heavens? And see the highest stars, how lofty they are?”
(Job 22: 12)

This is another vain accusation by Eliphaz against 'Job', of which he is definitely innocent; That, although he claims to be religious, and offers sacrifices for the sake of his children, Yet he practices practical atheism!

According to Eliphaz, Although 'Job' believes that God is there in the high heavens, above all stars; Yet he is practically atheistic! How? That although God is there, Yet He is too high in heavens to care for men, or to preoccupy Himself with their sins, or with their righteousness! That human life as a whole, does not preoccupy God's mind! With such a belief; and having no fear of God, 'Job', according to Eliphaz, has given himself the right to practice many great evils and equities without end!

How did Eliphaz discover that practical atheism of the righteous 'Job'?

Having been unable to present particular names of those against whom he claims that 'Job' has done oppression and injustice; Eliphaz, with the assumption that he is knowledgeable and aware of the secrets of things, reached the conviction that there could be no sin serious enough, for God to punish with such severity, like that of oppression, cruelty, and mercilessness.

According to him, Although 'Job' pretended through certain apparent actions, to be a man of God, and a believing leader; Yet his actual behavior reveals what he secretly believes in his mind, that God is too high in heavens to be aware of everything that goes on earth! Because, if he thought otherwise, he would not dare refer injustice to God; would have the fear of God in his heart; would never say that "*the Lord does not see, the Lord has forsaken the land*" (Ezekiel 8: 12); and would commit himself to be upright and merciful.

"And you say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the deep darkness?'" (Job 22: 13)

Eliphaz probably believes that, although 'Job' is aware that God is there in the high heavens; Yet, instead of giving the reverence befitting to Him, he despises Him, on account that He in the high heavens, cannot see from beyond the deep darkness; and would not preoccupy himself with what goes on earth.

Pope Gregory the Great, commenting on this, presents the following facts:

a. God indeed exists in the high heavens, as though He is hidden from humans by the darkness, through which their eyes are unable to penetrate.

b. In His wholeness, He is personally present with every individual, as well as with the congregation as a whole. Being present with individuals does not mean that He is not wholly present with all.

c. Although God's heavens are up high; Yet with His divine care, He cares for everyone on earth.

d. God may seem to forsake those who sin; not that He is not present somewhere; because there is no place where God is not; Yet He forsakes the wicked who persist on their wickedness; Namely, His grace forsakes them, and His divine help supports them no more. He does not work against our will; Although He seems not to be there to give help to those who reject His work in them; Yet He will definitely be there to condemn them on His great day of judgment.

e. God, being wholly present in the heights; He is as well, wholly present down on earth; His presence on earth does not imply that He has forsaken the heights.

f- Although God is hidden from humans, who cannot see Him by their physical eyes, Yet He could be seen through His exalted divine works and ordinances.

g. God, who could not be perceived by carnal senses, condescends to be perceived by humans through His shining in their minds; Yet, with all what we enjoy, we are counted as unable to perceive Him as He is.

❖ **“Do you count God to be in the high heavens, far above the stars. And yet you say: ‘How can He know¹?’ (12-13).** There are many who, because they foolishly do not fear except what they can see and feel, they do not fear God whom they cannot see!

He is indeed perpetually mighty; **His presence is wholly for everyone**; while it is also wholly for all of us together.

Although He forsakes those who sin; and may seem not to be there to support them, Yet He is present for them concerning their judgment.

He is aware of what is on the outside, and fills what is inside ... He ordains the heights above, without forsaking the depths below... He is present in the low reaches, without forsaking the high reaches.

Although He is somehow hidden, as far as His appearance is concerned; yet He is known through His works. Although He is known in His work; Yet He is still not perceived by human accounts Although He is somehow present; Yet He still could not be seen by the physical eyes; although He could be perceived through His ordinances that testify to His presence. Although He submits Himself to be perceived by us; yet the ray of His perception remains covered with clouds! But while we hold fast to the darkness of ignorance, He remains shining in our minds by the rays of His splendor.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **“Give ear to my words, O Lord”** (Psalm 5; 1); Calling the Lord, her help, the church crosses over this evil world, to reach Him. **“Consider my sighing”** (Psalm 5: 1). By this, the Psalmist makes it clear that his sighing -- that comes from within, from the secret place of his heart, and is not uttered by his mouth -- reaches God. The physical voice is heard, while the spiritual is apprehended. That is the way God is heard, not by physical ears, but by being present with **His greatness everywhere²**.

St. Augustine

“Thick clouds cover Him, so that He cannot be seen, And He walks above the circle of heaven” (Job 22: 14)

Eliphaz probably claims that ‘Job’ looks at God as covering Himself in thick clouds, so as not to be seen by humans; And that He walks above the circle of heaven, preoccupied only with His glory, and not caring for His earthly creation.

It is as though Eliphaz calls on ‘Job’ to forsake his evil ways that he secretly practices, which brought on him all those tribulations; On the assumption that they are not seen nor felt by others, And that even God Himself is too preoccupied to care to see them. He calls on him to reconsider himself, and to confess his great sins and his iniquities with no end. According to Eliphaz, it is befitting for ‘Job’ to realize that he has become a disgrace, not because of the tribulations themselves, as much as of what is behind them of disgrace on earth, as well as in heavens.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² On Ps. 5.

9- COMPARING JOB'S WAYS TO THOSE OF THE WICKED MEN OF THE OLD WORLD:

“Will you keep to the old way which wicked men have trod?” (Job 22: 15)

Having thought that, by his wisdom and experience, he revealed before Job's eyes, his sins and iniquities, Now Eliphaz is warning him that he may end up the same way the wicked men of the old word have ended, Those who were destroyed by the great flood in the days of Noah. According to Eliphaz, Job's way is not a new one; It is a wide and well-trodden way, whose end is perdition.

While Eliphaz calls on 'Job' to forsake his evil way, which was trodden by many of the old, and perished: The Lord of Glory, on the other hand, Instead of taking such a negative way, He presented Himself as the divine Way, that would grant the sinners the forgiveness through repentance, and would bring them up to the gates of heaven, open to receive them.

Here, it is befitting for us to compare between Eliphaz who destroys the others, and the Lord Christ who grants hope to the whole world. In pride and with haughtiness, claiming to be wise and knowledgeable, Eliphaz instructs 'Job' to recognize his sins that, because he disregarded and hid them from people and even from God; all this flood of tribulations and afflictions have dwelt upon him, which will not cease until he utterly perishes.

The Lord Christ, on the other hand, the Wisdom of the eternal God, humbly came to hold the hands of the wicked, without hurting their feelings, bearing them in Him, to bring them over into the divine bosoms. And He came to support the weak, and to give them His Holy Spirit, the Grantor of love, joy, peace, and goodness.

While Eliphaz attempted to destroy Job's soul by vain accusations; Jesus, the Lord of Glory, bore on Himself the accusations directed against men, granting them the fellowship with Him in the divine nature, to lift up their spirit, and to grant them the well-being of the soul, the body, and the spirit on an everlasting level, for man to be wholly glorified on the great day of the Lord.

- ❖ **“Will you give a sign to the old way which the wicked men have trodden?”¹** (15). While the way of our Redeemer is humility, that of the world is pride. The wicked tread upon the way of the world, and with self-esteem, walk in its lusts.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If we, brethren, are in Christ, are clothed by Him, If He is the Way of our salvation; Let us then walk like Him, as we are taught by the apostle John: *“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked”* (1 John 2: 6)².

Cyprian the martyr

- ❖ He is the Home where we are heading; And He is the Way by which we go! If we take it to Him, we shall not go astray³.

St. Augustine

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Treatise 9 on the Advantage of Patience, 9.

³ Selected Lessons on N.T., Sermon 42.

- ❖ You should abide beforehand to what they testified about themselves, saying: “As you received the Lord Jesus Christ, Walk in Him” (cor2: 6) As He is the Way that leads to God the Father. Do not walk in the angels, as their way would not lead there¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Who were cut down before their time, Whose foundations were swept away by a flood” (Job 22: 16)

The flood came upon the wicked all of a sudden, while they were unprepared, and assuming that they would live a long time; to drown and perish, as though before their time. Having set the earth as their foundation, having built upon it their hopes, and having thought that they are secure and on a solid rock; they were swept away by “*the flood that came on the world of the ungodly*” (2 Peter 2: 5).

Some may probably wonder: ‘If man’s age is known beforehand by God, how could it be said that the wicked are cut down before their time?’ Will they die before their assigned time? And will the days of the righteous be extended beyond what God has assigned for them?

1- **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that everyone has an age that befits him and what he deserves. Yet God also knows beforehand that it would be better for a particular wicked person to die early, so as not to cause the righteous to stumble; Or that he would be given a longer time to repent.

What is said about the age of man, whether to become longer or shorter, does not mean that God changes what He has already set in His mind; But man’s age becomes longer or shorter according to a divine wisdom. God also knows beforehand what is more befitting for a particular man, to add to his age or to take away from it, according to his nature or worthiness.

2- **The scholar Origen** believes that the measures of age differ with men than it is with God. As the Psalmist says that one day to God is like a thousand days, and a thousand days like one day; On the great day of the Lord, you may find little children, counted as persons who lived several years; and elders seen as little children.

To clarify this, Let us consider the ‘fetus’ John the Baptist, when he leaped for joy in the womb of his mother Elizabeth, as soon as the voice of the Virgin Mary sounded in her ears. According to human measures, he was not yet born; While in God’s sight, and according to His measures, he is counted as a grown-up man, older than the high priest, the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, etc. of that time; who, having not testified to the Lord Christ, despite the prophecies they had in their hands, were counted as dead.

The righteous may die while infants, and counted in God’s sight as though they have lived thousands of years; And the days of certain tyrants may be long, yet counted as nothing, “their spirit come out, and they return to their dust”

When we hear God’s commandment: “*Honor your father and mother, so that you may live longer on earth*”; We should not marvel to see a son or a daughter die young despite honoring their parents; He or she are counted as though they have lived a long life on earth, because one day of their life is counted in God’s sight as a thousand years. This is the spiritual symbolic interpretation often adopted by the scholar **Origen**, as he speaks about man’s age on earth.

¹ *Homilies on Colossians, homily 6.*

According to that interpretation, the wicked may be cut down before their time, having lived without fruit, and did not make use of the chances of repentance to enjoy the fellowship with God, the Grantor of life. By their death they are counted as having lost their life, and having not enjoyed it.

❖ ***“Who were cut down before their time, Whose foundations were swept away by a flood” (16).*** Although each one of us is cut down from this life on a time assigned beforehand by a divine authority; Yet it should be known that the Almighty God, in our creation and in ordaining our affairs, assigns the limits of our life according to the worthiness of each of us. The wicked could be committed to live a short time, lest he would harm those who walk upright; And the good could be committed to live longer, to help many to do good

But it must also be put into consideration that God’s compassion may grant the wicked a longer life as a chance to repent, and to forsake their evil practices. And may cut down the good before his time, lest, if he lives longer, he could get corrupted.

God knows beforehand the time of death of each one; and nobody could die before his assigned time. And even though fifteen years were added to Hezekiah’s life (2 Kings 20; Isaiah 38); Yet the duration of his life indeed exceeded what he deserved, and what God has beforehand assigned for him.

“The wicked are cut down before their time” could be interpreted, that those who happen to love their present life may have in their minds to live a very long life! And when death approaches them, they count that their life has been cut down before their time; and that **“their foundation is swept away by a flood”**.

Cain was said to build the first city on earth (Genesis 4: 17); By that he obviously confirmed that, having been a stranger to the abidance in the eternal world, he set for himself a foundation on earth; Because he was a stranger to the higher things, he laid his foundation on lowly ones, and set his heart on earthly pleasures.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They said to God, ‘Depart from us’! What can the Almighty do to them?” (Job 22: 17)

The wicked people, prefer to live without God, to spare their conscience being disturbed, Or they disregard Him, saying: *“The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil”* (Zephaniah 1: 12). Although they might have heard that He is Almighty, Yet, they think that he has no authority on them.

As we already said, Atheism is of two kinds: Either some may altogether deny the existence of God; Or, although knowing of His existence, Yet they think that He is too far away in His heavens to be aware of them; Or they may ask Him to depart from them; on the assumption that He is helpless to grant them the happiness they need, or provide them with what they want.

“Yet He filled their houses with good things; But the counsel of the wicked is far from me” (Job 22: 18)

What makes the wicked guiltier, is that they were already enjoying good things provided by the Almighty, which they abused. Those who perished by the great flood in the days of Noah, were eating, drinking, marrying wives, given in marriage, buying, and selling (Luke 17: 27). Having been living in His great goods, they had no reason to ask:

“*What can the Almighty do to them?*”, or to ask the ‘Beneficent’ to depart from them. But because their hearts were lacking the divine grace, they perished.

Saying: “*The counsel of the wicked is far from me*” (18), Eliphaz is in accord with ‘Job’, who said exactly the same thing (see Job 21: 16).

❖ “*He fills the houses of the wicked with good things*” (18). God does not deny His gifts even from those who deny Him; Either hoping that they may feel ashamed before the compassion of their Creator, and return to Him; Or, in case they persist on their ways, and pay God’s goodness with evil, That would be a cause to punish them more severely.

"I wish their rule be away from me." This is also expressed by Blessed Job, says: "to move away their advice for me"

Pope Gregory the Great

“*The righteous see it and are glad, And the innocent laugh them to scorn*” (Job 22: 19)

The righteous are not glad for the perdition of the wicked, but they moan and pray for their sake. Yet on the Day of Judgment, destruction will dwell upon the wicked, who would rather have son hood to the devil than to God; as the fruit of their free wicked will and behavior, and of their persistence on giving their back to the Grantor of life. On that day, the righteous, as they live in the holy high Jerusalem together with the Holy God, will become glad, as they see that evil has no more place among them.

However, the righteous, bearing the will of their Father, who wish that all be saved and return to the Truth, could never gloat on the perdition of the wicked; But they would rejoice on the destruction of the authority of evil and oppression that would spare the weak of getting stumbled; And on the incorruptible glory of God.

Having the chance to see how the vanity, the weakness, and the mortality of evil are revealed; and to watch how the wisdom, and craftiness of the wicked are ridiculed; The righteous would then rejoice on the collapse of the kingdom of the devil, and the destruction of sin, and not of the sinner; As he knows nothing but love, even for the sinners.

❖ “*The righteous see it and are glad, And the innocent laugh them to scorn*” (19). The righteous would never become glad as they watch the wicked sin and bring perdition upon themselves; Because if they do, they would not be counted as righteous The Pharisee lost his righteousness when he became glad, counting himself more exalted than the tax collector, saying: “*I thank You Lord, that I am not like the other men extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector*” (Luke 18: 11).

Again, if we say that the righteous could rejoice on the perdition of the wicked; what kind of rejoice would that be, when even their own life in this world is not guaranteed?!

To distinguish between the times that the horror and the glory. The saved will now see the bad guys and become the wasting for their wickedness. And when they see them beating, do not trust in their lives are also... Here, they rather moan and pray for the wicked; but on the Day of Judgment, when they see how they end up, they would “*laugh them to scorn*”

Pope Gregory the Great

“Surely our adversaries are cut down, And the fire consumes their remnant”
(Job 22: 20)

Here, he probably refers to ‘Lot’, whose righteous soul suffered for the sake of the ungodliness of the wicked. Despite losing all his possessions, he wished that all the ungodly people of Sodom and Gomorrah be saved, and yet, he rejoiced at the same time to see the destruction of lowliness and corruption (2 Peter 2: 7-8).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the opponents to the righteous, and the adversaries to the divine Truth, will ultimately be cast in the fire of Hades to burn both their souls and bodies. The way the body partook of the oppression against God with the soul, and co-operated to practice the works of the devil, and to submit to him, It would also be fitting for both to share with the devil the eternal fire.

- ❖ Although the wicked here, on their death, depart from their body, yet they again will receive it in the resurrection, to be consumed in the same body they have committed the sin. As their sin was committed by the soul and the body, so their punishment will be on both of them.

Pope Gregory the Great

The righteous believer will rejoice to see the opponents to the divine Truth namely, the evil thoughts that intended to infiltrate into their mind, to submit their inner man to see them consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, as the thorns are consumed by fire. He will rejoice to see all what is foreign to the pure nature created by God in us, become the fuel to flare the fire of the divine love. The believer rejoices in the work of the fiery Holy Spirit in him that both destroys and edifies.

10- REPENTANCE IS TO ACQUAINT ONESELF WITH GOD:

“Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace” (Job 22: 21)

It is difficult to judge that position of Eliphaz; As, although he oppressed ‘Job’ by his bitter accusations against him, and attempted to confirm them despite his failure to present practical proofs of his accusations, Yet here, he opens before him the door of hope.

If we disregard Eliphaz’ real intentions to confirm Job’s wickedness; His good counsel here: *“Approach God, acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace with Him”*, revealing the blessings of returning by repentance to the Almighty, to find in Him every goodness, righteousness, treasure, and all fulfillment, are a strong source of hope.

- ❖ Nothing would make us sad, like seeing someone recalling in his mind the details of his earthly carnal pleasures, instead of preoccupying it with the beautiful ways to get to know God.

Adam hid himself in the garden when he heard God coming; As God called him by the same thing he wounded himself (not encountering the Lord), saying: *“Adam, Where are you?”* (Genesis 3: 9); Namely, *“Where are you hiding? Why are you hiding yourself from God, whom you always longed to see¹!”*

St. Ambrose

“And be at peace with Him”; namely, Be at peace with God, or with yourself where you find rest in Him; As evil is a source of inner anxiety.

¹ *Concerning Repentance, book 2.*

“In this way, good will comes to you”. What is the “good” that Eliphaz thinks would be the fruit of being at peace with God? If by it he means the heavenly blessings, his counsel would be true and edifying. But if, on the other hand, his eyes concentrate upon the temporal goods that ‘Job’ has lost, his counsel would not be sound.

“We have peace with God” (Romans 5: 1) through our Lord Jesus Christ who reconciled us with God through the sacrifice of His blood. Christ came to destroy the adversary, to make peace, and to reconcile us with God, from whom we were separated by the wall of evil we set by our sins.

The scholar Origen

11- REPENTANCE IS A PERSONAL ENJOYMENT OF THE WORD:

“Receive instruction from His mouth, And lay up His words in your heart” (Job 22: 22)

Whoever enters into peace with God would enjoy the divine commandment that comes from His divine mouth, and goes directly to his heart; Feeling its sweetness, he would in pleasure cry out, saying: *“Lord, What do you want me to do?”* (Acts 9: 6)

Hearing the commandment from the mouth of a minister of God, or a friend, or reading it in the Holy Book; we would truly feel a personal relationship with God, as though He speaks directly to us. We would hear His divine voice inside us, And our depths would respond to His love. There is no place more fitting for the divine word like the heart, which is the storehouse of love, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that what Eliphaz utters here, although it seems to represent a true counsel; Yet, what is wrong with it, is that he thinks of himself as more righteous than the (wicked) ‘Job’ – according to him. He takes the position of the wise teacher, and the haughty guide. In this he represents the heretics who, in all eras, have despised the church of God; accused her of ignorance and evil; And, thinking of themselves as being knowledgeable, wise, and bearers of righteousness, extended to her their vain teachings.

- ❖ It is a sin for a man to instruct someone better than himself; like what the heretics do; on the assumption that what they think in their minds, is coming from the mouth of God.

Pope Gregory the Great

12- REPENTANCE IS A RETURN TO THE ALMIGHTY:

“If you return to the Almighty, You will be built up; You will remove iniquity far from your tents” (Job 22: 23)

Here, Eliphaz presents a sound, active, and positive concept of repentance; It is not just a return from sin; As this negative side does not give fulfillment to the soul; While its positive side is the return to the Almighty God, which would fulfill and edify the depths. The Almighty alone, by His Holy Spirit, can renew the heart, perpetually and incessantly, to be conformed, to become truly, an icon of God.

Approaching the divine light, man would not allow darkness especially oppression to infiltrate into him; As there is no fellowship between Light and darkness. Eliphaz says: *“If you remove iniquity far from your tents”* Here he refers to the tents of the household as a whole; and to the tent of the body, in which the soul dwells.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, although Eliphaz has recognized certain true facts from his friend 'Job', Yet he had some divergences from the straight line; namely from the Truth. It is the same thing with the heretics: Although we may find in them certain sound concepts that they learned from the church of Christ; Yet they mix what is an evagelic Truth with their own vain dogmas.

❖ Being a friend of the righteous 'Job', Eliphaz knows certain true things; Yet in some points he diverted from the straight line and became like the heretics. Because he assumes that 'Job' was stricken by temptations because of his sins, he promises him that in case he returns to the Almighty, "*he will remove iniquity far from his tent*"

Pope Gregory the Great

13- REPENTANCE IS A WAY TO PROSPERITY:

"Then you will lay your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brook" (Job 22: 24)

Eliphaz believes that if man attaches himself to God, the Source of goods, he would be very prosperous; And that to him, gold would be as plenty as dust. According to Eliphaz, because 'Job' has gathered his wealth through oppression, he lost it; But in case he again, attaches himself to God, He will grant him riches that he would never lose. What he lost was his wealth in beasts and land that he has taken by oppression from the farmers and shepherds; but, through his attachment to God, he would get the wealth of kings; namely, gold and silver.

And he would not have to put that wealth of the gold of Ophir in well-guarded safes and stores, because he would not fear losing it; it does not preoccupy his mind and heart.

We can spiritually interpret this, that he who returns to God; On account that he acquires Him, For His sake, he would lay his gold in the dust, and count everything as waste. He would lay the pure gold of Ophir among the stones of the brook, as in his eyes, it would be like them of little value.

"Yes, the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver" (Job 22: 25)

Laying the gold of this world in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones in the brook, the righteous will see God as their heavenly gold and silver; He would be their treasure that would never be robbed from them.

In the Holy Book, silver often refers to the word of God; That is why it is befitting for the believers to acquire this spiritual silver, which would grant them an exalted spiritual wealth, power against the devil, coming against them; and an inner joy and rejoice, to partake of the praise of the heavenly creatures to the divine word; and to become prosperous and a good soldier of the Lord Christ.

Unlike the way the people of this world get pleasure, only for some time from their riches, the righteous get an everlasting pleasure in God, their true treasure, riches, honor, and strength, "*The Lord is my strength and my might*" (Exodus 15: 2; Psalm 118: 4; Isaiah 12: 2).

Whoever acquires such silver in his heart, would supplicate by the word of God; And in its stronghold he would take refuge against the forces of darkness. Whereas, he who submits to evil and surrender to the forces of darkness, would not apprehend the secrets of God, proclaimed by the divine word.

- ❖ Who are the enemies to whom we would submit, other than the evil spirits who use our thoughts to put us under siege, to enter by force into our minds, submit to them, and captivate us under their authority?

The Psalmist by the word ‘silver’ refers to the divine inspiration, saying: “*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth*” (Psalm 12: 6).

Our souls would never enjoy the divine inspiration when we submit to the deception of the evil spirits, who scatter the dust of earthly thoughts over our minds, to darken our inner eyes, and to make them unable to enjoy the inner vision. That is what the Psalmist means by saying: ‘Depart from me, you wicked, to contemplate in the ways of my Lord’ (Psalm 119: 115); Teaching us that he could not contemplate in the commandments of the lord, when his mind was taken over by the snares of the evil spirits.

Pope Gregory the Great

In the parable of the prodigal son who returned to his father (Luke 15), the Lord Christ reveals the riches we would enjoy through repentance, when we get the greatest position, which is the adoption to God, through which He would grant us the best (or first) robe, the ring of son hood, and the sandals, to help us walk along the way of the Truth, and testify to the compassionate fatherhood of God.

- ❖ He would grant you the robe, the ring, and the sandals.

The robe is that of wisdom by which the apostle covered the nakedness of their bodies, and by which every one of us would be clothed. They took the robe to cover the weaknesses of their bodies by the power of spiritual wisdom, about which it is said: “*He washes his garment in wine*” (Genesis 49; 11). The robe is the spiritual garment and the wedding attire.

The ring is the (bill) of the true faith, and the seal of Truth.

And the sandals refer to the preaching of the gospel¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ The best (or first) robe is the honor that Adam lost; The servants who presented it to us are the preachers of reconciliation; The ring in our hand is the down payment of the Holy Spirit for the fellowship of grace; as it is well referred to the Spirit as the finger; The sandals on our feet refer to our preparation for the preaching of the gospel, in order for our feet not to get in touch with the earthly things².

St. Augustine

14- BY REPENTANCE MAN IS WORTHY TO LIFT HIS FACE UP TO GOD:

“*For then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God*” (Job 22: 26)

A righteous man enjoys a daring to “*lift up his face to God*”; would never be terrified nor have a broken heart; but in the joy of heart, and in confidence, he would appear before God, talk to Him, and seek a life of fellowship with Him.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Eliphaz would be uttering the truth, if he is addressing a wicked man, who does not dare to lift up his inner face to God. But,

¹ In Luc 15: 11-32.

² Quaest Evang. 2: 33.

presenting what is true with no wisdom; as an accusation against the righteous man 'Job', That was his great error..

By looking at our faces, Men can recognize us, and discern between one and another. Whoever does not lift up his face and appear before men, would not be recognized by them. In this same way, when man, through repentance returns to God, he would find pleasure to lift his inner face up to the Almighty God, to become known to Him, and not a stranger. That is why in every divine Liturgy, the priest cries out, saying: 'Lift up your hearts' or, 'Where are your hearts?'; to be answered by the congregation, who, by the strength of the Spirit say: 'They are with the Lord'. Here they proclaim that their inner faces (their hearts) are lifted up to the Lord, who would find pleasure in them, and would grant them the fellowship with Him.

❖ Lifting the face up to God is to lift the heart up to search for the more high. By the same way we would be recognized by our carnal faces to men; By our inner form we would be recognized by God. But when, on the other hand, we get burdened by the iniquity of sin, and get down to earth; We would fear to lift up the face of our heart to God; and our mind would be filled with fear to look up into the higher things. We would be accused by our conscience itself. Yet, by shedding tears of remorse, to lament what we have committed, our sins would be cleansed, until he commits no more sins to lament. When we then start to enjoy confidence in the mind: and the face of our heart would be lifted up to contemplate in the pleasures of the anticipated reward.

Eliphaz would be counted as uttering the truth, if he was giving counsel to a weak man; But to look with contempt to someone broken down because of the strokes he suffered, would be nothing but pouring the words of knowledge without knowledge!

Pope Gregory the Great

15- REPENTANCE OPENS THE GATES OF HEAVEN:

"You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you, and you will pay your vows" (Job 22: 27)

Calling on 'Job' to repent his evil works, and to return to God, Eliphaz confirms to him that through his repentance, he would pray to God, and He will hear him. This is a true talk, as repentance opens the gates of heaven, and grants us a daring with God, who would incline His ear to listen to us, and smell our prayers as sweet fragrance of incense before Him.

The repentant would enter into a debate of love with God, find himself standing before the throne of grace, offering his vows of thanksgiving and praise, as a reaction to God's listening to his prayers.

By saying these words, the goal of Eliphaz may sound faultless, if it is not for his evil intention to accuse 'Job' of not being the man of God, he claims to be! That His prayers he kept on presenting to God all the days of his life, were not well received, because they were not coming from a repentant heart, or from a returning soul. And because his heart is not pure, His vows would never fulfill their goal, even if he offers so many sacrifices on behalf of his children.

Eliphaz' words, with what they carried of the divine truth, were used by him as a sword to strike and break down the soul of the righteous man 'Job', and to bring him over to the hell of despair.

- ❖ Those who count God's commandments as nothing, would raise prayers, to which God would never listen; according to what is written: "*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer shall be an abomination*" (Proverbs 28: 9). Being convinced that God did not listen to 'Job', Eliphaz was positive that he must have committed a serious sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Repentance is a fire that consumes every human weakness; Takes away the slothfulness, the laziness, the heavy burden of the body; and provides the soul with a wing by which it flies up to heaven; where, through that high summit, the vanity of this present life would be revealed to her.

Whoever does not rise up to the high tower of vantage, would not be able to get a true overall portrait of the earth and its contents;

As many things down here would darken the range of vision, deafen the ears, and tie up the tongue; it is fitting for man to separate himself from such chaos, to get away from the thick smoke, and enter into seclusion, to find deep peace, tranquility, and silence, together with enlightenment.

When the eyes concentrate on the love of God and the ear hears nothing but His words; as though a sweet spiritual symphony, the soul becomes a captive of God; and would be disgusted even by food and sleep.

Being so lifted up, the noise of the world and the material interests would slide over the soul but would never enter into it; It would pay no more attention to the earthly storms.

The way mountain dwellers see nothing of city down there, and hear its noise as a vague murmur; So are those who chose to forsake the world by their own choice, and set forth flying in the exalted heights of philosophy (the wisdom); They would have all their senses directed to heaven, and would no more apprehend the affairs of the world.

Therefore, let us seek, not only the seclusion of the wilderness, but the seclusion from the inner desires; Let us hide above the highest summit of the soul, where nothing earthy dwell.

The power of repentance is like a gust of air that drives away the dust of lusts, more swiftly than smoke.

St. John Chrysostom

"You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways" (Job 22: 28)

The repentant man will find an inner comfort in ordaining his affairs; He would decide on a matter, "and it will be established"; as said about Joseph the righteous, who walked according to the law of the Lord: "*The Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands*" (Genesis 39: 3).

"And light will shine on your ways"; God will guide you; He who returns to the Lord in repentance, will find in the word of God a lamp to shine on his ways; It will bring him over into the kingdom of the light.

16- BY REPENTANCE WE WILL BE GLORIFIED:

“When others are humiliated, you say it is pride; for he saves the humble” (Job 22: 29)

In the Jesuit version it came as: *“To the humble you say: Be exalted”*. When despair tends to infiltrate into the hearts and thoughts of the repentant, and is about to swallow him, He will find that the grace of God strengthens him, to make him enjoy the successful exalted life, *“He will cause him to ride on the high hills of the earth”* (Isaiah 58: 14). True repentance gives man true humility; grants him a return to God, who lifts up the humble.

But unfortunately, Eliphaz’ intention here, is not to provide every man with counsel to enjoy the true humility; but to confirm that the utter collapse that has dwelt on ‘Job’, and cast him on a heap of trash, is the fruit of his pride and haughtiness, even before God.

❖ **“Whoever is humiliated will be glorified; and who looks down with his eyes, will be saved” (29)**. This phrase conforms with the words uttered by the divine Truth, Who says: “For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”(Luke 14: 11); And conforms as well with the words of Solomon: “Before destruction one’s heart is haughty, But humility goes before honor” (Proverbs 18: 12).

It is well said: “Whoever looks down with his eyes, will be saved”. Pride is revealed through man’s body language; Its first indication would be apparent in the eyes; As it is written: *“The haughty eyes You will bring down”* (Psalm 18: 27) ‘Looking down with the eyes’ implies that man counts himself less and lower than everything in sight.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ A patient should inform his physician of everything wrong he has done, rather than hide them from him, and arrogantly attempt to expose the faults of others. We should not marvel that the tax-collector in the parable of the Lord has gone justified, having confessed his wrongdoings without reservation or shame¹.

St. Augustine

❖ Where would you be, when the demons approach you? Humility would bring them down.

When they see you humble, they would flee before you.

Humility is the house of the Deity; wherever it is, there God will dwell.

Where shall I dwell, but in the meek, and the humble, who fears my words?

When your soul is humble, the King would come and dwell in you; And all the power of the adversary would not be able to overcome you.

The King’s house would never get robbed; as its gates are well-guarded.

If you are humble, He will turn you into His kingdom, and robbers would never approach it.

If you are humble, the tree of evil in you, would be uprooted; and in its place the blessed tree of our Lord would be planted.

If the love of His Deity flares in you, It makes your ears deaf to all the evils that would tend to dwell in you; which they would hear as good things.

¹ *Sermon 351:1.*

You would look at insults, humiliations, and bitter reviles, as though good words and not as evil.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

17- BY REPENTANCE WE CAN INTERCEDE ON BEHALF OF OUR BRETHREN:

“He will deliver even those who are guilty; They will escape because of the purity of your hands” (Job 22: 30)

Eliphaz ends his talk by addressing ‘Job’ with a cruel reproach. According to him, if ‘Job’ used to offer burnt offerings on behalf of his children, for *“It may be that they have sinned to God in their hearts”* (Job 1: 5); counting himself and his household more righteous than all; God did not listen to him, and did not save him or his children; as a sign of his wickedness. Whoever return to God would supplicate on behalf of others, even those who are guilty, and they would be saved; because of the purity of the hands that the righteous, raised in prayer. He is as though saying to ‘Job’ with despise: If your hands were pure, your prayers and your offerings for yourself, and even on behalf of others, would have been well-received; But because they were not pure, they brought so much evil on all!

A pious man would indeed enjoy God’s work, not just in himself; but, through prayers from his spacious heart, for the sake of others, God would listen to him; as He did to the apostle Paul while on board the ship on his way to Rome (Acts 27: 24).

Eliphaz could not foresee that this will eventually be realized, when ‘Job’ prays on his behalf and that of his two friends (Job 42: 8).

And he probably unintentionally prophesied about the Lord Christ, the atoning Intercessor! As, who is He with pure hands, but the Lord Christ, who is alone without sin?

He who stretched His hands on the cross, crying out: ***“My Lord, my Lord. Why have you forsaken Me?”***. He who has risen by His own might, to grant the guilty humanity the salvation and conquest over death!

Yes indeed, Our Christ alone, by the power of His blood, shed on the cross, could save the guilty man!

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF ‘JOB’ 22

LET ME RETURN TO YOU BY REPENTANCE

TO ENTER INTO YOUR DIVINE BOSOMS

- ❖ Grant me the wisdom, which I need for my edification;
Without which my soul would never rest;
But I would live in anxiety and bitterness.
Without which evils would destroy my soul;
Through giving me vain pleasure mixed with poison;
And through providing I with temporary rejoicing that would bring me over to everlasting death.
- ❖ You are wisdom itself.
I would be in need of nothing more.
I need Your wisdom to be justified.
I need your salvation to live forever.
By You I am justified, and my soul would be filled with goods.
O Holy One; You are not in need of my righteousness;
But in Your love, You let me offer You what is really Yours;
To hear Your amazing voice, saying:
“Whatever you did with any of my little brethren, you have done to me”
- ❖ Tell me: Would my repentance or goodness be of any benefit to You?
As You are wholly perfect, You do not need me.
But in Your love for me, You want me to be an icon of You.
You do not despise the work of Your hands.
My wickedness would never harm You;
And my righteousness would add nothing to You.
- ❖ If You reproach me for my evils;
It would be for the sake of my salvation and glory.
In Your humility, You condescend to debate with me.
You enter with me as though in a trial.
Not to destroy me, but to bring me back to you.
- ❖ I confess to You that iniquities have covered my head
Grant me to discover my disgrace.
Grant me to come to You, Who covers the souls by Your love.
- ❖ I do not fear the accusations of others against me;
What really preoccupies me is Your look at me.
I do not want to be justified before people.
But to be clothed by You, the true righteousness.
- ❖ My God, I believe that You dwell in heaven
But, while being behind clouds, and not seen by humans;
You are still wholly present also on earth.
You love both Your heavenly and the earthly creatures.

But, because of my evil ways, I became as though deprived of Your presence.
You, who are everywhere;
By my own choice, I reject Your presence in me;
Namely, the work of Your rich grace in my life.

- ❖ Grant me the repentance to return to You.
Your grace would work in my depths; and would transfigure inside me.
When I see You, my heart would rejoice by You; O my joy, and the rejoice of my heart.
No cloud or darkness can separate me from You
And no sin can blind my eyes to recognize You.
You are in me; And by You I become heaven.
By You, I become a temple for Your Holy Spirit.
In Your high heaven, You set, out of my earth, a holy heaven, dedicated for You.
- ❖ You are the Almighty; amazing in Your love.
By Your might, You consummate my salvation.
And by Your love, You set me to enjoy the fellowship of Your glory.
By Your exalted might, You dwell in me.
By Your exalted presence, You fulfill me.
By Your might You created me in Your image, and according to your likeness.
And by Your love, You again came down to recreate me.
You came to me; And gave me Yourself a 'Way'.
The way to heaven is no more impossible.
When I abide in You, I rise up to Your heavens.
You carry me in You, so as not to lose my way.
You hide me in You, as though in Noah's ark, to save me from the great flood.
- ❖ I confess to You that my sins have corrupted my life.
My days have become nothing, even to my own eyes.
Let me acquire You, to make up for my days eaten by locusts.
You count every day of my life as a thousand years.
- ❖ In my evil, I intended to flee from You.
Although I am aware of Your presence,
Yet I foolishly say in my depths: 'There is no God!'
I fear, if I approach You, my conscience would torture me.
I fear, if I attach to You, I would miss the pleasure of sinning.
While I was enjoying Your goods, I foolishly abused them.
You have granted much to me; But my heart was void.
- ❖ Now, Grant me the true repentance to return to You.
Grant me not to remember the evil that clothes one with death.
Lest my mind would be preoccupied with the pleasure of sin, instead of being fulfilled by You.
- ❖ Grant me not to hide myself as Adam did to escape from You.
But let me encounter You, and confess my sins to You.
As there is no peace for me without seeing You.

- ❖ Grant me to return to You.
Open my heart to Your word.
Let me embrace it, and find pleasure in it, as it is my life.
I find pleasure in Your commandment, as it comes out of your mouth.
- ❖ By returning back to You, O Almighty,
You will grant me the spirit of strength, and the incessant and perpetual spirit of work.
When I get attached to You, silver would become for me, so abundant like dust,
And the gold of Ophir would become like stones of the brooks.
You are my riches, and my real heavenly wealth.
Silver and the Gold of Ophir are of no more value to me.
Although I demand nothing for returning to You;
Yet in Your amazing love, You give me the robe of wisdom to cover me.
And the ring of son hood, to enter to Your throne unhindered.
And sandals to help me walk along the path of life, to testify to the divine Truth.
- ❖ I return to You with a contrite heart;
But You hasten to offer me an exalted sweetness.
You lift up my face to You, as a son with daring before his father.
- ❖ By returning to You, You listen to my prayer.
And the smell of the sacrifices of my praise brings You pleasure.
Then, my soul flies up to You, as though with the wings of a dove.
Then the whole world would be nothing in my eyes.
There is no one to fulfill me but You.
And there is no light to lead me except Your lamp.
I see myself very little in my own eyes.
But by Your love You carry me on Your arms;
And bring me to Your glories;
Yet, I shall not enter alone into them;
Because I shall have all humanity in my heart;
I wonder, Is it possible for all to be saved?!

CHAPTER 23

GOD'S SILENCE

In this chapter, 'Job' responds to Eliphaz without referring to his other friends. He probably found it futile to debate with them; Or he probably felt more comfortable with Eliphaz' counsel despite his questionable intention!

He responds to the words uttered by Eliphaz concerning the unseen God (Job 22: 12-14); But, contrary to Eliphaz' point of view, 'Job' does not hide from God with the intention to find pleasure in his sins without punishment; But proclaims his longing to encounter God; And being sure that He is Just, he is positive that He will vindicate him (6-7; 9: 33-35).

'Job' was not rebellious against God; But being so much grieved, he longs to confront Him. Yet he stands perplexed, because God refuses to proclaim Himself to him (8-9); He is probably concealing Himself, to deny 'Job' the chance to appeal for justice, and to be relieved of his temptation!

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1- 'JOB' PRESENTS HIS CASE BEFORE GOD:

"Then 'Job' answered and said: 'Today my complaint is bitter; His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning'" (Job 23: 1, 2)

Because Job's complaint was counted by his friends as a rebellion against God, 'Job' justifies it, by saying that, the groaning of his heart are not strong enough to express the heavy weight of his tribulations, the pain of his wounds, and the bitterness of his soul.

❖ Although man's sufferings should be healed by the comfort he gets from his friends, Yet in Job's case, because their comfort carried deception, they were like a poisoned ointment that increased the inflammation of his wounds.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ *"Faithful friends are life-saving medicine"* (Sirach 6: 16).

There is no effective healing to alleviate sufferings like a true friend, who comforts you in your afflictions, gives you counsel in your problems, rejoices for your success, and grieves for your tribulations. Whoever finds such friend, would find a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount of silver or gold can balance their worth (Sirach 6: 14, 15).

❖ Nothing can hold love as fast as partaking of joy and sorrow. Being far from the troubles of your friends, should not keep you from partaking of them. When you see your neighbor afflicted, count it as your own; Partake of his tears, to support his contrite spirit; and partake of his joy, to make it in him deeper and more rooted.

By that, it would be of more benefit to you than to him. By your tears, you become more merciful; And by your feeling of joy, you purify yourself of envy and prejudice If you are not able to take evil away from him, your tears would take away

half of it; And if you are not able to add to his goods, your joy would add something great to him¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ **“His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning”**. Pope Gregory the Great believes that by this he means that his friends’ hands are heavier than the temptations that caused him to groan. Instead of comforting him to alleviate his groans, their heavy hands made his wounds more painful. About this Ben-Sirach says: *“Some companions rejoice in the happiness of a friend, but in time of trouble they are against him”* (Sirach 37: 4).

“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat”
(Job 23: 3)

‘Job’ is so sure of God’s justice, that he longed to stand before His seat to present his case; He is sure that He would judge in his favor, and would never break him down, the way his friends did. As the prophet David says: **“I am in great distress. I would rather fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, than to fall into the hand of man”** (2 Samuel 24: 14).

‘Job’ probably feeling that his sins have isolated him from God; and his weaknesses have corrupted his relationship with Him, and wishing to get this relationship back, to enjoy again God’s love; he cries out, saying: *“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him”*; As the human soul in the Song of songs says: *“Have you seen the one I love?”* (Song 3: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that ‘Job’ longs to stand before God and His ministers, the heavenly hosts; where he would taste love and compassion, instead of what he suffers from his own race.

❖ What is the **“seat”** of God but the angelic Spirits, whom the Holy Book calls **“thrones”**? Whoever wishes to come to the seat of God, longs to be among them; to rise up in glory by contemplating in eternity; As when he sees by the eyes of faith, the Creator of everything controlling the angelic Spirits, he would then wish to come to His seat.

Pope Gregory the Great

Once the believer enjoys the fellowship with the heavenly creatures, he would feel that it is not less intimate than his fellowship with his human brethren; if not more loving, merciful, and compassionate. They rejoice in his salvation; And, in the name of humanity, they sing the praises of salvation; as though it is their own.

❖ Today, the Lord of glory will be glorified on earth, according to the words of the prophet; and will make us, who dwell on earth, His partners in the heavenly feast; to reveal that He is the Lord of both the heavenly and the earthly creatures; And will be praised by their joint praises.

That is why, the heavenly hosts sing proclaiming salvation on earth, saying: **“Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth”**.

And those below, as they partake in harmony of the joyful praises of heaven, cry out, saying: **“Hosannah in the highest; Hosannah to the Son of David”**².

Father Methodeus

“I would lay my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments” (Job 23: 4)

¹ In Rom. hom. 22.

² Fr. Methodius: on the Palms, 3.

‘Job’ longs to lay his case before God, being sure that He will give him the chance to defend himself. Here ‘Job’ represents the persecuted church, that although afflicted by the whole world, Yet, in Jesus Christ, and baring His divine righteousness, she can stand before the divine throne with daring and confidence.

Pope Gregory the great translates this verse as: “**I would let my case well before God; and have my mouth filled with His reproaches**”. The believer would rather stand before God to lay his case; that, So that, once his soul discovers itself, and recognizes it more accurately, it would become terrified.

There is a great difference between, when the believer is attacked by a fellow man to break him down, and when the Spirit of God exposes him before himself, to rebuke him, and to grant him a true repentance, as a way to enjoy the Kingdom of God. “**Therefore, brethren, we have now boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus**” (Hebrew 10: 19); and to stand before the throne of the divine grace.

In an open talk with God, in which man complains against himself, he would be justified in His sight; according to the words of the Lord Himself: “*Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted*” (Isaiah 43: 26). In the Septuagint version, it came as: “First proclaim your transgressions, that you may be acquitted” (Isaiah 43: 26 LXX).

- ❖ To realize this, God opens several ways before us: He says: “First proclaim your transgressions, that you may be acquitted” (Isaiah 43: 26 LXX); And He also says on the tongue of His servant David: “*I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’, And You forgive the iniquity of my sin*”(Psalm 32: 5). Continuously accusing ourselves, or remembering our sins, would contribute much to reduce their weight¹.
- ❖ A way that would grant us this medicine; is to condemn ourselves for our sins; As He says: “First proclaim your transgressions, that you may be acquitted” (Isaiah 43: 26 LXX). Whoever passes through afflictions, and give thanks to God, his sins would be dissolved; That is beside giving alms, which is greater than everything².

St. John Chrysostom

“I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me” (Job 23: 5)

Job’s friends misunderstood his wonder about the cause of his falling under such successive bitter temptations, as a complaint against God; and even a practical atheism. They also misunderstood his wonder about the secret behind the prosperity of the wicked, as an attack against the divine justice. However, because ‘Job’ is confident that if he enters into a trial before God, His response to his wonderings would be utterly convincing and non-aggressive, he longs to debate with Him, and to completely submit to His ordinances. He is confident that a debate with God would be much easier and sweeter than a debate with men.

‘Job’ is probably saying to his friends: I do not care much for your view about me; But I long to enter into a debate with God; And am preoccupied with His view about me, and with how He would respond to my wonderings. According to the words of the apostle Paul: “*With me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact I do not even judge myself He who judges me is the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 4: 3-4).

¹ Homilies on Hohn, homily 7:2.

² Homilies on 2 Corinth., homily 4:7.

- ❖ By this (Corinthians 4: 4), Paul does not mean to say that he is blameless; But he intends to shut up the mouths of those who blame him without reason. God is alone our Judge; As He alone knows what goes on in our hearts¹.

St. John Chrysostom

2- JOB’S CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S MERCY:

“Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would give heed to me” (Job 23: 6)

Indeed, who can contend with God; as it is written: *“God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom”* (1 Corinthians 1: 25). Debating with Him is better than debating with men, because he gives heed to the complainer, and as a compassionate father, he listens to him. Although firm, yet, together with His firmness, He proclaims His compassionate fatherhood toward the son, wounded by temptations and afflictions.

‘Job’ believes that the Almighty God would never horrify him; And that, even while trying him and debating with him, He would never show off the perfection of His greatness and majesty; But, in order to make the debate with man possible, He would rather condescend and show off as much as he would be able to endure; He would never be as violent as men, as unlike them, He is longsuffering, would listen to whoever cries out to Him; would strengthen him, would encourage him, and would enter with him into a contention; But not to prevail over him, but to grant him conquest. As it was said about our father Jacob: *“In his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us”* (Hosea 12: 3-4).

Indeed, whoever tastes the true intimacy with God, would never stop encountering Him; As he realizes the extent of His compassion, longsuffering, and His condescension for the sake of man, His beloved creature; He would say together with ‘Job’: ***“Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, But He would give heed to me”*** (Job 23: 6).

- ❖ They assumed that my light burden is very heavy; But I bowed down to them, forsaking My heavenly kingdom, in order to eat together with them. I took over their human form; and even gave them my body to eat; to them I became food and a partner on their dining table².

St. Jerome

3- JOB’S CONFIDENCE IN HIS CONQUEST BY THE CROSS:

“There, an upright person could reason with Him, and I should be acquitted forever by my Judge” (Job 23: 7)

‘Job’ believes that the divine verdict would be uprightly issued; And that by resorting to His divine Judge, He will acquit him on an everlasting level. By resorting to Him, we would be saved from the eternal judgment; as according to **St. Augustine**, ‘we escape from the divine judgment by resorting to God Himself’.

Pope Gregory the Great translates this verse as: “Let Him does justice against me; my trial would then come to a conquest’. In this scream, he hears the church seeking from God, the Word, to realize justice by His cross, to descend to her and redeem her; and then, entering into a trial, she would enjoy a conquest on an eternal level. She seeks the coming of the Word to reproach her; as through His

¹ Homilies on John, homily 9:3.

² Commentary on Hosea, 3:11. PG 25:962.

incarnation and reproach, the gates of the divine grace would open, and she would be justified before the divine throne.

❖ ***“Let Him do justice against me; so that my trial would then come to a conquest”¹***

To reproach my ways, Let Him send the Son incarnate Because, if the only-begotten Son of God remained unseen in the greatness of His Deity (namely, did not incarnate), and did not take anything of our weakness (our humanity); How then, would the weak humans find a way to enjoy the divine grace? As the weight of His greatness – if taken into consideration – would actually be against us and not to help us. But the powerful, who is above all, came as though weak among us. By becoming equivalent to us, through taking our weakness, He lifts us up to His strength. We would not be able to realize the exaltation of his divine nature – as we are not qualified for that -- But He bowed down to man through His manhood, so that we come to be, as though ascending to Him, He who has come down. He is raised to raise us.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ **Escape to God Himself; if you intend to escape from Him.**

Escape by confessing, and not by hiding.

Say to Him: ‘You are my refuge’.

Let love, which alone, gives life, grow inside you².

❖ **How joyful is the face of the Lord; Once seen by man, he would not find his joy in anything else³.**

St. Augustine

4- ‘JOB’ DOES NOT PERCEIVE THE SECRET OF GOD:

“If I go forward, He is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive Him” “On the left He hides, and I cannot behold Him; I turn to the right, and I cannot see Him” (Job 23: 9)

Here ‘Job’ expresses the extent of his perplexity; He is as though searching for God, and not finding Him in the east, or feeling Him in the west. Eliphaz previously demanded from him to recognize God (Job 22: 12); Here ‘Job’ tells him that this is the desire of his heart, as he longs to appear before Him.

‘Job’ undoubtedly believes that God is present everywhere; But here, he complains that he is unable to concentrate his thoughts in God, and in His wisdom, while they are chasing him with their useless and disturbing arguments. Despite his belief in the presence of God, yet there is some sort of mist that covers his insight, and keeps him from recognizing the cause of his troubles, allowed by God; He is not aware of a particular sin he has committed, to repent it; Is not able to apprehend God’s aim for allowing him to go through all those temptations; And does not know, what would be the end of those tribulations; Will God save him from them? When? And how would that be realized?

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us more than one interpretation of the east, the west, the north (the left), and the south (the right) in this verse.

1- If God is everywhere; and He is indivisible; fills all; sees man, and is aware of everything that go on in his depths; Yet could not be seen, nor recognized by the senses of man. He is awesome, although He is unseen!.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Robert Llewelyn, *The Joy of the Saints, Spiritual Readings throughout the Year, Springfield, Illinois, 1989, p. 28.*

³ *Sermon 170:9.*

2- If we look east; namely, if we contemplate in His greatness, as He shines from the east; we cannot conceive His nature by our mortal mind. And if we look west; Namely, if the insight of our heart retreats because of the greatness of His splendor, We would not be able to conceive Him as well. If we turn left; namely, fall into sins, we shall not conceive Him; And if we turn right; namely, fall under the 'right-hand strikes' of pride, hypocrisy,, and self-righteousness, we shall not behold Him.

❖ If I go east, He is not seen; And if I go west, I would not conceive Him; If I go left (north) or right (south), I cannot see Him (8-9). The Creator of everything is indivisible, and is everywhere The inapprehensible Spirit includes everything in Him; He who, at the same time 'fills and includes'.

He is as though saying: He who sees me, I am not able to see, and who sees me; He who elaborately beholds me, I cannot behold!

... Our Creator who is, everywhere, is wholly perfect, and can discern everything, could not be discerned by our senses.... He is above anything, remaining unseen, and is awesome; The destiny and time of our affairs are not known.

There is another concept to understand these words: Even if we go east through contemplating in His greatness; He still "*could not be seen*" in his nature by our mortal mind. And if we go west, "*He would not be conceived*". We go west when the eye of the heart lifted up to God, retreats because of His great splendor.

Going left (north) is when man submits to the pleasures of his sins; and would accordingly, be unable to conceive God. And going right (south), is when man rises up through virtuous achievements, and selfishly finds pleasure in his good works, when the eye of his heart goes down through vain pride. Hence. It is well said: "*You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*" (Deuteronomy 17: 11).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Although you cannot behold God, Yet, It is your right to see Him through your love for your neighbor; through your looking at the source of this love, you can behold God as much as you can¹.

St. Augustine

5- JOB'S CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL PURIFY HIM AS THOUGH WITH FIRE:

"But He knows the Way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23: 10)

Having proclaimed the exalted perfection of God, who fulfills everyone, who is aware of everything, and who searches the depths; Whom man cannot see, whether he goes east, west, north, or south; cannot conceive His divine secrets, or His plan for everyone; Yet he knows one thing for sure: that, in God's sight, he is counted as precious gold, that needs to be purified by the fire of temptations, which would increase its purity and splendor. Despite what 'Job' is going through, of feeling intense perplexity, and inability to conceive what is behind the events in God's mind; Yet he is sure that God knows His way; That He will eventually bring him out of his temptation, as pure as gold purified by fire; And that his temptation is destined for testing his faith, or to justify him (1 Peter 1: 7).

¹ Robert Llewelyn, *The Joy of the Saints, Spiritual Readings throughout the Year*, Springfield, Illinois, 1989, p. 78.

❖ **“He will test me like gold that made to pass through fire” (10).** In the furnace, the nature of gold increase in splendor, while losing the impurities. The same way the souls of the righteous are tested by the fire of temptation, time after another, to rid them of their faults, and to add to their virtues.

It is not in pride, that ‘Job’ likens himself to gold tested by fire He considers himself being purified by the sufferings of the temptation; even though there may be nothing in him to be purified.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ When God intends to make man victorious and great, He first delivers him to temptations, to be tested, before showing his beauty to the world by the good things He does with him.

When God intended for Joseph to become a great ruler in Egypt He let him first, he who committed no evil, be caught by his brothers, insulted, ridiculed, stripped of his clothes, cast in a pit, deprived of hope, and sold to Ishmaelite merchants, to become a humble slave.

Whoever considers those circumstances as difficult would never imagine that they all were destined to be for Joseph’s benefit. But God who knew beforehand what he intended to do for him, did not show compassion on him while being under all those evils; but let him furthermore unjustly cast into jail.

After all that, his beauty shone like the sun, and his truth appeared like gold. His evil circumstances scattered like smoke, he rode the chariot like a king, and got the greatness, for the sake of which God first let him get humiliated then to be lifted up¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

❖ As the goldsmith cast a piece of gold into the furnace, and leave it there to get purified by the fire for a certain time; The same way, God allows for the human soul, to get great benefit, to be tested for a certain time by the fire of temptations, until they are purified.

I wish, brethren, we do not get disturbed or fall into despair when temptations dwell upon us. Because, if the goldsmith knows for sure the exact time he should leave the gold in the furnace, then takes it out before it gets overheated, corrupt, and burnt out.; How much more would the Almighty God know. **When He sees that we are fully purified, He would release us from our temptations, before we are cast away and driven out because of our increasing wickedness.**

When we face something we do not expect, we should not be disturbed or collapse, but should accept it from God, who knows exactly what He is doing. He is intentionally testing our hearts for our own benefit; And knows exactly when to take us out of the furnace of temptation; We should therefore, perpetually submit to Him, continually endure everything with pleasure and thanksgiving, whether when He grants us blessings, or puts us under chastisements, which are likewise, a kind of blessings.

When the physician allows us to relax and have a nice time in beautiful gardens and joyful parks; and when he finds it proper to use on us the scalpel and knife; In either case he is still the physician!

And when the father treats his son with compassion, and chooses at times to chasten and punish him; He is still the father!

¹الرسالة الثانية والثلاثون راجع ترجمة الدكتور بهنام سوني.

Knowing for sure that God is more compassionate than all physicians and fathers, we should never question his dealings, or ask him for an account on them; What he finds proper, let Him do it. Whether he releases us of the temptation, or chooses for us to get more of it; Because in either ways, His intention is to bring us back to well-being, and to grant us fellowship with Him; He is aware of our different needs, of what suits everyone of us, and of how, and in what way, we are to be saved.

Let us then follow Him wherever He commands us; and let us not think much, about whether He chooses for us an easy way, or a difficult rough one¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ The way gold is tested by fire to become of benefit, You, as well, who live in this world, are tested with it. You are destined to pass through fire to get purified. And the way impurities are cast away from gold, every grief and temptation; will likewise be cast away from you, to become pure².

Hermas

“My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His ways and not turned aside” (Job 23: 11)

Despite Job’s confession that he is in need of getting rid of all impurities from him; he goes back to proclaim that he has put in his heart to walk according to God’s purposes and plans; to walk along the divine way step by step; and he does not intend to turn aside from it right or left.

On one aspect, ‘Job’ refuses his friends’ claim, that the temptations he is going through, are the fruit of his wickedness, hypocrisy, and his hidden opposition against God; But believes that they are like a crucible to purify his depths, in order to end up purified by fire. On another aspect, he proclaims that he walks, and will always walk, along the way of the Lord; keeps, and will always keep His commandments, and has never turned aside from them to the right or to the left.

❖ ***“My foot is committed to His steps”***. The works of God that we see are a kind of his footsteps; By these works, the good are separated from the bad, and the righteous from the wicked; Each to be put in his proper place The divine ‘Truth’ commands us to follow the footsteps of His Father; saying: *“Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5: 44, 45); And Peter says about these steps: *“For this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps”* (1 Peter 1: 21).

“I have kept His ways, and not turned aside”. That is what always preoccupies the righteous, to be committed to examine their behavior on the way of truth, day after day; For them it is counted as a law, not to turn aside from their straightforward way.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ To teach you how to suffer, the Lord Christ Himself suffered. Words are not enough, unless the practical example is added to them. What a valuable teaching He presents to us, brothers and sisters! While He was hanged on the cross, and the Jews were crying out, He healed them³.

St. Augustine

¹يسوع والمفلوجان للقديس ذهبي الفم، ترجمة القمص تادرس ملطي، 1966م، ص 35.

² *The Shepherd, visions 3:1.*

³ *Sermons, 283:6.*

“I have not departed from the commandments of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth, more than my daily bread” (Job 23: 12)

‘Job’ proclaims that he never turned back from the commandment that came out of the divine lips, but always went ahead according to them; and would always do to reach his ultimate goal. He held fast to those commandments, counting them better for him than his daily bread; He could not live without them, being the food and drink of his soul.

‘Job’ considers the divine commandment as coming out of God’s lips, the words of His mouth; not just as commands to which he should be committed to guide his behavior; but a sweet and precious gift coming out of that loving mouth! That is why it does not represent a burden from which he wishes to escape; he does not intend to depart from it, and will always long to treasure in his depths; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and contemplate your ways. I will delight myself in your statutes; I will not forget your words.... The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of shekels of gold and silver Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness”* (Psalm 119: 14-16, 72, 97, 105, 111, 172).

- ❖ If ‘Job’ has set for himself a personal resolution, which is to walk according to what befits him as man, Yet, what is more precious than that resolution, is the divine commandment, being the treasure he acquires and keeps in his heart. “I hide the words of His lips in the bosom of my heart”.

We hide the words of God in the bosom of our hearts, when we listen to His commandments, not in a haphazard way, but practically consummate them. About the Virgin Mother St. Mary, it is written: *“Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart”* (Luke 2: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Indeed, whoever gets material riches, would rejoice for having, *“all the riches”*, and not just a part of them; Namely, having all the (cash) and the steady (land and buildings) resources. So it is with him who intends to get spiritual riches, He would rejoice as well, when he gets *“all the riches”*, because of his progress in keeping God’s testimonies, and in practicing all the virtues. He would be as though saying: *“Let Your testimonies enrich me, and become my joy and riches”*.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ As those who, while dwelling here on earth, have their citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3: 20), consider themselves as foreigners, and are perpetually preoccupied with the heavenly things; They have to keep on praying that the commandments of God would not be hidden from them; as by them they would be able to consummate their temporary journey on earth; through their love of God, with whom they will eternally dwell, and through their love for their neighbor, that he also may join them where they are heading, namely, to heaven¹.

St. Augustine

“But He stands alone and who can dissuade Him? What He desires, that He does” (Job 23: 13)

¹ On Ps. 119.

Despite Job's feeling of his human weakness; he at the same time, cannot disregard his own faithfulness and seriousness in keeping the commandments of God, and his exalted appreciation of them. Yet he also wishes that he could enter into a debate with God, to conceive His divine purposes behind what He allowed to dwell upon him.

But 'Job' knows for sure his limitations as a weak creature: that he cannot admonish God to change His plan; cannot expect to be able to oppose Him; that what God, as the Almighty and wise Father, desires would be for the good, and is capable of doing it. Yet in his debate, 'Job' hopes that God would open up his insight, to float in His exalted love; even though the afflictions are still chasing him on all sides; hopes that his faith and love would increase, and that he would exalt above the words.

Although God is the absolute Truth; And by repentance He may forgive, Yet His counsel, will and purposes, are unchangeable; And No one shares it with Him, "From eternity, all His works are known to Him".

He is Almighty; "*What He desires, that He does*". He is not like men who desire many things they do not do, cannot do, or do not dare to do; But He is wholly capable, "*Whatever the Lord pleases He does*" (Psalm 135: 6).

❖ "*If He ordains, who can oppose Him? Whatever He desire, He consummates*".

Knowledge is kept within the limits of nature in every way; but faith may make its journey above nature. He who follows faith would instantly become free, capable of self-control, and to submit all the natures of creation; as though he is a god; By faith, authority would be realized to him, who was created in the image of God. He says: "You do as you desire, everything is at your disposal". Faith is often capable to bring things into existence from naught¹!

St. (Mar) Ephram, the Syrian

Commenting on the phrase: "He stands alone" (13), as though there is no one else but Him; **Pope Gregory the Great** says that it is fitting to discern between the Creator who "stands alone", the unchangeable, and the creatures that were brought from naught, and could never "stand alone".

❖ "He stands alone, And no one can change His mind" There are a multitude of things in nature; So why is it said on the tongue of 'Job': "*He stands alone?*" . There is difference between what exists now, and who existed from the beginning; between what submits to change, and who is independent of change. All these things are there, yet they could not "stand alone", or even exist, except by the hand of Him who ordains them; All things are set in Him who has created them; For their life they are not indebted to themselves; And those who move, their movement is not according to their whims, But it is God who moves them; He who gives life to some, while keeping the other lifeless things by Himself, setting them in an amazing way, as creations of lower nature.

Everything is created from naught, and their existence will end up to naught, unless they are held up by Him who created things by the hand of His ordinance. Therefore everything created, cannot stand by themselves, nor can move; except through submission to their Creator.

Anyway, Even if there is an opposition against us from outside (namely, afflictions); It is befitting for us to apprehend that God works inside us.

¹ *The Ascetical homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian, homily 52.*

We should look at God as He who “stands alone” from the beginning; who said to Moses: “*I am who I am*”, and said further: “*Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you’*” (Exodus 3: 14). Thus, when we are punished by things we see, we are committed to fear Him whom we cannot see.

Concerning the inability to change Him, he directly added: “No one can change His mind”. As He by nature is unchangeable, His will is unchangeable as well; As no man has the authority to oppose His hidden ordinances It is written: “He issues laws that could not be changed”; And, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*” (Mark 13: 31); And also: “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways’, says the Lord*” (Isaiah 55: 8).

Even in things that may look as though happening against His will, and not according to it; We should take into consideration that what He does not order, He sometimes allows, to serve what He orders, and to realize them in a more sure way. Although the will of the adversary angel (Satan) is wicked, Yet God, in His amazing way, uses his deceptive ways for the benefit of the righteous, which are purified through their strife. That is why “everything that God desires, He does”, using what seems adversary to His will, to realize His will.

Pope Gregory the Great

6- ‘JOB’ FEELS ANGUISH:

“For He will perform what He appoints for me; and many such things are in His mind” (Job 23: 14)

When ‘Job’ looks toward the One and only, the self-existing, Mighty God, as the source of his life and the Power that moves everything with His exalted care; He comes to believe that everything happens for his benefit and goodness.

Yet, despite this belief, he cannot help having his naturally weak human nature, apprehensive toward the tribulations and sufferings that would dwell upon him; which is probably not out of fear, but of a holy awe of the Lord God. In awe he stands before the exalted greatness of God; although he finds pleasure in the divine presence, Yet, not in slothfulness, but in respect and honor for God.

❖ But You may well, say to the righteous ‘Job’: Why are you still terrified of the sorrows, amid all those calamities and cruel strikes, without count, that have come upon you, and by which you have already been disturbed? To that, the righteous man would answer, saying: “*For He will perform what He appoints for me; and many such things are (still) in His mind*” (14); He feels insecure and apprehensive because of what could still dwell upon him.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Therefore I am terrified at His presence; When I consider this, I am afraid of Him” (Job 23: 15)

Although ‘Job’ said before that he is not terrified before God, because of the daring he has toward Him; Here he says, that when he meditates in God’s care and works, fear comes upon him; yet out of honor and respect toward Him; like that of a son toward his father.

Or probably it is his inner struggle that terrifies him; In his frustration caused by the vain accusations of his friends, ‘Job’ feels as though saying together with the prophet David: “*I would rather fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, than to fall into those of man*” (2 Samuel 24: 14). Yet, at the same time, he still feels that he is not worthy of standing before God, or debating with Him.

- ❖ *“That is why I am disturbed of His presence; and I am afraid of Him¹” (15)*. He feels utterly perplexed because he puts before his eyes the awe of His majesty and the splendor of His righteousness; and considers himself unworthy of answering if he is firmly tried.

Knowing how ‘Job’, dedicated himself to offer God various burnt offerings, and delivered works of generous giving to fulfill the needs of the poor; and how he showed humility before those submitted to him, and compassion toward his opponents; We, miserable creation and sinners, wonder what to say, when we see how all those calamities, beyond count, have dwelt upon such a righteous man!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Being aware that there is nothing superior to the fear of God; which prevails over everything; and by which everyone tries to avoid evil; Let us acquire such fear, keep away from what may offend and grieve God, do what pleases Him, and know that whatever we do is known to Him; and nothing is hidden before Him.

St. Macaios the Great

“For God made my heart weak, and the Almighty terrifies me” (Job 23: 16)

Despite the daring that ‘Job’ has, even to enter into a trial before God, yet, apprehending God’s greatness and majesty, he abides to the holy fear. The holy love drives away the fear of slaves, and brings over the holy fear, that clothes the righteous before the Holy One. Thus we should not marvel to see such daring of ‘Job’ before God, and at the same time, see his weakness of heart and terror before the Almighty! That is how the children of God behave, those who covet together with the apostle Paul to set forth and be with Christ, who cry out saying: *“Come O Lord Jesus”* ; And at the same time, recalling the day of judgment, they cry over their sins.

- ❖ *“For God made my heart weak, And the Almighty terrifies me”* It is said that the heart of the righteous, because of the divine gifts, become weak, being apprehensive of the judgment to come from the Most High; *“Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity”* (Proverbs 28: 14).

The hearts of the righteous are not secure, but disturbed, when they consider that great weight of the coming Judgment. Yet amid the chastisements of fear, when they remember the gifts they have got, they would rejoice, their hope would become supported, and their fear would calm down.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ In case you have in mind, God’s judgment for the whole world, every event would teach you the knowledge of God.

St. Mark the hermit

- ❖ If you always remember the hour of your exit from this world, **and never forget the eternal judgment**, there would be no sins in your soul.
- ❖ **There are five works to please God**, and to help bring forth His gifts:
 - a- The pure prayer
 - b- Praise by psalms
 - c- Reading the holy books
 - d- Remembering your sins, death, and the fearful judgment.
 - e- Labor of the hands.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

St. (Mar) Oghris of Pontes

“Yet I would not perish in the darkness, and thick darkness would not cover my face” (Job 23: 17)

Again, Although the believer’s heart would grow weak, and become filled with awe, Yet he knows that, he would not perish, while he is in the riches of God’s grace; And the darkness would not be able to cover his face, as long as puts his hand in that of God. By faith, the believer sees the gates of heaven open before him; And while he stands, he, according to the words of the apostle Paul, takes heed lest he would fall (1 Corinthians 10: 12).

❖ ***“But I shall not perish because of the darkness that threatens me; It will not cover my face”*** The tribulations that dwell on the righteous, would either take away the evils that they have practiced, or would motivate them to avoid the ones that would probably come. As to the righteous ‘Job’, having fallen under the rod, he was not purified from sins he has committed, nor was made immune from those threatening him, but his goodness got doubled under the stroke, to say; ***“I shall not perish because of the darkness that threatens me; It will not cover my face”***.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 23

YOUR SILENCE AMID MY SUFFERINGS IS SWEETER THAN MEN' S CONDOLENCES

- ❖ Amid the bitterness of my soul, I complained.
My sufferings are too heavy for moans or sighs.
Those who see me, may count me as though protesting against You.
I trust in Your love, and in Your righteousness.
I wish I can encounter You.
As You alone can search my heart.
Why are You keeping silent, O the Philanthropic?
Bring me to trial; But according to Your mercy.
I want to debate with You.
As I know that, by Your cross, I shall be forever saved.
- ❖ Why are You keeping silent, O the amazing in Your love?
I want to flee from the divine Justice; by resorting to Your love.
I want to confess my sins to You;
As no one will have Your compassion on my weakness.
- ❖ If I look toward the east, I see Your greatness;
And keep silent before Your splendor.
And if I looked toward the west, while retreating before You;
My comprehension will get hardened up.
If I walk toward the left, where sins are;
I shall not be able to reach You.
And if I walk toward the right, where the strokes of self-righteousness are;
I shall be deprived of beholding You.
Tell me, How can I behold You and talk to You?
You are my only refuge.
- ❖ You are everywhere;
You are in my depths.
Yet, in my foolishness, I did not know how to encounter You.
You see me, and search my depths.
Yet, because of my blindness, I cannot see You, nor apprehend Your secrets.
Your plan for me is exalted.
- ❖ You want me like gold purified with fire free of impurities;
You allow for me to pass through temptations.
Despite Your silence, You incessantly work in me;
Amid my bitter screams, You watch my soul while being purified as though with
fire.
You watch me coming in glories, that are the work of Your grace in me.
In Your silence, You may seem as though You do not care for my bitter screams.
But, as a wise Potter, You know when to bring me out of the furnace of
temptations.
You watch while I, the mud, transform into a vessel for honor!
You would never leave me in the fire until I burn.
And would not bring me out before the proper time, lest I get corrupted.
- ❖ I see You as the heavenly Physician, silently holding the scalpel.

To cut through my flesh, to remove my soars.
I see You as the Father, who although silent, yet His eyes are on his beloved son.
Now, I shall walk according to Your inapprehensible purposes;
To keep Your ways, by Your grace.
You promised to make me a son to the heavenly Father.

❖ Amid the waves of Your love, I know that You are alone the Almighty.
Who can apprehend the depths of Your wisdom?
Work in me, even if my soul murmurs!
As everything You do is surely for my edification.
As a weak creation, I submit to my Almighty Creator.
Although I sometimes get disturbed;
Your amazing majesty captivates my whole being.

❖ In my depths, You have nailed Your fear.
It is my stronghold and my refuge against the wars of the adversary.
In it, I take refuge, And by it I walk, as is befitting to a son of Yours.
By it, I become filled with hope; Yet with the spirit of submission and piety.
By it, when I remember the day of Your coming; I cry out:
My heart is ready O Lord; My heart is ready!
Come, O Lord Jesus!
You are the Judge;
And You are the Comforter, and the Intercessor on my behalf.

CHAPTER 24

HOW ABOUT A COURT TO APPEAL?

‘Job’ wonders: Why God does not designate certain days for justice; to investigate the conditions and grievances of the fatherless, the widows, the poor, and the oppressed. As the human judges sometimes fall into taking bribes from the rich oppressors (2-4)?

1- The wicked do not care for the divine Judge	1
2- The wicked persist on robbery and seizing violently	2
3- The wicked exploit the poor	3
4- The wicked terrify the meek	4
5- The wicked think that they are above the law.	5 – 10
6- The wicked wish for evil, whereas God wishes for the good	11
7- The wicked think that God is not paying attention	12 – 13
8- Darkness will dwell over the wicked	14 – 17
9- Terror will dwell over the wicked	18 – 20
10- The rod of the wicked will not come on the righteous	21

1- THE WICKED DO NOT CARE FOR THE DIVINE JUDGE:

“Since times are not hidden from the Almighty, Why do those who know Him see not His days?” (Job 24: 1)

Looking toward the Day of Judgment, ‘Job’ is filled with awe and fear of God, when he encounters Him who is above the time. At the same time he marvels how the wicked that, despite being submitted to time -- living for sometime then departing -- do not fear God who embraces all times, and no time would ever escape His attention! ‘Job’ believes that, since every man appears at a certain time then departs by his death, without getting to know the Day of Judgment; it is befitting for him to stop practicing injustice against his neighbor. By this, ‘Job’ is probably attempting to transfer the accusation directed against him to his friends, who do not fear God, and practice cruelty against him.

“Times are not hidden from the Almighty”; Since the time past is not hidden from His judgment (Ecclesiastes 3: 15); the present time is not hidden from His care; and the time to come is not hidden from His prior knowledge (Acts 15: 18)¹; It would then be befitting for the wicked not to assume that they will escape the divine justice. Since the past, the present, and the future, are all before the presence of God; they have no right to say: *“The Lord does not see us; The Lord has forsaken the earth”* (Ezekiel 8: 12; 9: 9); or to say: ‘The wicked in the past have lived all their life in prosperity and success’; As even if they die, they will rise again to stand before the Judge, before whom there is nothing hidden. God hid the day of His coming from humans, in the hope that all would forsake their evil ways, lest that day would come all of a sudden over them. The general day of judgment, called “The day of the Lord” (Psalm 27: 13), will definitely come, although we do not know when!

❖ *“Times are not hidden from the Almighty” (1)....* We, as created beings, are hidden within parts of the time; Whereas God, the Creator of everything, embraces all times And concerning eternity, we do not know when it will be.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ *Matthew Henry Commentary.*

As the day of the coming of the Lord for judgment is not known to us; whereas it is certainly known to Him; Serious training on anticipating the coming of the Lord, together with a daily follow-up of man's practices, with the spirit of hope in Christ, the Savior of sinners; and the work of the Holy Spirit, were vital issues in the early church; particularly among the monastic congregations.

- ❖ Everyone should extract for himself a daily record of his activities during the day and the night; In case he sinned, let him forsake sinning; And in case he did not, he should not boast; but with no slothfulness, he should hold fast to the good; should not judge his brethren, nor justify himself, "*until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things*" (1 Corinthians 4: 5; Romans 2: 16), as said by the blessed apostle Paul. As we have often, unintentionally done things we are not aware of, Yet the Lord knows everything; to whom we shall be delivered for judgment, Let us then have compassion on each others, and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6: 2); Let us hasten to test ourselves, and to mend every fault in us.
- ❖ My son do not hasten to rebuke anyone; as this, for you, is a grave fault; But remember all the time, your departure from this body; and never forget the day of eternal judgment. If you do this, you will sin no more. Our spiritual fathers told us that seclusion is a school to remind us of death, and to teach us how to escape from everything concerning the flesh.

St. Anthony the Great

2- THE WICKED PERSIST ON ROBBERY AND SEIZING VIOLENTLY:

***"Some remove landmarks; they seize flocks violently, and feed on them"* (Job 24: 2)**

Looking around him, 'Job' sees them, not caring for the just Judge, remove landmarks; namely, take by force the land of others; And violently seize flocks, and feed on them, as though it is their own.

Here he starts with the foremost and most serious of all evil, hated by the Holy One; namely, oppression! Nothing would grieve the heart of God as to see oppression occupy the place of love and truth. Man was created to be an icon of love; but, according to the wise Solomon, "*I saw under the sun: In the place of righteousness, Iniquity was there*" (Ecclesiastes 3: 16); and "*I saw the tears of the oppressed; they have no comforter; But on the side of the oppressors there was power*" (Ecclesiastes 4: 1).

Moving landmarks was forbidden by law (Deuteronomy 19: 14), and whoever breaks the law is worthy of being accursed (Deuteronomy 27: 17). As for violently seizing flocks, king David issued a verdict of death against a man who has slain the ewe lamb of a poor neighbor, unaware of the fact that he was issuing it against himself, having taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 12: 4).

- ❖ ***"O Lord, Why do the wicked escape from their hour? Why do they remove the landmarks? Why do they carry away both the flock and the shepherd?"* (2).** Once again doubt arise; And the question is asked: "Why do the wicked prosper?"

As we do not know why someone would unjustly fall under such sufferings by the hand of someone else; It is only natural to see that these oppressions would cause disturbances, and would affect both parties: the oppressor and the oppressed.

“They go out like wild donkeys in the desert” (6). Namely, they arrogantly despise the whole world, and disregard everyone, assuming that no one can touch them or oppress them!

Although **“God hasn’t yet visited them”**. He will certainly do later on; He will never let their evil actions so lightly pass.

St. John Chrysostom

The wise Solomom says: *“Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; And in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. I said in my heart: ‘God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, For there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work’”* (Ecclesiastes 3: 16, 17). The good Lord has done everything well and good in its time; And the corruption that has dwelt upon the world is not according to the nature of the world itself, but through the oppression and injustice of man against his fellow man. Nothing testifies to the vanity of the world, more than when oppression replaces justice; than when corruption occupies the places of justice! But Solomon believes in the just judgment of God; and in that the corruption of the world, does not mean that things are going on haphazardly without control; He believes that God is waiting for the right time to judge both the righteous and the wicked. *“For there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work”*; Namely, if man, through his corruption has done wrong to the world; has not put everything in its proper time and place and oppression has occupied the place of justice... God will interfere to mend the situation; Yet in His proper time.

Of the most serious iniquities, dealt with by the Holy Book with its two testaments, is man’s oppression and violence against his fellow man... God with his longsuffering, awaits our return to Him to enjoy His love and righteousness; But in case the wicked persist on practicing their violence and oppression, On the day of Judgment, God, not caring for the details, will calls all their wickedness as ‘oppression’; As nothing grieves His heart like man’s oppression against his fellow man. He will address the wicked, saying: *“I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity”* (Luke 13: 27). *“O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence’! And You will not save”* (Habakkuk 1; 2).

The Holy Book warns us against practicing oppression, confirming its seriousness:

a- There is no refuge from oppression except by resorting to God Himself.

*“Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; **Preserve me from violent (oppressive) men**”* (Psalm 140: 1).

*“Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; **Preserve me from violent (oppressive) men, who have purposed to make my steps stumble**”* (Psalm 140: 4).

b- The oppression that man practices, **he stores for himself**, to come back to destroy him; He will drink from the same cup he filled for his neighbor.

*“Let evil **hunt the violent (oppressive) man to overthrow him**”* (Psalm 140: 11).

c- Oppression **makes man lose wisdom and reason**, to be taken over by foolishness; and deprives him of entering into a covenant with God, the wholly Just; as there is no fellowship between oppression and justice.

*“**Oppression destroys a wise man’s reason; And a bribe debases his heart**”* (Ecclesiastes 7: 7).

Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: ‘Because you despise this word, and **trust in oppression and perversity, and rely on them ...**’ (Isaiah 30: 12).

“For I the Lord, love justice; **I hate robbery** for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make them an everlasting covenant” (Isaiah 61: 8).

d- Oppression **corrupts the spirit of care**; and make rulers and princes lose their shepherding work.

“Thus says the Lord God, ‘Enough O princes of Israel! Remove violence (Oppression) and plundering; **execute justice and righteousness, and dispossessing my people**’ (Ezekiel 45: 9).

e- Every oppression that **enters into the storehouses of the palaces of those who think they are great**, and above the law, and settle there, will not come out without repentance and return to God.

“For they do not know to do right’, says the Lord, ‘who **store up violence (Oppression) and robbery in their palaces**’ (Amos 3: 10).

“Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who **cause the seat of violence (oppression) to come near**” (Amos 6: 3).

“Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way **and from the violence (oppression) that is in his hands**” (Jonah 3: 8).

f- Oppression **corrupts the heart**; Jerusalem, the city of God and her inner temple.

“Who build up Zion with bloodshed, **and Jerusalem with iniquity (oppression)**” (Micah 3: 10).

“For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, For it **covers one’s garment with violence (oppression)**’, says the Lord of hosts, Therefore take heed of your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously” (Malachi 2: 16).

The Psalmist puts the word ‘oppression’, as though equivalent to ‘the devil’ himself; he puts ‘oppression’ against ‘God’, the Subject of our hope, and on whom we lean, and warns us, saying: “**Do not trust in oppression**”; As though we have one of two options: ‘God’ or ‘oppression’!

❖ “**Do not trust in oppression**” (Psalm 62: 2); I hastened to put my hope in God; Can there, in any way, be oppression in God¹?!

St. Augustine

g- The **result of oppression is naught**; It is of no value!

“**Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set your hearts on them**” (Psalm 62: 10).

God did not promise to take away oppression and persecution from His believers; But He allows for them, for the sake of His and their glory; It acts in them as a savior, turns evil to good.

The Psalmist says: “**He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight**” (Psalm 72: 14); Or as it came in some versions: “Their name will be honored in His presence”.

¹ On Ps 62.

- ❖ If Christians seem despised in this world, Yet their name is honored in the presence of God. He no longer will remember the names by which they were called before, through the nonsense of Gentile paganism; and will not refer to their names that stuck to them through their wicked behavior before they become Christians. In His presence, they are now called Christians, the name despised by the adversaries¹.

St. Augustine

In a commentary on Psalm 140, by which the Psalmist pray to God to keep him from men of oppression, St. Augustine believes that it presents to us a living example of prayer against oppressors; in saying: “*Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked The proud have hidden a snare for me and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set traps for me*” (Psalm 140: 4-5). This prayer is not against the oppressor himself, as much as it is against evil and oppression; a prayer to God to take away the nets set against us.

- ❖ Many people pray in an un-effective way against the wicked You should rather pray against such nets, lest you lose your heavenly inheritance; lest you lose Christ, with whom you have a fellowship of inheritance; who assigned for you to live forever with Him; who made you a heir; not to your own father, after his death, but to the One with whom you will live forever².

St. Augustine

The real oppressor, according to **St. Augustine**, is not he who causes you material or temporal losses; like robbing you of your inheritance or possessions; But he who sets traps for your soul, to deprive you of your fellowship with the Lord Christ, in the eternal inheritance.

When the oppressors set nets to catch the righteous, the oppressors themselves, fall into their own nets, and lose their eternity; accords to the saying of the Psalmist: “*Evil hunt the man of oppression to overthrow him*” (Psalm 140: 11).

- ❖ Evil may come, But the wicked will not abide, hence the words “hunt to overthrow him”. Many of the righteous have been struck by evil; Yet by them, they were ‘found’ and not ‘overthrown’. When evil chased the righteous; namely, our martyrs, they caught up with them, but not to destroy them; their bodies might have been pressed down, but their Spirits which were taken away from their bodied, were crowned.

Let the body be burned, scourged, or distorted; would it be taken away from its Creator, to be delivered in the hands of its persecutors?!?! He who created it from nothing, will bring it back in a better form³.

St. Augustine

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Job’s friends symbolize the heretics who perpetually use every possible way, either by deception or by seduction, to enlarge their territories, and to rob new souls, through removing the landmarks put by the fathers; namely, the well-established evangelic ecclesiastical concepts; drawing some, and diverting them away from the divine field. They take the meek flock of Christ away, count it as their flock, and claim the right to care for it away of the church of Christ.

¹ On Ps 72.

² On Ps. 140.

³ On Ps 140.

❖ *“Some others remove the landmarks, and take away the herds by force, and feed them” (2)*. Who are those referred to by the words “Some others”, but the heretics, the strangers to the bosom of the holy church? They remove the landmarks when they divert the concepts of the laws of the early father, about which it is written: *“Do not remove the ancient landmarks which your fathers have set”* (Proverbs 22: 28).

Pope Gregory the Great

3- THE WICKED EXPLOIT THE POOR:

“They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; They take the widow’s ox as a pledge” (Job 24: 3)

Here he gives another example of the oppression, of driving away the donkey of the helpless fatherless, on which he depends for life; Or of taking the ox of the widow, which she uses in her tiny plot of land, as a pledge for a little debt or a backward rent. The wicked persist on robbing what is not theirs!

God considers the oppression against the fatherless or the widow, as directed to Him personally; being *“the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows” (Psalm 68: 5)*; *“Who administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothes” (Deuteronomy 10: 18)*; *“The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and the widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down” (Psalm 146: 9)*; and *“He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint” (Sirach 35: 17)*. God has given several commandments that concern the fatherless and the widow, of which are:

“You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow’s garment as a pledge” (Deuteronomy 24: 17).

“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it, it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 24: 19).

“When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow” (Deuteronomy 24: 20).

“When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterwards; It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow” (Deuteronomy 24: 21).

“When you have finished laying aside all the tithes of your increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled” (Deuteronomy 26: 12).

“Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow’, And all the people shall say, ‘Amen’” (Deuteronomy 27: 19).

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the land of the oppressor. Do not wrong, and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place” (Jeremiah 22: 3).

“Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor; Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother” (Zechariah 7: 10).

“And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and the fatherless, and against those who turn away an alien – because they do not fear Me,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3: 5).

- ❖ Get away, O Bishop, from him who afflicts the widow, suppresses the fatherless, or cruelly treats his servants by strikes, hunger, or abuse; Their offerings are hateful, Reject them¹!

The apostolic laws

- ❖ Priests should be compassionate and merciful on everyone; They should bring back the lost; visit the sick; and do not ignore the widow, the fatherless, or the poor; but *“have regard for good and honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”* (Romans 12: 17; 2 Corinthians 8: 21); Refrain from anger, partiality toward men, or hasten to make an unjust verdict on someone; or have no love for money; putting in mind that we are all prone to sin².

Polycarpus, Bishop of Smyrna

- ❖ Your ministry, O Bishop, will glitter with more splendor, if you, with the help of the church, relieve the widow and the poor of their anguish caused by someone in authority; revealing that God’s commandment for you, has more weight than favoritism to the rich³.

St. Ambrose

Of the most important forms of oppression, against which the early fathers of the church cared to warn their congregation, is hypocrisy, and the exploitation of the poor by the rich, through lending them money with high interest, that would cause them endless troubles. I have dealt with the subject of ‘Lending with interest’ in my work ‘The social thought of the fathers of the church’.

St. John Chrysostom presents to us a bitter portrait of the exploitation of the poor families by the rich, through charging them extensively high interests on loans they give them, that end up in their complete destruction.

- ❖ When a family becomes so poor that they have to borrow money to keep alive, and the lender charge them high interest on the loan, It falls more and more in the deep pit of need, being committed, not only to pay back the loan, but also the interest that accumulate on it. The lender may claim, even to himself, that he is acting cleverly; while he is actually acting with hypocrisy; causing much harm to others, under the pretense of giving, which he turning into an act of robbery. He pretends to help the poor family to land at a haven of security, while he is actually pushing their boat toward destructive rocky shores.

The lender is doing business at the expense of the anguish of others; making profit out of their tribulation. He may ask, why should he give up money he needs, to someone else, without getting a reward for it? To answer this, we say that, For the little gold he lends on earth, he will get in heaven more gold than he can ever imagine!

St. John Chrysostom

Adopting a symbolic interpretation: The donkey of the orphan, taken by the wicked heretics, refers to the simple souls they snatch out of the bosom of the church; exploit and commit them to the burden of their wrong faith and erroneous dogmas; not aware of the son hood of the orphan to God, his Father, and the church, his mother. By

¹الدسقولية، باب 14.

² Epistle to Philippians, Ch. 6:1.

³ On The Duties of the Clergy, 2: 28: 149.

making him fatherless, they deprive him of the peace of God; And by making him motherless, they deprive him of the bosom of the church, his mother.

Taking the ox of the widow as a pledge, on the other hand, refers to the soul that, not apprehending the church, as a joyful wedding, would live in great sorrow like a widow. The heretics take such a soul by force, through temporary seductions, while robbing her of her only ox, to make her internally in need.

❖ The widow should be conceived as the holy church that is deprived of her slain Groom! And her ox is every single preacher taken from her!

Pope Gregory the Great

4- THE WICKED TERRIFY THE MEEK:

“They push the needy off the road, So that the poor of the land are forced to hide” (Job 24: 4)

The oppression of the wicked does not stop at robbing the lands, fields, flocks of others, and at exploiting the little that the needy may have, But, assuming that the world was created just for them, and the poor has no right to live, the wicked do their best to uproot them from the earth, that the needy are forced to hide from their faces.

The oppressors find pleasure in blocking the way of escape before the poor, and in threatening to deal with them as fugitives; and when the poor attempt to hide, they mock them.

God, Himself, inclines His ears to listen to the sighs of the simple and the meek, on which no one cares. The Psalmist says: *“O Lord, You will hear the desire of the meek; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more”* (Psalm 10: 17, 18).

❖ *“His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless”* (Psalm 10: 8). The wicked particularly persecutes the righteous, about who is said: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5: 3); *“He lies in wait secretly as a lion in his den”* (Psalm 10: 9); Namely, as someone violent and deceptive.... *“O Lord, You will hear the moans of the meek”* (Psalm 10: 17); while being burned; In their afflictions and troubles in this world, they long for the dwelling of the day of the Lord *“... for the orphan and the oppressed on earth to be stricken with terror no more”* (Psalm 10: 18); And not for those conformed according to the world; Nor for the haughty¹.

St. Augustine

5- THE WICKED THINK THAT THEY ARE ABOVE THE LAW:

“Indeed, like wild donkeys in the wilderness, they go out to their work, seeking diligently for food. The wilderness yield food for them and for their children” (Job 24: 5)

‘Job’ likens the wicked to the wild donkeys that set forth in the wilderness with no law to control them; who go early in the morning to seek diligently for food; and the wilderness yield food for them and their children. The wicked consider themselves above the law; and have no work but to eat, drink, have pleasure, and to provide for their children.

“In the wilderness”: The wicked would rather have the whole earth turn into a wilderness, where no law controls the society; and where they, accordingly can be free to

¹ On Ps. 10.

practice their oppression. Yet, although the wilderness would be the most suitable place for such savages, no wilderness can hide man from God, or make him far from the reach of His hand.

“They go out to work”, namely, to rob and practice oppression, which became their regular work, from which they get great profit. The way the righteous go early in the morning to glorify God; the wicked also go out to practice oppression as their regular work (Psalm 104: 23). After spending the whole night planning evil, By sun rise they hasten to go out to put into effect what they have in their hearts.. As it was said: *“A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales in his hand, he loves to oppress. And Ephraim said, ‘Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself”* (Hosea 12: 7, 8).

“The wilderness yield food for them and their children”. They sustain both themselves and their children from robbery on the paths of the wilderness, instead of doing it through honorable ways.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the heretics act the same way; living in a barren wilderness, when they forsake the church, the house of God and His holy vineyard. They are licentious; only preoccupied with temporal pleasures; not intending to submit to any control, or to be committed to any particular ordinance, like fasting, praying, metanias, etc; they do not care, even if they come under a divine chastisement. By living in such a barren wilderness, with no fruit of the Spirit, they are like Ishmael, about who is written: *“He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him”* (Genesis 16: 12).

❖ *“Indeed like wild donkeys in the wilderness, they go out to their work”*. Here he likens the heretics to the wild donkeys, licentious in their lusts, and aliens to the laws of faith or reason. As it is written: *“A wild donkey used to the wilderness that sniffs at the wind in her desire”* (Jeremiah 2: 24); A man would be like a wild donkey in the wilderness, when he, not having the land of his heart plowed by the exaltation of chastisement, lives without fruit.... It is not the work of God, but their own work, not to follow the sound teachings, but to follow their own lusts; As it is written: *“He who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me”* (Psalm 101: 6).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ I know that what I shall say is painful to hear; Yet it includes a great benefit. [If the rich man finds someone to give him such an advise, instead of complimenting him, and telling him what he likes to hear; he would not fall in that pit, under that unbearable suffering; where it is too late for remorse; where he may seek sympathy from those who did their best to deliver him to the fire of Hades.

I wish we always preach and continuously talk about this subject; according to the Holy Book: *“In all your works, if you always remember your end, you will never ever”* (sirah7: 40) and, *“Set your work for your departure, and prepare everything for the way”*¹].

St. John Chrysostom

❖ However (green) the wicked are now, Being kept for fire, they will eventually perish They flourish in the happiness of this world, and will perish in the power of God; But they will not perish by the same way they flourish; As they only flourish for some

¹ لعازر والغني، عظة 2.

time, then perish eternally; flourish in what is not truly good, and perish by real sufferings¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ The Psalmist, looking at the wicked, living in peace, prosperity, and happiness in this world; confesses feeling envious and jealous of them; saying: “*As for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore violence covers them like a garment*” (psalm 73: 2-6).
- ❖ I watch the wicked and see how they live in peace. Yet, what kind of peace? It may be a temporary, earthly, and fallen kind of peace, Yet, I seek it from God! When I see how those who do not serve God have what I wish to have, my feet almost stumble, and my steps nearly slip! But why is it that way with the wicked?!... Now I know why they have peace, and why they flourish on earth... Death surely awaits them eternally; And they will not be able to avoid it Their punishment will not be temporary, but steadfast and eternal²!

St. Augustine

6- WHILE THE WICKED WISH FOR EVIL, GOD WISHES FOR GOOD:

“They gather their fodder in a field not their own, And glean in the vineyard of the wicked” (Job 24: 6)

Assuming that they are above the law, they reap the fields of others, and provide their beasts with their fruits; Considering their beasts better than the owners of the fields, they do not care for the hunger of the later.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the field and the vineyard here refer to the Holy Book; the heretics quote certain of its phrases, then divert their meanings to what conform to their own interests.

- ❖ **“They reap a field not their own, and by violence, they glean the vineyard of those whom they press”³ (6).** By the field he refers to the wide range of the Holy Book, that, being not their own, the heretics quote certain of its phrases, and let them carry meanings far from what they are supposed to mean. The same is said about what is called a ‘vineyard’, that offers bunch of virtues through phrases of the Truth. It is as though they violently apply pressure on the Owner of the vineyard – the Author of the Holy Book – to distort the meanings of some of its words. And as the Lord says: “*You have burdened me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities*” (Isaiah 43: 24), they reap bunches of grapes of this vineyard; gather together certain of its phrases, then squeeze from them what conform to their own concepts.

We can also understand the field or the vineyard, as the catholic church, reaped by the corrupt preachers; who press on its Creator In the persons of His members; “gathering together the wine”, through submitting certain individuals, who seem to be righteous.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ On Ps. 54.

² On Ps 73.

³ التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

The scholar Origen believes that the heretics start by receiving their talent of faith, from which they later on divert; and from the true teaching of the church. In their pride, they start by searching in the divine Book, not to find the truth, but to confirm their own concepts. According to 'Henri de Lubac, in his book on **Origen**:

[Man should receive faith by the spirit taught to us by the church¹, not like the heretics who search the Holy Book to find what conform to their own concepts. Their pride rises up higher than the Cedar of Lebanon; their philosophy is full of deceit they falsely claim that their tradition has come to them from the apostles Yet they truly are masters of falsehood.

While the true Christian would never divert from the Holy Book, the heretics, in order to confirm their lies, intend for us to worship 'a Christ' they invented in 'a wilderness'; Whereas our 'Christ' reveals Himself 'inside the house'. They distort the golden and silver vessels; namely, the holy contexts, to transform them to what conform to their own concepts.... They are actually robbers and adulterers, putting their hands on the divine words with only one aim; namely, to distort their meanings by their pervert interpretations. They are counterfeiters who have created their principles outside the church; false teachers, and false prophets; they are the liars about whom Ezekiel spoke, those who cover their idols – their empty dogmas – by sweetness, to make them more convincing to those who listen to them, They all claim that Jesus is their Teacher; they embrace Him, yet their kiss is like that of Judas²].

“They spend the night naked, without clothing, And have no covering in the cold” (Job 24: 7)

Once again, not submitting to any law, they rob others of their clothing, and drive them out, to spend the night naked with no cover in the cold. The heretics are doing their best to bare the believers of their clothing; namely, their true fellowship with the Lord Christ, about whom the apostle Paul says: *“You have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3: 27); *“and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”* (Colossians 3: 10); And also says: *“And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4: 24).

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6: 11).

“Therefore , as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering”(Colossians 3: 12).

“But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3: 14).

❖ ***“They drive out people and leave them naked with no cover in the cold”³*** (7). As the garments cover the body, So the good works cover the soul. That is why it is written: *“Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walks naked and they see his shame”* (Revelation 16: 15). When the heretics destroy the good thoughts in someone's mind, they are as though taking off his garments. It is well said, *“with no cover in the cold”*; as the cover is related to righteousness, and the cold to sin.

¹ *Comm on the Song of the Songs, 3:4. PG 33:179.*

² *Henri De Lubac: Origen, On First Principles, NY., 1966 (Koetschau text together with an introduction and notes by G.W. Butterworth, p. XIV*

³ التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5: 8).
“that when you put off the old man with all his conducts ..., You put on the new man which was created according to God” (Ephesians 4: 22,24).
- ❖ Let us cast out every hypocrisy and falsehood; and get away from every malice. I wish we take upon ourselves to love God and our neighbor, in order to become a new creation; and to keep the feast as we should¹.
- ❖ We need to put on the lord Jesus to be able to keep the feast together with Him. We put Him on when we love virtue and become enemies of evil; when we love righteousness and not oppression; when we have the strength of mind; when we do not forget the poor, and open our doors to all men; when we do not forget the humility of thought, and hate pride².

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic

- ❖ If the garment of your soul is ‘greed’, take it off, and put on another; Take off the old garment, and do not put it on again; Take off the adultery and uncleanness; And put on the glittering garment of purity I beseech you to do it before the Groom, the Lord Jesus comes and sees your old garment! You have a long time for repentance; an ample chance to take off, to wash up, to put on, and to enter³.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and huddle around the rock for want of shelter” (Job 24: 8)

Robbing the believers of their faith in the Lord Christ, to deprive them of the divine garments and the heavenly cover; the wicked leave those poor people, naked under the rain of the mountains. For want of shelter, they huddle around the rocks.

- ❖ *“They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and huddle around the rocks for want of (garments)”* (8). The showers of the mountains are the words of the learned. About these mountains it was said in the voice of the holy church: *“I will lift up my eyes to the hills”* (Psalm 121: 1).

“They are wet with the showers of the mountains”; Those who fill their ears with the words of the saintly fathers.

The garment we use as cover, refers to the good conduct, by which man covers the uncleanness of his corruption in the sight of the

Almighty God; according to what is written: *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”* (Psalm 32: 1).

And who are those, referred to as ‘rocks’, but the strong ones within the range of the holy church, To whom it was proclaimed: *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house”* (1 Peter 2: 5). So are those, who, according to their practical conduct, with no slothfulness, hasten to resort to the protection of the saintly martyrs, shed their tears and raise their supplications, at their holy relics, to gain forgiveness

¹ Paschal Letters, 1.

² Paschal Letters, 4: 3.

³ مقالاته لطالبي العماد: مقال افتتاحي.

through their intercession. What are those people doing with such supplications, but huddling around the rocks, for want of the cover of good practical practice.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Some snatch the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge from the poor”
(Job 24: 9)

In their violence, they snatch the fatherless infant while suckling from his mother’s breast, and search for the poor to take them hostages. Having no compassion, they deprive the suckling infant from his mother, and the mother from her suckling infant. And they choose to do that during very critical moments, while the infant is suckling, giving no heed to the screams of his hunger.

The pharaoh of Egypt killed the Hebrew infants, and so did Herod, in his attempt to kill the infant king among them. Those two snatched the suckling infants from their mothers’ breasts, and killed them by the sword.

Some believe that the oppressors, after killing the fathers, snatch the suckling to deprive them from their mothers. While others believe that they snatch the suckling to use them as slaves, as it happened in the days of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 5: 5).

❖ ***“They use violence to devour the fatherless, and corrupt the herds of the common poor”*** (9) The heretics use violence to devour the fatherless, when they violently attack the minds of simple believers by their words and actions.

“The herds of the common poor” are the unlearned multitudes, which, if they have got the true knowledge, the cover of their faith would not be taken away by the heretics, through their poisonous teachings; which they cannot do with the learned ones, the elite (Senators) within the holy church, who have got the true knowledge in their hearts.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They cause the poor to go naked, without clothing, and they take away the sheaves from the hungry” (Job 24: 10)

❖ ***“They take away the ears of grain from the naked, which go without cover and from the hungry”*** (10). He says ‘naked’, then adds, ‘*without cover*’; as there is difference between being ‘naked’ and ‘*to go naked*’. He, who neither does good, nor evil, is considered naked and valueless. Whereas he who does evil, ‘goes naked’; having no cover of good practice, he goes along the way of evil.

Yet, some, being aware of the of their misery, hasten to get fulfilled with the bread of righteousness; and feel hungry for the words of the Holy Book. Going through that change of mind, For them, the sayings of the fathers, become like ears of grain of a good crop.

These ears of grains are taken away by the heretics from the naked, from those going without cover, and from the hungry.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They press out oil within their walls, and tread winepresses, yet suffer thirst”
(Job 24: 11)

The wicked keep treading with their feet on the children of God, to humiliate them; but they are unaware that, treading with their feet on the believers, they help turning them into fragrant oil, and into joyful spiritual wine.

What does he mean by saying: “***within their walls*”**? The wicked tread on the believers with their feet within the walls of their city; namely, force themselves into their

own places and humiliate them in their homes. But God turns the city into a holy winepress, to make the believers partners with their crucified Christ, who says: “*I have trodden the winepress alone*” (Isaiah 63: 3). When the wicked tread upon the believers with their feet, the winepress becomes filled with wine that brings pleasure to the heart of God, and makes the heavenly hosts proud. Whereas the wicked will come out of the winepress thirsty; getting nothing out of their violence but void!

❖ **“In the middle of the day, they relax over heaps of those who thirst to the wine of the treaded winepress” (11).** Those who persecute the holy church are treading the winepress! This is allowed by the divine ordinance, to let the bunches of grapes of the soul, that got free of the corrupt flesh, flow with a flood of spiritual wine, that run into the heavenly places, as though in a vessel.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The bunch of grapes would not turn into wine; and the grain of olive would not turn into oil, unless the stone of the press goes over them.
- ❖ The soul would not return to God, unless it is taken away from the world; and nothing truly takes it away but labor and suffering.

St. Augustine

7- THE WICKED THINK THAT GOD IS NOT PAYING ATTENTION:

“The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing (oppression)” (Job 24: 12)

God definitely hears the groans of the suffering, and the cries of the wounded; Yet, while turning the evil of the wicked into good for the suffering, He may seem as though not paying attention to the oppression. That is how we feel as oppression prevails, and we think that God is not preoccupied with His church, does not care for her wounds, and for the oppression falling upon her!

‘Job’ probably means here, that while the suffering groan and the wounded cry out for help, the wicked ridicule them, assuming that God in His heaven does not care for the oppression falling on humans, whoever they are!

In the Jesuit version, it came as: “And in the cities, people groan”. Oppression is not confined to the villages, but extends to the cities as well.

“God pays no attention to oppression” (12); Namely, He does not hasten to judge the wicked, but practices long-suffering on them, in the hope that they may eventually repent and return to Him; He may let them have their way all their life long, and may not expose their foolishness here on earth, until the time comes, when their souls are required of them; Then, they would be counted as fools; the way it was said to the rich man: “*You fool, This night your soul will be required of you*” (Luke 12: 20); and: “*He who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool*” (Jeremiah 17: 11).

❖ **“They cause men to groan in the cities¹” (12).** ‘Cities’ are so called by those who live together in them; The same way, churches of the true faith, are fittingly called ‘cities’, because of the harmony among their congregation. In the gospels, when the Lord

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

intended to feed the multitudes with the five loafs of bread, He commanded them to sit fifties and hundreds in harmony; to let them have their food separately, yet in unity. The heretics, on the other hand, mostly destroy this life of unity, and harmony, through their attachment to the wicked of authority in this world. Hence it is here said: ***“They cause people in the cities to groan”***.

“The soul of the wounded cries out” The soul of the righteous is wounded when the faith of the weak is shaken. Yet God does not allow the wicked to go on without punishment.

Pope Gregory the Great

“There are those who rebel against the light; they do not know its ways, nor abide in its paths” (Job 24: 13)

Assuming that God does not care for His believers, and does not act before the oppression falling on them, The wicked rebel against God, the true Light; lose their insight, become blind to the ways of God, and no more abide in His paths.

Some believe that those who do not keep the divine commandment, although they claim to know God – **the true Light**– Yet they are rebels against the knowledge they have got, when they refuse to walk according to it.

Some¹ interpret this phrase literally, that, despite having the light of the day, yet the wicked choose the darkness of the night, more befitting for their evil ways, which are called, *“Works of darkness”* (Ephesians 5: 11). *“For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed; But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God”* (John 3: 20, 21).

❖ Those who first rebelled with prior knowledge, became blind afterwards, and knew no more; according to what is written: *“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful”* (Romans 1: 21, 28); Then added, *“God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting”*. As they did not intend to glorify Him, whom they knew, they were given a feeling of being rejected, and were forsaken to this destiny; namely, not to know any more how to realize the evil they have done... Now, those who do not care to do the obviously good deeds, will no more get the understanding to know what is more pure.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Seeing the heavy burden of the sinner, the Lord Jesus wept; He did not let the church weep alone, but he had as well, compassion on his beloved, saying to the dead man: *“Come forth”* (John 11: 43); Namely, You, who are cast **out into the darkness of the conscience**, into the captivity of your sins, and into the prison of your crimes, *“Come forth”*, Let your sins be exposed to get justified; *“For with the mouth confession is made to salvation”* (Romans 10: 10).

Come to my grave, O Lord, to shed tears on me, As my eyes have dried up, and are no more able to shed such tears for the sake of my own transgressions. If You weep on me like You did on Lazarus, I will be saved... Call me, O Lord, out of the grave of my body, saying: *“Come forth”*; So that my thoughts would not be confined to such narrow

¹ *Matthew Henry: Commentary on Job*

limits of my body, but would go forth toward Christ, live in the light; and would not think about the works of darkness, but about those of the light¹.

St. Ambrose

8- DARKNESS WILL DWELL OVER THE WICKED:

“The murderer rises with the light; He kills the poor and needy; And in the night he is like a thief” (Job 24: 14)

Here, ‘Job’ provides us with three examples of the wicked who escape from the light: the **murderer**, who although he kills during the day, yet he escapes from the light, like a thief who hides himself in the darkness. And the **adulterer** who waits for the night to practice his evil, thinking that the darkness would conceal it from the eyes. And the **robber** who shuts himself indoors during the day, then comes out by night that makes it easier for him to rob and get away.

Rebelling against God, by killing his believers, the wicked comes to be like a murderer who dares to kill in broad daylight, assuming that there is no one can to confront and stop him; to kill the poor, regardless of the Father of the poor.

Challenging God, the true Light, the darkness of his evil works would dwell upon him, to end up like the thief who works in the darkness of the night, after being a daring murderer who kills in broad daylight.

As, after man practices his evil deeds, violently and with no fear even from God, sin would rob him of his strength and courage, to come to fear even his own shadow, like a thief who hides lest someone would see and catch him.

❖ *“And at night, he is like a thief” (14)*. As, while in the night of his temptations, although with no true strength, he would pretend to have the hand of cruelty; would give evil counsels to those in authority, and would go here and there, searching for ways to harm the righteous. He would be fittingly called a “thief”, as in all his evil practices, he fears lest be seen and caught.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Our adversary who fights us, is real crafty, he sets himself to attack the brave warriors, to make them weak; whereas the feeble, he does not fight, because they already belong to him.

Who can give us wings to fly away from him, and to avoid the arrows aimed by him? The spirituals see him fighting, yet his weapons do not prevail on their bodies; The children of the light do not fear him; because darkness flee before the light; They do not fear the wicked, as they are given to tread on him with their feet (Genesis 3: 15)².

St. Aphrahat

“And the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he disguises his face” (Job 24: 15)

After likening the wicked to the **murderer** who kills by night, then to the **thief** who, fearing the light, crawls by night lest someone catches him; Now, he likens him to the **adulterer** who waits for twilight and the dwelling of darkness, to practice his lusts away from the watching eye of the husband of her with whom he commits adultery, who

¹ On Repentance, Book 2.

² Demonstrations, 6: 2 (of Monks)

would have vengeance against him; “for jealousy is a husband’s fury; Therefore, he will not spare in the day of vengeance” (Proverbs 6: 34).

He does his best to plan his adultery, so as not to be seen by anyone; that is why the apostle Paul tells us: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lust” (Romans 13: 14).

See **Pope Gregory the Great** that the relationship of physical exercise adulterer cheating, do not ask for the same children, but satisfying the desires of false heretics thus cheating the word of God, do not seek spiritual offspring, the children of God, but to highlight their fluency and knowledge of the right Computes adulterers!

❖ “And the eye of the adulterer waits for the darkness, saying, ‘No eye will see me’” (15). To apply this to the heretics, it would be understood in a secret way. Paul says: “For we are not as so many, peddling (adulterate) the word of God” (1 Corinthians 2: 17).

The adulterer seeks no children in his carnal relationship, but only pleasure; So is every wicked person, and he who is truly submitted to vain glory. Because he does not seek to get children through the holy word of proclamation, but rather seeks to show off his knowledge and eloquence. He is said to peddle the word of God.

He adds: “No eye will see me” As adultery is usually committed indoors, it is very difficult to detect. A daring woman commits it, while making sure that no eye can see her.

Moreover, we should know that, Like him who commits adultery, who binds himself illegally to the body of another man’s wife; So are the heretics; By bringing the soul of a believer to adopt their fallacy, they come to be as though pushing someone’s wife toward sin. The soul of man, that is spiritually married to God, and is united to Him as though in the secret place of love; When she is led astray to the corrupted teachings by the heretics, She would be like someone’s wife who got defiled.

It is well said: “And he disguises his face”. Every one living by evil; whether through thinking or action, While he descends to such low level through corrupted teaching or corrupted behavior; To avoid being detected on the judgment day by the Almighty God, he attempts to disguises his face with a mask. To such men God ultimately says, “I do not know you; Depart from Me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7: 23). What is the ‘face’ of the human heart, but his likeness to the image of God?

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ If we look at the behavior of such kind of people, we not be much disturbed by their thoughts. They reject God as their Judge; because they fear that their secrets would be exposed to His searching eye. But, knowing every hidden detail of their works, He would deliver them to darkness. “**In the night he is like a thief. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he disguises his face¹**” (Job 24: 14-15). Whoever avoids the light, loves the darkness, seeking to hide, although he cannot hide from the eye of God, depths of men, and what goes on in their minds. In Sirach it came: “Who can see me? Darkness surrounds me, The walls hide me, and no one sees me. Why should I worry? (Sirach 23: 18). Such a man, so

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات القديس كما هي.

thinking, while lying on his bed where he least suspects it, he would be seized. Shame would be on him, having not known the fear of God¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Pride produces apostasy. Abusing its free will, a soul walks in the darkness, also falls in other sins; and corrupts its being with the adulterers. He who was created as a companion to the angels, would become a custodian of swine².
- ❖ O bride the Lord, aware of the uncleanness of your heart, and the defilement of your thoughts, has so allowed for the 'old man' inside you to be crucified together with Him; So that you may live no more under the authority of darkness, but in the freedom of the children of God³.

St. Augustine

“In the dark they dig through houses; By day they shut themselves up; They do not know the light” (Job 24: 16)

As during the night, it is easy to break into houses, the Lord Christ commands us to watch, saying: *“If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into”* (Luke 12: 39).

What is the 'house' into which the wicked break, but their 'inner man'? As amid the darkness of the evil will, they corrupt their minds, hearts, consciences, and depths, to let evil occupy the position of leadership in them.

- ❖ ***“In the dark they break into houses which they marked for themselves in the daytime; They do not know the light”⁴*** To what does the term “house” refer but the conscience where we dwell, when we practice or preoccupy ourselves with something. That is why the Lord said to the one who is healed: *“Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you”* (Luke 8: 39); Namely, ‘From now on, keep away from the evil sin; return to your conscience; and listen to the voice of preaching’ *“In the dark they break into houses”*; when they seek to corrupt the minds of the righteous The wicked man who fears reform, remains in the darkness of grief.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ No one can lighten himself; All light comes from heaven, from *“the Spirit of truth who proceed from the Father”*. By this Light, we behold the Son Word, as well as the Father; And, once our insight is enlightened, we can behold the truth of ourselves, recognize our weakness, and feel our need for salvation He shines on us *“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4: 4-6).
- ❖ As it is written: *“By Your light we behold the light”*; Namely, by the shining of the Holy Spirit *“The true light that shines on everyone who comes to this world “*, the glory of the only begotten Son is revealed, And the knowledge of God to the true worshippers, is granted

¹ Duties of the Clergy, 1:14:54.

² Robert Llewelyn, *The Joy of the Saints, Spiritual Readings throughout the Year*, Springfield, Illinois, 1989, p. 70.

³ On Contenance.

⁴ Duties of the Clergy, 1:14:54.

- ❖ From His sweet saving lips came the words: *“Those who are well have no need for a physician, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Matthew 9: 12, 13). What excuse, have you, or any one, got? As long as it is the Lord Himself who said it? He, who wishes to purify you of your weakness, and to show you the light after the darkness.
- ❖ They looked at Him, were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed. Blessed is he, who bears this light that exposes the sins without feeling shame, because of a conscience defiled by evil deeds On the day of judgment, when the Lord comes, *“who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts”* (1 Corinthians 4: 5); The sinners as well, will arise to shame and disgrace, to see in themselves the ugliness of sin, that is more horrible than the darkness of the eternal fire; They will eternally feel ashamed, when, before their eyes, the results of sin are demonstrated, leaving its sign on their body like inscription that would never go away, they will forever remember it inside themselves.

St. Basil the Great

“For all of them, deep darkness is their morning: For they are friends with the terrors of the deep darkness” (Job 24: 17)

In the Jesuit version, it came as: ***“For to them, the morning and the shadow of darkness are the same thing”***

Sunshine at dawn is welcomed by the righteous who seek the sun of righteousness, and by those who welcome the work of the Lord Christ in their life. On the other hand, sunshine brings terror to the wicked, who curse the sun that exposes them, not only before others, but even before their own depths, *“They are in the terrors of the shadow of death”* (17).

The wicked wish that the morning would never come; They wish that their life would be an incessant night, that conforms with the darkness of their consciences. Whereas the righteous rejoice in the coming of the morning, to enjoy the light of the Sun of Righteousness in them; and wish that their life would be an incessant daylight, that conforms with the light of their inner depths; According to the words of the apostle: *“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not the night or the darkness”* (1 Thessalonians 5: 4, 5).

- ❖ ***“In case the morning suddenly comes, they think of it as the shadow of death”*** (17). ***“The morning”*** is the mind of the righteous that takes away the darkness of his sins, to be scattered by the light of eternity. In a similar way, it is said of the holy church: *“Who is she who looks forth as the morning?”* (Songs 6: 10). Similarly, he, who shines with the light of righteousness, is, at the present time, highly established with honors. Whereas the shadow of death comes before the eyes of the wicked, whenever they remember the evil things they have practiced.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ***“The rich man also died and was buried”*** (Luke 16: 22). You should not, dear brother, pass lightly over this simple phrase! All those magnificent dining tables decorated with fine silver cutleries, the fine wine, the delicious food, the sofas, the carpets, the superb attire, the sweet perfumes, the fragrant oils, beside the guards, the servants, and all those appearances of pride and haughtiness; will all fade away and

will leave in their place only dust, ashes, and mourning music! No one of those who came to bid him farewell can bring back the soul that has departed! From among the crowd of guests, he was taken away naked and alone, not able to take along with him any thing of his vast wealth; he departed without any helper or companion; Out of all those who served him, no one can save him of the coming punishment; he was taken away alone by himself, to endure the unbearable sufferings;

“All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flowers fade, But the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40: 6-8).

Yes, death came, extinguished all those luxuries, and took him away like a captive, his head bowed down, wordless, moaning with shame, shaking with fear; feeling as though all those things he enjoyed have been like a dream¹!

St. John Chrysostom

9-TERROR WILL DWELL UPON THE WICKED:

“Swift are they on the face of the waters; their portion on the land is cursed; no treader turns toward their vineyards” (Job 24: 18)

After presenting the wicked that practice murder, adultery, and robbery, as children of darkness, who seek the night and fear the morning; ‘Job’ takes us along to the extension of their work, not on earth, but even on the water of the sea.

Some see how the pirates of the sea use light boats that can smoothly and swiftly sail on the surface of the water to help them rob one ship after another. They scorn the work on land, especially on the fields and vineyards, as a lowly profession that brings no profit that could be compared to theirs as pirates on the seas!

We can also say that ‘Job’ looks at the wicked murderers , adulterers, robbers, and house breakers; who, although seemingly frightful and terrifying; to see them as actually very weak and vulnerable; sailing on the surface of water like light boats amid stormy seas and mighty waves; cursed by the whole earth; with no safe haven to provide them with security.. The righteous, on the other hand, are blessing on earth, treading along the ways of vineyards; namely along the way of spiritual wine, that fill the souls with joy and rejoice.

❖ ***“Swift are they on the face of waters” (18)***. The mind of the wicked is so (light) that any breathe of temptation that may touch him would readily sweep him away. His unstable heart is like the surface of waters before the wind. At a time, a breath of anger would blow him away; and at another, a breath of pride, or a breath of lust, envy, or vanity, would push and move him around; Because he is (light) on the surface of waters, any wind of error would blow him away!

***“Their portion on the land is cursed”;* (18)**. He who does what is upright in the present life, yet faces tribulations, Although having such bangs of labor, yet he is seen as perfect, for the sake of the eternal inheritance. Whereas he who does not refrain from evil deeds, for the sake of gaining an abundance of temporal benefits, despite the prosperity he is in, yet: “His portion on the land is cursed”.

“They will not tread along the way of vineyards” (18) “The way of vineyards” is the upright way of churches, according to the upright ordinance of the living Righteous One; forsaken by the heretic, or carnal men, who do not abide to the right faith.

Walking along “the way of the vineyard” is holding fast to the fathers of the holy church, like to bunch of grapes, getting drunk by their words in love of eternity.

Pope Gregory the Great

“As drought and heat consume the snow waters, so should ‘Sheol’ those who have sinned” (Job 24: 19)

Trying to escape from the curse of the land, by setting forth to the sea; there they would be chased by perdition, and would become like flakes of snow that melt before the intense heat. Suffering from spiritual drought, they would go down to “Sheol”.

“The womb should forget him, the worms should feed sweetly on him; He should be remembered no more, and wickedness should be broken like a tree” (Job 24: 20)

“The womb should forget him” (20). Vainly assuming that everyone fears him, and would go on remembering him; the wicked would soon be forgotten even by his own mother who begat him.

The church, indeed, would never forget humanity, would always moan for the sake of every soul that perishes, and would cry out together with her heavenly Groom, saying: *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you”* (Isaiah 49: 15); But he who persists on his wickedness and his rebellion, the church would not commit him to salvation, but to the isolation of his soul from Christ, the Grantor of salvation, and to hear the divine voice, saying: *“I never knew you; Depart from Me”* (Matthew 7: 23). The church would tell him that she forgot him, and would remember him no more!

“The worms should feed sweetly on him” (20); Namely, that God would not condemn him to be hanged on the walls to be devoured by the birds of prey, or to be eaten by the wild beasts; But He would let him die and be buried in a grave, to be sweetly fed upon by worms, like the rest of humans, until the time comes for him to stand before the divine Judge, to be condemned by his own evil; and his destiny would be together with the devil and his hosts.

In the old, it was believed that worms naturally exist in the skin and in every part of the human body. ‘Roberts’, in his work, ‘Oriental Illustrations’, quoting an old Indian work, says that in the different parts of the body, there are 18 kinds of worms, ready to consume it once he is dead. The sick people in India used to say: ‘Oh, my body became like a nest of worms that are incessantly devouring my flesh¹’.

“He should be remembered no more; And wickedness would be broken like a tree” (20). He would be remembered no more, Not only by humans, who would count him as a broken tree; But he would also be forgotten by God, who, on the day of judgment, would say to him: *“I never knew you”* (Luke 7: 23); God would forget him; namely, would not grant him His mercies and grace.

❖ **“He would be remembered no more; He would be crushed like a broken fruitless branch of a tree” (20).** This is the destiny of him who remain until his last breath

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 213.

persistent on his evil habits; He would be worthy of being utterly wiped out from the memory of his Creator.

Yet, we should apply the term 'remember' to God with reservation! How can the Almighty, who would never 'forget', be said to 'remember'? This could be our ways as humans: to remember those whom we embrace; and to forget those whom we forsake. But as far as God is concerned, We can say, according to human terms, that He 'remembers' when He grants gifts; And 'forgets' when He forsakes those with whom He is not pleased.

It is written: *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place; Keeping watch on the evil and the good"* (Proverbs 15: 3); and the Psalmist says: *"The face of the Lord is against those who do evil; to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth"* (Psalm 34: 16). At them He would look and say: *"I do not know you, where you are from; Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity"* (Luke 13: 27).

So He would see and still forgets the life of the wicked in such an amazing way; namely, by forgetting the remembrance of mercy!

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Tell me! If you see a thief wandering in the streets, lying in wait on its corners to attack passers by; If you see him hiding his loots of silver and gold in caves and secret places; or purchasing for himself magnificent attires and acquiring slaves to serve him; Tell me, Would you consider such a person happy because of his wealth and riches; Or would you see him miserable because of what is awaiting him of severe chastisement? He may indeed be still free; not yet apprehended, not yet brought before a judge, not yet charged with any crime, still eating and drinking in abundance, and enjoying himself; And yet, he is considered miserable because of what he would definitely face on the day of judgment, of well deserved punishment and coming suffering. So, this is how we should think about the greedy wicked, on account of what awaits them of horrible divine tribunal, merciless condemnation, and outer darkness!

Seeing how some wrongdoers escape temporarily from chastisement; and knowing what would surely await them, we should pray for their sake, and for our own, to be spared of such way of life with all its abhorrent riches! Although, as far as God is concerned, No one who leads, and persist on leading, such way of life, would ever be spared being brought under the eternal punishment we read about in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man mentioned in the holy gospel.

Recalling all these thoughts in our mind, beloved brethren, We should not any more consider a happy man as the rich, but the good one; And a miserable man as the poor but the wicked one; We should take into consideration, not what is present, but what is to come¹!

(St. John Chrysostom)

10-THE ROD OF THE WICKED WILL NO COME ON THE RIGHTEOUS:

"For he preys on the barren who do not bear, and does no good for the widow"
(Job 24: 21)

¹العازر والغني، عظة 1.

Evil would be helpless to harm the productive mother; but would easily harm the barren that do not bear. He, likewise, cannot touch a bride rejoicing in her groom, he does no good for the widow.

Who is the barren here, and who is the widow?

The soul that does not enjoy the grace of God, and consequently cannot testify to the gospel of Christ, or bear children to the Lord, could be considered barren. On the other hand, It is said about the congregation of the church: “*None is barren among them*” (Songs 4: 2; 6: 6). Such productive souls by the Holy Spirit, the wicked would not be able to touch; His opposition and charges against them would rather turn into perpetual conquests, and they would enjoy the crowns of glory.

What the wicked practices against the bride, united with her heavenly Groom, would be counted as something for her benefit, that would rather increase her splendor, and let her enjoy crucifixion together with her Groom. Whereas she who becomes widowed through forsaking her groom, as though dead, and have no more existence in her heart and mind; The wicked would do her no good, but would rather destroy her with his wickedness.

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us the following symbolic interpretation of this phrase:

❖ **“He feeds the barren who does not bear, and does no good for the widow¹” (21).**

Who is she, referred to as barren, but the body that seeks only the temporal things; being unable to bear good thoughts? And who is she, counted as widow, but the soul, with whom the Creator intended to unify, through marriage, in the secret place of the heavenly womb; according to the testimony of the Psalmist: “*Like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*” (Psalm 19: 5). This soul is indeed called a widow, as her ‘Man’ submitted to death for her sake; And now He lives away from her in heaven, hidden from her face.

That is why the wicked who does not care for the life of his soul, while obeying the lusts of his body, is said to “*feeds the barren, and despises doing good work for the widow*” (21).

Pope Gregory the Great

“But God drags away the mighty by His power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life” (Job 24: 22)

‘Job’ believes that the wicked in his pride and self assurance, disturbs even the great on earth, and not even the mightier of the mighty can confront him. When he becomes agitated he knocks down everyone around him; But although no one is safe before him, At the same time, he himself is not sure of his own safety; as “*His hand is against everyone, and everyone’s hand is against him*” (Genesis 16: 12)².

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the wicked here symbolizes the heretic, who in the pride of his heart assumes that he is the cleverest of all, despises all others, and feels haughty with his vain knowledge; He is only preoccupied with his own glory and honor. About such a man, the apostle Paul says: “*God has chosen the weak to put to shame the wise*” (1 Corinthians 1: 27).

¹ *Duties of the Clergy, 1:14:54.*

² *Matthew Henry: Commentary on Job.*

❖ **St. John** says: *“He who says, ‘I know Him’, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar”* (1 John 2: 4); So says St. Paul: *“They think they know God, while by their works they deny Him”*; And so says St. James: *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2: 20, 26).

Pope Gregory the Great

“He gives them security, and they rely on it; Yet His eyes are on their ways”
(Job 24: 23)

Beside the troubles the wicked causes to even his beloved ones, he also destroys himself; *“His hand is against everyone, and everyone’s hand is against him”*. Yet God remains longsuffering on him, and may allow for him, despite his arrogance, to succeed in this world, to lead a life of temporary prosperity, and even to end his life in peace; as it happened with Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, who *“lived at odds with all his kin”*; yet he *“breathed his last and died among all his people”* (Genesis 16: 12; 25: 18). It may seem as though such a man is put under a special divine protection and care; that man marvels, how he could lead a successful life, and could even be spared of the dangers he may cause to himself!

When God shows longsuffering toward the wicked, he sometimes, misunderstanding the divine intention, thinks that he is immune of any harm. *“Because the sentence against his evil work is not executed speedily”* (Ecclesiastes 8: 11), he assumes that God does not mind his wickedness, and that He would not call him to judgment. He may even think that God loves him more than everyone on earth, and that he is the object of His divine care because of his self-righteousness!

The wicked wrongly seeing his wicked life as the way of truth, increases his pride and haughtiness; while *“God’s eyes are on his ways”*, hoping that, eventually, he may forsake the pride of his heart, and walk along the way of the cross with humility.

❖ Paul says: *“Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”* (Romans 2: 4-5).

“God’s eyes are on his ways”. Because the wicked cares only for his ways, depends only on his mind; and considers only the temporary things that are of benefit to him, The Lord Christ was keen on demanding from the then haughty hearts of his two disciples, who asked Him to grant them to sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His glory, to seek the true glory, asking them: *“Can you drink the cup that I drink?”* By that, the cup of passion was presented before their eyes as an example to be followed, to find first the way of humility, in case they are seeking the pleasures of greatness.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They are exalted for a little while, and then they are gone. They are brought low; They are taken out of the way like all others; They dry out like the heads of grain”
(Job 24: 24)

When the wicked think as though they are beloved by heaven, and when they wrongly assume that they are lifted up in honor, and no danger would ever come to them; They would, all of a sudden collapse, and become as though nonexistent; Their pride

would be brought down to dust; they would die like all men; and would dry out like the heads of grain. Then every vain honor they may have would be taken away.

❖ ***“They are exalted for a little while; then they are gone” (24).*** The glory of the wicked, even if it persist for several years, and are considered by the minds of the weak as well-established; Yet, its coming to a sudden end, proves clearly that temporal glory has a certain limit, which makes it vain and of no true value.

Man’s self-glorification is temporary and non-persistent; because it is separated from the strong foundation of the eternal essence. It would eventually fall to destruction; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“You cast them down to destruction”* (Psalm 73: 18), who also says: *“For yet a little while, and the wicked shall be no more”* (Psalm 37: 10). And as said by James: *“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”* (James 4: 14). And expressing the temporary nature of the carnal glory, the prophet Isaiah says: *“All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field”* (Isaiah 40: 6).

“They dry out like the heads of grain”. The haughtiness of the proud will surely be destroyed under the pressure of the ultimate sieving; whereas the life of the elect will be glorified.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ When a brother monk once asked St. Bimoa: ‘Why do demons keep me from doing good to my neighbors?’ He answered him, saying: ‘When you say so, you are accusing the Lord of lying!’; He who said: *“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10: 9). You should rather say: ‘It is I who refuse doing mercy’, because you do not attempt to crush the unclean spirits?’

“Now if it is not so, *Who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?*” (Job 24: 25)

‘Job’ ends his talk with a daring challenge to all those around him, to prove him a liar, if they could.

❖ The righteous man, even if he utters something wrong, would never be judged by the wicked who leads a wicked life As those who persist on following the principles of deception, would always lack the boldness to rebuke others.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 24

I WOULD FALL IN THE HAND OF GOD, RATHER THAN IN THE HAND OF MAN

- ❖ Falling in the hand of the Almighty is better than falling in the hand of man.
Man, in his weakness, helplessness to conceive the times,
Tends to become cruel on his fellow men.
Whereas God, with His might and knowledge of the secrets of the heart, and His
conception of the times,
Is full of compassion toward our weakness.
I would rather fall in Your hand, O You amazing Judge,
Than to fall in the hand of man who is weak and helpless like me.
- ❖ I am not judging my brethren for their cruelty on me.
As I am cruel, as well, on my fellow man
When I am under the same sentence as he is.
In my foolishness, I bring my sins down on him, instead of showing compassion
toward him.
- ❖ When You, the Judge compassionately support my weakness,
My fellow man, my partner in weakness, on the contrary robs me of my humanity.
Forcing himself on my life, he does not only rob what is mine, But he even robs my
whole being.
- ❖ When You, the Holy One, cannot bear to see my tears!
My fellow man, when he sees my tears, he accuses me of deception and lack of
uprightness.
He goes around me with no control,
Not to mend, but to destroy, and to bring darkness into my depths.
- ❖ You have created the world to become an icon of heaven.
But corruption came into us, and oppression became the law of that beautiful world.
Instead of the justice mixed with love, Injustice dwelt in our human life
The places of justice are transformed into centers of corruption.
Yet in Your longsuffering, You still anticipate our return to the divine Truth.
- ❖ I do not fear man's oppression against me.
But I rather fear my own oppression against my fellow man,
When he resort to You, and his depths cry out against me.
Whatever I do against my brother, would come back to me.
Take away from me the violence, cruelty, and oppression.
So that I may enter with You into an eternal covenant.
Grant me compassion toward those whom I lead.
Grant me to bear the spirit of compassionate leadership.
- ❖ My depths cry out; As in them, all what I did to my brethren are embedded.
Who can save me of my wickedness, but You?
Take it away from the storehouses of my heart; And put Your righteousness in its
place.
Take it away from my depths; to turn them into a holy temple for You.

Take it away from me; As it is all deception and vanity.
Take it away; I cannot endure Your wrath, O Righteous One, who hates oppression.

- ❖ My Lord, Your grace takes the spirit of oppression away from me and from my brethren.

Without Your grace, man loses his inner compassion.

He would justify for himself robbing the fatherless and the widows.

He would turn into a beast to devour the poor.

He would count the whole world as belonging only to him and his descendants.

He would rob without a deterrent.

He would not care for the suffering of his brethren, or for their tears.

He would snatch the suckling from his mother's breast

He would captivate the poor and take him as a slave.

He would assume that there is no law to punish him; or a God to Judge him.

He would love darkness, murder, robbery, and adultery.

He would assume that there is no one who sees or hold account.

- ❖ How miserable is the oppressor!

God is longsuffering toward him, with hope for his return.

Curse would dwell upon him.

He would end up with an inner famine.

A pit would be prepared to swallow him.

He would turn into a sweet meal for the worms.

His memory would go away from the world, like a tree broken from its roots.

He would fall in the middle of his riches and pride.

- ❖ Keep me in You, O Lord, not to practice oppression.

I shall not fear the oppression of men, as long as You are my only resort.

CHAPTER 25

THE LAST CHARGE AGAINST ‘JOB’ WHO CAN ADMONISH GOD?

It seems that Bildad and his company stood helpless to respond to Job’s claim, that there are wicked men who are successful, and on whom God may sometimes remain longsuffering, up to their last breath on earth; Albeit that does not imply their escape from the fruit of their evil; As, as long as they did not return to God by repentance, they will definitely fall into an eternal judgment.

That is why, when it was Bildad’s turn to talk; Being unable to respond to Job’s talk that came in the last chapter, and having nothing new to talk about, he disregarded the main issue, and presented a very concise new charge against ‘Job’, repeating what was said before.

By the following reasons, we can justify why Job’s three friends stopped their violent debate:

1- They felt that ‘Job’ has put them in a tight corner by his talk about some wicked who do not suffer any troubles, and who even may become more successful than the righteous. They did not ask him for actual examples to support this claim, as they might already have certain contemporary ones.

2- Counting what they have already said as enough, they might have reached the conclusion that there was no need for useless further repetition.

3- They might have realized that what they said conformed with Job’s views; and that their thoughts were not different from his; Especially when ‘Job’ confirmed the inevitable ultimate eternal perdition of the wicked, even if they happen to have prosperity in this world because of God’s longsuffering on them.

St. John Chrysostom believes that Bildad the Shuhite intended to rebuke ‘Job’ because the later sought to be tried before God, on account that he was punished, although he did not do wrong. Claiming that Job’s request was vain and not befitting, Bildad says that all creation should stand in awe and fear before God; No one could be justified before Him, or escape from His hand.

Bildad commends God for His mighty care; Who, although He ordains heaven, and sends His messengers as shining light on earth, Yet, the heavenly creatures remain of lower level than God; So how much less, would man be?

1- Dominion and fear belong to God; He makes peace in heaven1 – 3

2- How can man be righteous before God 4

3- The stars are not pure in God’s sight 5 - 6

1- Dominion and fear belong to god; he makes peace in heaven:

“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: ‘Dominion and fear belong to Him’” (Job 25: 1)

Although what Bildad uttered, that it would be befitting to belittle ourselves greatly before the awesome and exalted God; and that the difference between Him and us is immensely immeasurable and unutterable; Yet, Bildad, bearing no spirit of love toward ‘Job’, erred in applying this fact to him.

God, being the Creator of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, and the Grantor of life; He has the absolute right to set laws, and to ordain the universe; And as expressed by Nebuchadnezzar, blessing the Almighty God, after regaining his reason: *“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to*

generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Daniel 4: 34-35).

Despite the great daring that the men of God had toward Him, Yet, they kept on confessing that He is the great, almighty, awesome, and fearful God: "*Let them praise Your great and awesome name He is wholly*" (Psalm 99: 3).

"*And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, 'O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments'*" (Daniel 9: 4).

"*And I said, 'I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keeps Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments'*" (Nehemiah 1: 5).

"*Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and awesome God, who keeps covenant and mercy; Do not let all the trouble seem small before You that has come upon us, our kings and our princes, our priests and our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until this day*" (Nehemiah 9: 32).

In his commentary on Psalm 99, talking about God, sitting on the Cherubim, the awesome God, before whom people tremble, and the earth shakes, St. Augustine sees Him sitting on the human soul as though on His holy throne.

❖ The Cherubim are the throne of God, described by the Holy Book as an exalted heavenly throne, although unseen to us, Yet it is recognized by the Word of God as His own throne ... God does not sit like man does; But, in case you wish that God sits in you, that would be possible If you are good enough to become His throne ... The soul of the righteous is the throne of Wisdom. As God, who exalts over all knowledge, is said to sit over the perfection of knowledge, if you acquire the perfection of knowledge, beside love, you would become the throne of God, ... You would also become heaven; ... Heaven, we see by our eyes is not so precious in the sight of God; It is the holy souls that are His heaven; ... The minds of God's angels and ministers are His heaven¹.

St. Augustine

***"He makes peace in His high places"* (Job 25: 2)**

If in their arrogance and evil, men oppose God; In losing His exalted peace, they are actually opposing themselves. The heavenly creatures, while loving God, they submit to Him, completely obey Him, bear His divine love, follow His example of humility, feel no haughtiness toward one another, and show no envy, adversity, or murmur; It is through the exalted gift of God to them as His beloved, that they enjoy such an exalted peace in the high places of God.

The inhabitants of the earth, on the other hand, are in need to obey God; to enjoy His work as the Grantor of peace, according to the words of the Psalmist, saying: "*He calms the storm, So that its waves are still*" (Psalm 107: 29; 65: 7).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that God, being the Maker of all the mortal creation on earth, reigns on them, have authority; and brings terror to their hearts. They lack peace, and on them confusion and disturbance prevail. Whereas, up there in the high places of God; namely in the heavenly world, God unify His elect with the angelic hosts, and all of them live together in peace.

¹ On Ps. 99.

By God we turn from earthly dust and ashes, into heavens, would be counted as “*His high places*”, He lives in us, and sets His peace in us; according to the words of the apostle: “*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us*” (Ephesians 2: 14).

❖ Being Peace, Christ the Son of God came to gather together those who are His, and to separate them from the wicked¹.

St. Augustine

❖ “*Peace I leave with you*” (John 14: 27). He says: ‘Why should you worry about the troubles of the world, as long as you are in peace with me? This peace is not of the same kind as that belonging to the world, which is an outer peace, often harmful, and of no benefit to those who acquire it. The peace that I give is of a kind that you share with one another, which makes you stronger’².

St. John Chrysostom

❖ “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*”; The king versus the tyrant, came, not as the Almighty One with wisdom, But with what was counted as the ignorance of the cross, by which He saved His own, those who were captivated by the serpent, the one with evil wisdom.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: The Truth versus the liar; The Savior versus the destroyer; The Prince of peace versus the maker of wars; The Philanthropic versus the hater of mankind.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: The Lord who comes to have mercy on the creation of His own hands.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: The Lord who comes to save man, lost in sin, to take sin away from him; to grant light to those in the darkness; to bring to naught the deception of the idols; to replace it with the knowledge of God, the grantor of salvation; to sanctify the world, and to take away the defilements and the anguish associated with the worship of the vain gods³.

Father Methodeus

God refers the highest places to Himself; as “*The heavens are the Lord’s*” (Psalm 115: 16); and as Bildad calls them: “*His high places*” (2).

When the people are holy, God refers them and their feasts as “*His*”; He calls them “*My people*”, “*My Sabbaths*”, etc. Whereas when they rebel against God, He calls them: “*the people*”, “*your feasts*”, “*your Sabbaths*”, etc.

“*Is there any numbers to His armies? Upon whom does His light not rise?*” (Job 25: 3)

The peace that dwells in “*the high places of God*”; namely, in his heaven, is not that, because God’s heavenly armies are few in number, harmony prevails on them; As “*Is there any numbers to His armies?*”. But the secret of their peace in the Lord is because He shines with His light on them all. If the light of the sun covers the whole earth; “*Upon whom does (God’s) light not rise?*”.

Shining with His light on all the heavenly creatures, He also shines it on earth; “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good*” (Matthew 5: 45), that all would seek and become enlightened by the light of His exalted grace, bear His righteousness and peace. Yet, although He hides His light from no one, nor keeps His knowledge from His creation, He does not commit anyone to receive His grace.

¹ On Ps. 125.

² Homilies on St. John, homily, 75.

³ Methodius: Oration on Palms, 6.

The Lord Christ calls on us to become the children of God, saying: “*That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good*” (Matthew 5: 45). He wishes all to be the children of light, “*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Corinthians 4: 6).

- ❖ “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord*” (Ephesians 5: 8). He does not say ‘by your own virtue’, but “*by the grace of God working in you*”; namely, ‘You were once worthy of punishment, but now as you are not any more, Walk as the children of light ... in all goodness’¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Those who are born again, were the children of darkness, and then became the children of light; they were darkness, and then became light. Now Jesus refers Himself to them, they come to Him, not by night like ‘Nicodemus’ (John 3: 2), and they search for him, not in the darkness, but seek him in the daylight².

St. Augustine

- ❖ By the Holy Spirit will be realized: Our return to paradise, our ascension to the kingdom of heaven, our return to adoption as children of God, our right to call God ‘Abba Father’, our fellowship in the grace of Christ, being called the children of light, our fellowship in the eternal glory, and in short, our reaching the perfection of blessing³.

St. Basil the Great

2- How can man be righteous before god?

“How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?” (Job 25: 4)

However exalted man’s righteousness and holiness may become, he cannot be compared with God’s righteousness and integrity (Psalm 89: 6); And if he enters into judgment with God, God would be justified, and man would be condemned; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous*” (Psalm 143: 2). There could be no error in God’s ordinances; and no one can object or appeal against them.

- ❖ “**Can man be justified in comparison to God? And can he be pure who is born of a woman⁴?**” (4). this phrase was previously said by ‘Job’ Any man can be righteous through enlightenment by God, but not in comparison with Him. As the righteousness of man, if compared to that of the Creator, could not counted as righteousness; And even if man holds fast to the condition, according to which he was originally created, no creation could be equal to the Creator.

Anyway, this creature became a bearer of heavy burdens; and on him, the sin, that was brought in him by the deception of the Serpent, and toward which the woman proved her weakness, accumulated. Now, being born of a woman submitted to sin, man has got a double portion of the sin through inheritance; and not on account that the human race was originally corrupted, It is well said: “**How can he be pure who is born of a woman?**”

¹ Homilies on Ephessians, homily 18.

² Tractate 2: 4.

³ On The Spirit, 15: 36.

⁴ التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

It is as though he says: If man contemplates in the way he has come to earth, and conceives his present situation, he would never allow himself to boast against his Creator!

Yet, you should also take into consideration, that there are those who through the gift of the Holy Spirit against the frailty of their bodies, have got help to edify themselves, and shone in virtues; Yes, shone in great and amazing wonders. Yet, no man can pass through this life without sin, as long as he carries this corrupt body!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Who are they who intend to enter into judgment with God, but those who are ignorant of His righteousness, and wish to set their self-righteousness? *“In Your sight, no one living is righteous”*. By *“In Your sight”* here, he refers to the mortal, who lives in the body, expecting death. He, who is born as man, got his life by man, came from Adam, may be justified before himself, but not before you, He may be justified before himself, by pleasing himself, but not by pleasing you. Do not, O Lord, enter into judgment with me, Your servant. However upright I may seem in my own sight; Yet, according to Your measures, my soul shall prove to be twisted¹!
- ❖ *“You are proved right when You speak, and blameless when You pass judgment”* (Psalm 51: 4). You are superior to all humans, to all judges. Whoever thinks of himself as righteous before you is not! You alone judge right; You are above all humans, who are all created by You².

St. Augustine

3- The stars are not pure in god’s sight:

“If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight ...” (Job 25: 5)

In spite of the beauty of the moon and all the stars, yet they are not actually no more than solid rocks that emit no light, nor have any beauty in the mselves, unless the rays of the sun are reflected on them! So is the church; namely, the moon, and the believers; namely, the stars; they have no beauty except by the reflection of the splendor of the Sun of Righteousness on them, to scatter every trace of darkness. It is said about the true believers and preachers: *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12: 3).

Outside God’s grace, the moon becomes dark and cannot shine; And the stars are counted as not pure; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“Then the moon will be disgraced, and the sun ashamed; For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 24: 23).

The scholar Origen³ believes that the moon and the stars here refer to reasonable creatures *“whom God has commanded”* (Isaiah 45: 12); that are prone to progress as well as to fall.

- ❖ What is meant by the **moon** but the whole church together; And whom are meant by the **stars** but the souls of many who live upright in the midst of the evil practices of the wicked; who are prominent by rare virtues, that shine in the darkness of the night; according to the words of the apostle Paul to his disciples:

¹ On Ps. 143.

² On Ps. 51.

³ Origen: *de Principiis*, 7:2-3.

“... among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2: 15); the elect, about whom Paul also says: “One star differs from another star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15: 41).

“If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight” (5). The holy church would not shine with such amazing wonders, on her own, unless rains of grace pour on her. Likewise, the minds of the many who lead an upright life, pure of the defilement of erroneous practices, would not shine, if they are judged out of the divine compassion; as in the sight of the firm Judge, everyone is unclean through his intention toward corruption; unless the grace of God takes him out of that fall, day after day.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Let your ears from now on listen to the glorified voice of the angels, singing with joy because of your salvation, as you enter like the stars of the church, with glittering bodies and twinkling souls, saying: “*Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered*”¹.

How great is the baptism granted to you, that gives freedom to the captives, forgiveness to transgressions, death to sin, a new birth to the soul, a robe of light, a holy un-loosened seal, a chariot to heaven, joy of paradise, a welcome to the kingdom, and a gift of adoption! But be vigilant; because there is a serpent outside, lying in wait, and watching the passersby. Beware lest it stings you with the stings of non-belief.

As it sees many receiving salvation, it “*seeks whom it may devour*” (1 Peter 5: 8)².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ There is no one without sin. (All) “*Stars are not pure in his sight*”, And all creation will tremble with the coming of the Lord Yet, there is another interpretation, that the word “all” does not refer to ‘everyone’, but to those subject to controversy. It is like if we say: ‘All people cried out’; It would not imply that nobody was silent; but it rather refers to the majority that over-rides the minority³.

St. Jerome

- ❖ No one is without sin, whether his life on earth is a single day or several years. If the stars are not pure in the sight of God, how much less are the worms and the corruption that came to those who submitted to the rebellion of Adam⁴?!
St. Augustine

- ❖ Would not He be good, He who turned the earth into heaven, that the glittering stars in His company reflect his glory in heaven as though in a mirror; Namely, the hosts of apostles, martyrs, and priests, who, like glorified stars, shine their light on the world⁵?

St. Ambrose

“*How much less man, who are a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?*” (Job 25: 6)

¹ مز 32 : 1، لا زالت الكنيسة اليونانية تستخدم هذه التسمية بعد العماد.

² مقال افتتاحي، 15.

³ Epistle to Eph. 1:1:22-23.

⁴ On Forgiveness of Sins, and Baptism, ch. 12 (6).

⁵ Of the Christian Faith, 2 : 2 : 24.

In case man goes back to his origin before creation, and separates from God His Creator, he would become dust and ashes, maggots and worms. How amazing it is, that the incarnate divine Word, so humbly say on the tongue of the prophet: *“I am a worm, and no man”* (Psalm 22: 6).

❖ All humans born from a body are nothing but worms! **And from such worms, God creates angels!** If the Lord Himself says: *“I am a worm, and no man”* (Psalm 22: 6), who could hesitate to utter what came in ‘Job’: **“How much less man, who is a maggot, And a son of man, who is a worm?”** (6). He first said: “Man is a maggot”, then he said: “A son of man is a worm”, as worm comes from the maggot. See how He intended to become for your sake, He who *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1: 1) ¹?!
St. Augustine

❖ **“How much less man, who is a maggot, And a son of man, who is a worm?”** (6). As though he clearly says: ‘If this is the case with those who, amid the darkness of the present life, shine with the splendor of the virtues they acquired; How much less would be those who are bound to life according to the flesh?! If such persons, who actually walk along the heavenly path, cannot free themselves from sin; How much less would be those who are still under the burden of wicked habits, who are forsaken under the pleasures of their bodies, who still bearing the yoke of corruption?! That is why Peter says: *“If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* (1 Peter 4: 18); And Isaiah says: *“On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers, Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city”* (Isaiah 32: 13) ... The ‘joyous city’ is the mind of the wicked who does not care for the punishments to come, for the sake of the pleasure of the flesh; And goes on a false joyful spree!

Pope Gregory the Great

According to **Pope Gregory**, the first man is called ‘corruption’; having been corrupted by death that dwelt upon him through sin. Whereas the son of man is called ‘a worm’; as corruption produces worms in the dead body.

¹ *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 1:13.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 25
SHINE WITH THE LIGHT OF YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ON ME, O LORD

❖ You shine with the light of Your love over the whole creation.

By You, the heavenly hosts are enlightened.

And without You, heaven seems impure.

By You, the heavenly beings live in peace.

And without You, there is no peace even in heaven.

❖ How can I be righteous before You?

As corruption has dwelt in my depths?

Who will take away my corruption, but You?

Let Your grace work in me, O whole Goodness!

CHAPTER 26

'JOB' CONFIRMS GOD'S GREATNESS AND WISDOM

When Bildad commended God's might and authority, as the Grantor of peace in His heavens, anroclaimed the helplessness of man to justify himself before Him, 'Job' did not contradict him, but proclaimed more strongly God's might and greatness, confirming what he previously said: "*What you know, I also know*" (Job 13: 2). As though, 'Job' says to Bildad: 'What you say, I also know; however, you are diverting from the issue under debate, concerning the search for God's wisdom in allowing for bitter affliction on the righteous, and sometimes for prosperity for the wicked. What you and your two companions say, I am not in need to hear, As I can describe God's majesty by words more exalted than your words, and I can provide the following magnificent proofs for God's wisdom and might in creating and keeping the world:

- a- He hangs the earth on nothing.
- b- He fixes limits for the waters which they would not cross and cover the earth again; and keeps the waters above the firmament from pouring over the earth.
- c- The enormous creatures dwelling in the waters like the whale tremble in fear of God.
- d- By the storms and hurricanes, He shakes the mountains.
- e- He stretched the heavens as a curtain.
- f- He conceals His glory from the world, as it cannot endure its splendor.
- g- All the glittering adornments of heaven are the work of His hands.

In his final words to his friends, 'Job' again confirms his innocence, and at the end of the second round of debates, he utters the climax of his the cry of hope, saying that he knows for sure that God is the living Savior; That He has the ultimate word on this earth; That he will behold the Lord; And will see Him with his own eyes, and not by the eyes of others!

Then 'Job' says that God not only ordains the heavens with such a mighty way, but cares even for the seas that are on a lower level than the earth; And for 'Sheol', where men would go down after their death.... He is everywhere in the universe!

1- Bildad diverts from the issue under debate	1 – 4
2- God's authority on the depths of the seas	5
3- God's authority on 'Sheol'	6
4- God's authority on nature	7 – 12
5- God is the secret of the splendor of heaven	13
6- How amazing is the greatness of God!	14

1- BILDAD DIVERTS FROM THE ISSUE UNDER DEBATE:

"But 'Job' answered and said: 'How have you helped him who is without power? How have you saved the arm that has no strength?" (Job 26: 1,2)

Here 'Job' addresses Bildad in a magnificently eloquent way, yet with humility and contrition; mockingly says to him: What a great helper you are for him who is without power, and a supporter to the arms that have no strength! Although describing himself with such weakness, yet he rebukes Bildad who thinks of himself as a wise

counselor and helper; while destroying the soul of the helpless, whose arms are with no strength!

Here, 'Job' says that Bildad, and his two companions, while proclaiming true facts of faith, yet their eloquent words are devoid of love, and their talk is with no deeds; offering no help for the one without power, whose arms are without strength!

- ❖ 'Job' says: 'Yet, I do not blame you for defending the role of the grace of God, which you should do; But If possible, without submitting your friend to such bitter accusations!

St. John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great believes that it was befitting for Bildad (and his two companions) to work together with God to support the contrite hearts with a spirit of humility and not of haughtiness; As God demands from His ministers (1 Corinthians 3: 9), to refer the fruit of their ministry to God who works in them (1 Corinthians 3: 7).

- ❖ **'Job' answered and said: "Whom are you helping? Is it someone with no power?**

Or, are you supporting the arm of someone without strength?" Here, we need to know that, when we work with humility, we are helping even God, who is undoubtedly "not without power"; As Paul says: "*We are God's fellow workers*" (1 Corinthians 3: 9). Therefore, if we contribute with the voice of counsel, with inner grace, to carry someone over through the Holy Spirit We admonish them toward perfection, only when God is in the heart as the Helper; Here also Paul says: "*Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*" (1 Corinthians 3: 7); As he who plants or waters is only a helper; but the ministry would be vain, unless God gives the increase in the heart.

But those with haughty thoughts concerning the power of their mind, would never be helpers with humility to God; As they count themselves of benefit to God, and make themselves foreigners to the useful fruit.

- ❖ When the shepherds attempt reforming their flock, they have to do that with humility, and to feel that they are equal to those they are attempting to reform, lest they may divert to abuse their authority;. We, as shepherds, should train ourselves on silence and meditation, and prefer those whom we are attempting to reform, to ourselves; on account that their faults may be already reformed, whereas no one has rebuked us on our own faults, even with a single word. Because of this, we, the shepherds, **as much as we are spared the judgment of men, we are judged before the Lord; whereas the congregations are spared of the divine judgment**, they are judged on their faults here in this world¹.
- ❖ The flock should to be sure of the internal humility of their shepherds before themselves; and to realize what they should fear of their authority; and what they should imitate in what concerns humility².

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ It is obvious that when someone counsels another, and in the meantime suffers more than the one he reproaches; he does that not to increase the pain of others, but to offer

¹ ترجمة: مجدي فهمي حنا. *Pastoral Care*, 2:6.

² ترجمة: مجدي فهمي حنا. *Pastoral Care*, 2:6.

them deep love. Whereas he who reproaches another without this feeling, is actually treading with his feet upon the feelings of his brother¹.

Father Ambrose

- ❖ Do not let your rank of clergy, make you haughty, but rather humble; As shame and disgrace are produced by haughtiness. The highest you may reach of the ranks of priesthood, the more befitting for you to feel humble, remembering in fear the fate of the sons of Aaron (Leviticus 10). The knowledge of the holy life is one of meekness and humility. Humility is following the example of Christ; whereas haughtiness and arrogance is following that of Satan. Be like Christ, and not like the anti-Christ, like God, and not like His adversary, like the Master, and not like the fugitive slave. Like the merciful, and not like the merciless. Like the Lover of mankind, and not like its enemy, And like your Fellow in the secret place of the wedding, and not like the dweller of the darkness. Do not be an abuser of your authority on the congregation, lest you would have the burdens of their sins over your neck².

St. Basil the Great

“How you have counseled one who has no wisdom, and given much good advice!” (Job 26: 3)

‘Job’ rebukes Bildad for giving theoretical philosophies, as though he talks to an infant without wisdom, and for showing off his understanding and knowledge, in so many words and no deeds. Although he presents what is true, Yet, because he does not consider the circumstances, the truth came out of place, and out of the proper time.

- ❖ ***“To whom are you giving counsel? Probably to someone without wisdom?” (3)***. To give counsel to someone ignorant, is a work of love; To give it to someone wise, it would be a kind of boasting!, But to give it to the Wisdom Himself, That would be a diversion of thought.
- ❖ A shepherd of souls should discern with wisdom and care, between virtues and iniquities, lest meanness would come into his heart, while trying to appear as a good controller; Or boast his generosity, while he is actually an irresponsible spender; Or disregard what he should strongly criticize, and so brings upon his flock an eternal punishment; Or practice merciless chastisement on faults, committing by that a greater fault; Or corrupts what he should do with integrity, through hurried and irresponsible expectations; Or postpone some good work, that turns it the other way round³.

Pope Gregory the Great

“To who have you uttered words, and whose spirit has come forth from you?” (Job 26: 4)

He says to him: ***“You have uttered words”*** in the wrong way; you should offer God’s comfort to the tempted, not terrify them with such horrible things. ***“And whose spirit has come forth from you?”***; namely, with what spirit have you given those talks to break down an already wounded soul? It was befitting of you to seek wisdom and reason, from Him who granted you the life and soul, to say together with the prophet Isaiah: ***“The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in reason to him who is weary”*** (Isaiah 50: 4)

¹ Commentary on Paul’s Epistles (2 Cor 1:4).

² On Renunciation of the World, (Frs. Of the Church, volume 9, p. 30-31).

³ Pastoral Care, 2:9 . ترجمة: مجدي فهمي حنا .

❖ **“Whom do you intend to teach; is not He the One who has given the way of the spirit?”** By the spirit we live, and by the reason we are wise. But to be wise, we have first to live; To have the power to be wise, we have first to acquire Him who granted us life; Who would undoubtedly grant us reason as well.

❖ **Attempting to heal at an improper time can make the wounds more painful.** And to use the wrong medications, it would make the condition worse¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The apostle Paul gave three features for preaching the word: An adventurous flaring zeal; a soul ready to bear any probable risk; and a knowledge bound to wisdom. His adventurous spirit (in preaching), and his blameless life would not have benefited him, if he had not received the power of the Holy Spirit; it should first appear in him, lest, according to his own words: **‘Our ministry would be reproached’²**.

St. John Chrysostom

2- GOD’S AUTHORITY ON THE DEPTHS OF THE SEAS:

“The dead tremble; those beneath the waters, and those inhabiting them” (Job 26: 5)

Or as it came in another version: **“The shades below tremble, the waters and their inhabitants”**

By ‘the shades’, he means the mighty monsters like the whales and sharks; Those mighty and fierce creatures that seem as though beyond control, fear God and live under His care in the deep waters of seas and oceans.

And as it came in the book of the prophet Jeremiah: **“Do you not fear Me?”, says the Lord, ‘Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea. By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it’** (Jeremiah 5: 22).

Some believe that by ‘the shades’ or ‘the dead’, are meant those who in the days of Noah despised and ridiculed him, assuming that no harm would ever come to them, to find themselves all of a sudden under the waters of the great flood, trembling of fear,, yet when it was too late!

❖ **“Behold, the monsters moan under water”³ (5).** If ‘monsters’ symbolically refer to those of authority in this world, ‘waters’ refer to the multitudes of people, as testified by John, saying, **“The waters which you saw are people, multitudes,...”** (Revelation 17: 15).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The wide sea with its great waves and fierce wind is bridled by weak sands! Notice how God’s wisdom allowed for it to be always turbulent and unsettled, so as not to be assumed that its good system is through a natural ordinance; The sound of its mighty waves may roar high and shattering, Yet, they are committed to stay within their boundaries; Once they reach the coasts, they are broken and stopped by a barrier of

¹ Pastoral Care, 2:10 . ترجمة: مجدي فهمي حنا .

² In Ephes., hom. 6.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

sands, to get back and retreat! To confirm that this is not just the work of mere nature, but by the One of authority, He meant for that barrier to be so weak; not built of wood, rocks, or mountains, but of weak and tiny grains of sand! Hence He says on the tongue of Jeremiah to the Jews: “*Do you not fear me?*”, says the Lord, *Who has placed the sand at the bound of the sea; By a perpetual decree that it cannot pass beyond it?*” (Jeremiah 5: 22) ¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ A grain of sand, the weakest of the weak, checks the violence of the mighty ocean²!

St. Basil the Great

3- GOD’S AUTHORITY ON SHEOL:

“*Sheol is naked before God, and destruction lies uncovered*” (Job 26; 6)

Here, ‘Job’ refers to the exalted authority of the Almighty God, not only over the fierce monstrous creatures of the seas, but over the devil and his angels who dwell in Hades; who cannot do a thing without His permission.

Yes, Sheol may be far away from our sight; So is the destruction that is to dwell on the demons and the wicked, which we have not yet seen; But everything is revealed before the eyes of God, and to whom He wish to be revealed, of His holy angels. It is written about him who worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, “*he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with the fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb*” (Revelation 14: 10).

Some believe that ‘Job’ here, talks about the wicked who became the children of the devil, and who dwell together with him in Sheol; Those who assumed that God does not see them, when they are actually exposed before His eyes; The apostle says: “*There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*” (Hebrew 4: 13).

❖ “***Sheol is naked before God, And destruction lies uncovered***³” (6). Similarly, Paul says: “*All things are naked and open to His eyes*”(Hebrew 4: 13). By Sheol and destruction he refers to the devil together with all who are connected to his judgment.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Would it be possible for God, who nothing can escape His care, not to know such things? “*Hades is naked before His eyes, and there is no cover for the wicked themselves, who cannot hide from His sight*⁴?”

St. Ambrose

❖ The Word of God judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart; and “*There is no creature hidden from His sight*” (Hebrew 4: 13). By these words he intends to terrify them And why should I speak about humans? Even the angels, the archangels, the

¹ *Homilies on Statues, homily 9: 9.*

² *Hexaemeron, homily 4: 3.*

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

⁴ *St. Ambrose: The Prayer of Job and David, 5:21.*

Cherubim, the Seraphim, or any other creature, are all naked before those eyes; everything is open and proclaimed; nothing would escape His attention¹.

- ❖ “*Everything is naked and open*” before Him who judges us, to whom we must give account, not only of the words, but even of the thoughts; As this Judge will soon discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart².
- ❖ Then, the righteous will shine like the sun, and even brighter; whereas the wicked will suffer many painful things to the utmost degree. And there, there would be no need for records, proofs, or witnesses; As the One who judges will be, at the same time, the Witness, the Proof, and the Judge; Every detail will be naked and exposed before His eyes³.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ “*All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him, to whom we must give account*” (Hebrew 4: 13). By this he means that He is different from anyone else. (He is not a creature); He is the divine Judge; and every one of those creatures has to give account to Him⁴.

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic

4- GOD’S AUTHORITY ON THE NATURE:

**“*He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing*”
(Job 26: 7)**

The Holy Book describes God as He who stretches out the heaven and earth, and continues His care for His creation until the end of times, when He would roll them up like a scroll!. The Psalmist says: “*He stretches out heavens like a curtain*” (Psalm 104: 1); and as it came in the book of Revelations: “*Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up*” (Revelation 6: 14). As to Job’s choice of the ‘north’, It is because he used to live in the northern hemisphere of the earth. He sees God stretches the earth as though over empty space; namely, as though on void or on nothing. The Psalmist says: “*The north and south, You have created them*” (Psalm 89: 12).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the ‘north’ refers to Satan, whose kingdom is devoid of God’s grace, although not hidden from Him.

- ❖ God gave settlement to the earth; and it will stay that way as long as He intends for it to be⁵.

Theodoret, Bishop of Coresh

- ❖ Who would not marvel before these things, and who would not be convinced that they are not just the work of nature, but that of the divine care, which is superior to nature? Who would not say: “*Who hangs the earth on nothing*” (7); and “*In His hands are the corners of the earth*” (Psalm 95: 4)⁶?

St. John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on Helreus, homily 1: 2.

² Homilies on Statues, homily 9: 2.

³ Homilies on Matthew, homily 56.

⁴ Four Discourses against the Arius, Discourse 2: 72.

⁵ Commentary on Ps. 104.

⁶ Concerning the Status, 9:8.

❖ **“He stretches out the north over empty space” (7).** The ‘north’ in the Holy Book is often used to refer to Satan who reigns on those whose hearts are not filled with the grace of God’s love; Yet the Almighty God can fill even the vessels of Satan, empty of every virtue, with the gift of His grace, and can put the divine fear in those whom He sees, as not founded over any behavior of righteousness. He said well: **“He hangs the earth on nothing”**. By the ‘earth’ he refers to nothing but the holy church, that receives the words of preaching, and brings over the fruits of the good works; About which Moses said: *“Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth, Let my teaching drop as the rain”* (Deuteronomy 32:1, 2). And the ‘nothing’ is the several peoples of nations; about whom Isaiah said: *“All nations before Him are nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless”* (Isaiah 40: 17).

Pope Gregory the Great

“He hangs the earth on nothing”. When man can never hang anything on nothing; God created the earth and hanged it on no columns! As the apostle says: *“Upholding all things by the word of His power”* (Hebrew 1: 3). He who set the earth and fixed it for man to live and walk on it, Would He not be able, by the word of His power, to ordain the life of everyone?!

❖ ‘You have raised heaven as a roof for me, and established the earth for me to walk upon. For my sake, You have bound the sea.

For my sake, You have manifested the nature of animals. You have subjected all things under my feet. You have not left me in need of any of the works of Your honor’

The divine Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian

“He binds up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not torn open by them” (Job 26: 8)

God keeps the waters, *“above the firmament”* (Genesis 1: 7), so as not to pour all at once as a great flood to cover the world again as it happened in the days of Noah. They are kept (bound) through a divine wisdom, to fall as rain by a divine ordinance in controlled quantities. And despite the great weight of these waters, they do not tear the clouds they form open to fall all at once, for the protection and benefit of humans, beasts, and plants on earth.

St. John Chrysostom stands in awe before the exalted care of God, who allows the exceedingly heavy waters (in the clouds) to be born up high above, and to be sealed upon by the air, that carries it to irrigate several locations of the earth¹!

❖ Who **“binds up the waters in clouds”**? It is a miracle to hold fast something so naturally fluid by His word to stay above the air; then let it fall as rain with the right quantity at the right time on the face of the earth. By that God abides to the covenant He gave to mankind, that *“Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth”* (Genesis 9: 11)².

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great sees in the waters a symbol of knowledge; and in the thick cloud, a symbol of the congregation; As God grants the heavenly knowledge to the preachers.

¹ On Ps 135.

² Theological Orations 28: 28.

If Bildad and his two companions claim to have the knowledge and the wisdom, It is befitting for them to be like the light cloud that floats in the sky, high above the dust and the earthly things; to enjoy the heavenly wisdom and the divine knowledge.

God, in His exalted care, grants us the grace to be clouds and a divine chariot; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying: “*Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, And will come into Egypt*” (Isaiah 19: 1). Through dwelling in us, He fills us with His knowledge, wisdom, and love; And brings us up as though into Egypt; namely, into the heart of every man, to offer them, Him who dwells in us, God, the true Love.

❖ **“He binds up the water in His thick cloud, so as not to flow downwards¹” (8).** By the waters he refers to knowledge; and by the clouds to the preachers; As testified by Solomon, saying: “*The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters, The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook*” (Proverbs 18: 4); And by David, who says that the dark ‘waters’ in the clouds of heaven refer to the hidden secrets without limits, with their vague meanings; And the ‘clouds’ refers to the saintly preachers; namely, the apostles who were sent to every corner of the earth, to pour their words like rain, and their miracles like lightening. About whom Isaiah looked since long time and said: “*Who are these who fly like a cloud?*” (Isaiah 60: 8).

Pope Gregory the great

❖ **“His lightening light the world”** (Psalm 97: 4). What a great joy! While His lightening light the whole world, His enemies sit on fire and burn from where come the lightening? From the clouds. And who are the clouds of God? The preachers of the truth The Lord Christ sent His apostles to preach; As human beings, they were despised, Yet they were high and productive like clouds².

St. Augustine

❖ Virtue joyfully shines; And those who walk along its way, fly like a cloud, and, according to the words of Isaiah: “*Like doves to their roosts*” (Isaiah 60: 8). Whereas sin is: “*as heavy as lead*” (Zechariah 5: 8)³.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

St. Basil the Great believes that all humans are like clouds, perpetual moving according to the direction of the wind. Those moved by the wind of the Lord, set forth toward heaven; whereas those moved by the wind of lusts of this world, head toward Hades for their destruction.

❖ Humans are like clouds; move here and there in the sky according to the ever changing winds⁴.

St. Basil the Great

“He covers the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud over it” (Job 26: 9)

It is out of God’s amazing love and care for us, that He covers the face of His throne; As, according to Him: “*No one shall see Me and live*” (Exodus 33: 20). On it He spreads on it cloud and mist to look dark. Although our eyes cannot behold it, yet we live

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² On Ps. 97.

³ On Virginitly, chapter 18.

⁴ Letter 244: 9.

by faith and not by sight; Until the time comes, on the great day of the Lord, when we encounter Him face to face, as much as we can bear.

❖ We would not be able to conceive the glory of His heavenly kingdom in this life “*For the perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind*” (Wisdom of Solomon 9: 15). Mist spread over our eyes; And our minds are darkened by the clouds of our ignorance. The Psalmist says: “*He bowed the heavens and came down with darkness under His feet, and He rode upon a cherub and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place*” (Psalm 18: 9-11).

But, if we count His royal throne on which He sits, as the hosts of angels; He covers the face of His throne from us; As long as we have this mortal body, we cannot conceive the nature and the way of this amazing ministry of the angels.

“*And spreads His cloud over it*”. When our heart is secretly lifted up in its limitless search, to return empty, we hear what is written: “*The deep uttered its voice, and lifted its hands on high*” (Habakkuk 3: 10).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ “*He bowed the heavens and came down with darkness under His feet*” (Psalm 18; 9). What an amazing humility! For the Almighty to bow downward for the sake of the weakness of mankind!

“*With darkness under his feet*”; Those whose eyes are blinded by their wickedness, who only care for earthly things, would never be able to recognize Him; As the earth falls under the soles of His feet.

St. Augustine

❖ Every mind, according to its stature, is enlightened by a limited amount of light.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

❖ “*God’s face is the image of His Person*” (Hebrew 1: 3). He who longs for God’s face with his whole heart, meditate in Him with a pure heart, and concentrate his inner eyes on Him; can utter the words before us.

To realize the greatness of him who can behold the face of God, Let us hear the teaching of the lord Jesus, saying: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God*” (Matthew 5: 8) ¹.

St. Dedymus the blind

“*He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness*” (Job 26: 10)

When ‘Job’ looks at the huge seas, and sees how, although the rivers flow into them, Yet their level do not increase to overflow unto the earth; For they are checked back and bound by a barrier of tiny sand grains.

Now, if, by God’s ordinance, the waters of the seas know how to respect the earth and abide to their limits, how much more should the peoples and nations of the world (the many waters) respect and refrain from prevailing on one another!

❖ Concerning the sea, I do not marvel at its greatness, as much as I marvel at its nobility! What binds it? How does it rise up, then calms down, as though respecting its

¹ القمص تادرس يعقوب ملطي: المزمور المئة والتاسع عشر (118) غنى كلمة الله ولذتها، 1996.

neighbor (the earth)?! How does it receive all the waters of the rivers, and yet its level does not rise or increase?! How could it be bound by such a tiny element as the sand grains?! (Job 26: 10 LXX) ¹.

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

- ❖ **“He drew a boundary for the waters between the light and darkness” (10).** As we said before, the peoples are referred to as ‘waters’. In His dealing with the human knowledge, God drew for it a boundary that it does not reach in perfection to apprehending the inner splendor.

If we interpret the light as the righteous, and the darkness as the wicked, Paul says: *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light”* (Ephesians 5: 8); There would be nothing against understanding, that the perfect knowledge of eternity would not be granted to anyone, until the walk of both the righteous and the wicked come to an end.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at His reproof” (Job 26: 11)

- ❖ The pillars of heaven refer to the holy angels, the basic preachers of the church, on whom the whole heavenly world of the high spiritual establishment is perpetually set. The Holy Book says: *“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God”* (Revelation 3: 12); Namely he who holds fast, with a sound goal in mind, in God’s work, will be like a pillar in the spiritual establishment; in that temple; namely, the church, to serve both for benefit, and for adornment; Paul says: *“James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who were acknowledged pillars,... gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship”* (Galatians 2: 9).

It is however, not unfitting to interpret “the pillars of heaven” as being the churches themselves; which, although numerous in number, yet they form one catholic church, covering the whole earth. The apostle John writes to the seven churches, meaning the one Catholic Church, provided with the Spirit who has seven-sided grace.

Now, even the hosts of the heavenly world who perpetually behold Him, and is the object of their contemplation, became in fear; Yet, not the fear of woe, but rather that of awe; Having brought, through His amazing work, such a great fear, We know that it is an ordinance for our salvation.

Pope Gregory the Great

“By His power He stilled the sea; and by His understanding He struck down Rahab” (Job 26: 12)

Some scholars who believe that ‘Job’ lived in the days of Moses, or after him, see him talk here about God’s work with His people, when, by His might He split the red Sea, and by His understanding, He struck down Egypt, often referred to as ‘Rahab’ (See Psalm 87: 4; Isaiah 51: 9).

- ❖ **“By His power the sea piled up all of a sudden; And His wisdom shook the proud”² (12).** The sea here, refers to the present world, in which the hearts of men, seeking the earthly things, swelled up by waves of various thoughts, agitated by the haughtiness of pride, and by opposing one another, they destroy themselves together in the face of

¹ *Second Theological Oration, 27.*

² التزمتم بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

currents. But, by His power, *“The seas came together”*, as, through the Lord’s incarnation, the opposing hearts of men believed in Him, and became in harmony.

Who is called here “the proud”, but he who said: *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High”* (Isaiah 14: 14); About whom the voice of God also says” He who fears no one, and made himself a king above all the proud”; Conforming with what David says: *“You have broken (the proud) in pieces, as one who is slain”* (Psalm 89: 10).

Pope Gregory the Great

5- GOD IS THE SECRET OF THE SPLendor OF HEAVEN:

“By His wind the heavens were made fair; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent” (Job 26: 13)

In the Jesuite’s version, it came as *“By His Spirit the heavens were adorned”*; namely, By His Holy Spirit, He set the heavens and adorned them with the stars by night and by the sun by day.

Some of the fathers of the church believe that, as man alone among all creatures’ looks upward and not downward, the Holy Spirit of God adorned the heaven, in order to draw man’s sight upwards, so as not to be preoccupied with the earthly things. He set for him the seen heavens, with such a beauty, that, by faith, he may look up at the unseen heavens, in anticipation of his eternal dwelling place.

In some versions the next part of the verse came as *“the twisted serpent”*. God, who created the heavens and adorned them with such magnificent splendor, has also created the beasts, and even the serpent which became ‘twisted’. While some believe that he means the whale or the crocodile, others believe that he means *“Leviathan, the twisted serpent”* (Isaiah 27: 1). He is the Creator, Good in His gifts; yet, granting the freedom of will to His reasonable creation, the devil, by his wicked will and his rebellion, became ‘the ancient twisted serpent’.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that God the Father, by His Hand (the incarnate Wisdom of God), deprived the twisted serpent of its authority, and, by the cross, *“He made a public spectacle of it”* (Colossians 2: 15). Thus, by the Holy Spirit, our souls fly as though to heaven, set for us with all its splendor; And by the cross of our Lord of glory, we tread upon the serpents, the scorpions, and all the power of the enemy. He granted us the heavenly life, as well as the conquest over the devil and his hosts.

❖ *“By His Hand He brought up the twisted serpent”* (13). Who could be described as the serpent and the (Adversary dragon), but our twisted ancient enemy, who spoke through the mouth of the serpent to deceive man? Who was called by the prophet? *“Leviathan, the twisted serpent”* (Isaiah 27: 1). He was allowed to speak through the serpent’s mouth, to let man know who is dwelling in it.

By the Hand of the Lord, the twisted serpent was drawn from her hole; so that, by the divine healing grace, He would chase away our ancient enemy who reigned over us; About whom the incarnate Truth says: *“Now the ruler of this world will be cast out”* (John 12: 31). Now, as he does not reign internally over the saints, or holds them in his possession, he fights externally against them; persecuting them by temptations having lost his authority inside, he makes wars from outside.

Pope Gregory the Great

6- HOW AMAZING IS THE GREATNESS OF GOD!

“Indeed these are the mere outskirts of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?” (Job 26: 14)

Here, ‘Job’ ends his talk, confessing the love of God for man, to whom He reveals just “*the outskirts of His ways*”; namely, a portion of His wisdom, might, and plan, as much as man can bear or conceive. However great is our knowledge of God’s secrets, it would be counted as the littlest of the little of what He intends to proclaim to us. We hear just a whisper of His words; We still “*know in part and prophesy in part*” (1 Corinthians 13: 9); We sing together with the apostle Paul, saying: “*How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out*” (Romans 11: 33). While we are still in this world, it is impossible for us to reach to the depths of God’s knowledge and wisdom; “*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face in the coming life*” (1 Corinthians 13: 12). Thus the little we now know is however counted like great and awesome thunder, “*The thunder of His power, who can understand?*”.

St. Ambrose believes that man, helpless to conceive the secrets of God, stands in awe before the divine talk, as though before thunder, not able to apprehend its secret.

- ❖ It is very befitting for Christ to prepare for his coming by the power of the heavenly holy books, whose voice to us is a kind of thunder; namely, the heavenly proclamations fill us with awe and natural fear.

Finally, in the gospel, we read that two of the brothers of the Lord (His disciples), were called ‘sons of thunder’. And that when the Voice of God the Father uttered the words “***I have glorified it, and will glorify it again***” (John 12: 28), the Jews said, “It was thunder”. By these words, despite their inability to gain the grace of truth, they involuntarily confessed; and without knowledge, they uttered the secret of the great testimony by God the Father to God the Son. And in the book of ‘Job’, he says: “He who knows when to make the power of thunder” (Job 26: 14 LXX) ¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Humans see it as much as they die to this world; and, as much as they live for it, they do not see it. And although to us this light appears clearly, not only with more possibility to be seen, but also with more joy, yet, it is still seen as though in a dim mirror (a riddle). While we walk in this world as strangers, even though our souls are in heaven (1 Corinthians 13: 12; 2 Corinthians 5: 7), we can say that we see it by faith and not by sight. At that stage, through cleansing the eyes of our emotions, we will realize that we have not as yet put our neighbor before ourselves that we truly have not as yet loved him as we loves ourselves².
- ❖ This vision is kept for us as a reward, about which the apostle John says: “*We know that when (the face of God) is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3: 2). We understand the “face of God”, as “His proclamation”, not as we call the part of the body similar to ours³.

St. Augustine

¹ *The Holy Spirit, 2:5: 55.*

² *On Christian Doctrine 7.*

³ *City of God 22:29.*

❖ **“Behold, these things are uttered in part about His ways; As while we just hear a little drop of His words, Who dares to listen to the thunder of His greatness¹?” (14).** About “His ways”, the lord says through His prophet: *“My ways are not your ways”* (Isaiah 55: 8).

That is why, telling about the coming of the Lord, he describes His ways, by which He created us, that differ from those by which He saved us. He reveals to us those things concerning God’s ways in work, as compared to the ultimate judgment, saying: *“Behold, these things are uttered on His ways in part”*; which he called *“a little drop of His words”*; As we, by meditating in Him, while we are still in this life, we may be able to recognize His heights and His awe²

“Who can listen to the thunder of His greatness?” (14). It is as though he expresses himself, saying: *“If we can barely endure the wonders of His humility, How can we dare confront His coming (or the appearance) of His mighty and high majesty? That “thunder of His greatness” is expressed by the Psalmist, saying: “Our Lord shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him” (Psalm 50: 3).*

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Like we see ourselves through reflection in a mirror, We, as much as possible, may meditate in the Creator through the divine element in us².

St. Clement of Alexandria

² *Stromata 1 :49.*

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 26

YOUR WORKS, O LORD, TESTIFY TO YOUR GREATNESS AND YOUR LOVE

- ❖ Your works, O Almighty God, the Philanthropic, testifies to You.
You have not set this magnificent world to show off Your might,
But to embrace every man with the works of Your love.
Grant me as Your son, not to be preoccupied with theological issues in a dry spirit.
But to seek fellowship with You, when my heart becomes spacious enough to love all men.
Grant me not to criticize any one;
But to have my depths moan my weakness, and be compassionate on the weakness of my brethren.
Let me, through being attached to You, love everybody.
- ❖ Let me, working by You and with Your grace, bear the spirit of humility.
Work in me,
Let me know no slothfulness, or show no care.
Let me know no haughtiness, pride, or self-righteousness.
To cry out, together with the apostle Paul:
"The sinners, of whom I am the foremost"
- ❖ Grant me the wisdom that comes from above.
Not to show off dry talks of philosophy,
Nor offer an untimely counsel,
Nor despise the one I am talking to.
Grant me the spirit of discernment, to walk as is befitting.
To deliver the spirit of hope to every tempted soul,
To offer Your comforts to every wounded heart,
To know how to be firm, with true love,
Yet with no slothfulness,
Grant me what You did to Your apostle Paul:
A flaring zeal, a soul that endures sufferings, together with wisdom and knowledge.
- ❖ For my sake, You created these oceans.
Despite their might, and that of the creatures inhabiting them,
Tiny grains of sand keep them from overflowing over the land where I dwell,
By tiny grains of sand, You have set boundaries around the mighty seas.
- ❖ You are the Almighty.
With authority over the fierce beasts of the seas,
With authority over the devil and Sheol,
Everything is naked before Your eyes,
Why would I fear, as long as You are my loving shepherd?
All what I should fear is my slothfulness, and not caring for Your divine care.
- ❖ For my sake, You created the earth and held it fast,
Although it seemingly hang on nothing,
Yet, it is kept under Your divine care.

By Your wisdom, You keep the waters bound in moving clouds,
To become rain for our benefit,

- ❖ Grant me to become like a light cloud, moving with love,
Let my depths drop rain of Your wisdom to water many.
- ❖ Your love allows for mist to be all around You,
Lest, while we are in this body of dust, see you and die.
But You promised us to see You face to face,
When will that amazing encounter be realized?
- ❖ Like the seas in which all those rivers flow their waters, know their boundaries.
That know how to respect their neighbor; namely, the land;
Grant the peoples and the nations of the world to respect their neighbors.
Grant them to recognize their boundaries.
- ❖ Set out of Your ministers, pillars of spiritual heavenly joy,
To testify to Your amazing and awesome works,
To preach the salvation that is Yours,
As You let your people cross over the Red Sea.
And as You crushed Pharaoh together with his army;
Bring us over to Your Kingdom;
And crush the heads of the dragon in the waters of baptism.
- ❖ On the cross You stretched Your arms,
And destroyed the deadly serpent, our ancient enemy.
You cast it out of our hearts, O Holy One.
- ❖ Shine with Your light on me.
Make me meditate in the exalted works of Your love.
Thunder in me, to enjoy Your secrets.

CHAPTER 27

‘JOB’ CONFIRMS HIS INNOCENCE

Having responded to Bildad in the last Chapter telling him that he has not provided anything of benefit for him, and that he deviated from the main issue under discussion, to speak about the greatness of God, and how man is unable to justify himself before him; ‘Job’ came with stronger, and more eloquent evidences. It seems that his three friends, having become weary of talking, they let him talk as much as he wants to. They put their weapons aside as though they got out of the battle; either because they were convinced that ‘Job’ is right, Or because they despaired of presenting further evidences that he is wicked.

It was expected of Zophar to start the third round of debates; But having kept silent, ‘Job’ set forth talking, to confirm again his innocence (1 – 6), and to deny the charges that his three friends presented against him, both by hinting and by talking openly. But now, he vows by God who “*has taken away his justice*”; then talked about the end of the wicked (7 – 23).

Now, with no warning, ‘Job’ appears as a zealous believer in what his friends embraced; namely, that wickedness is the cause of tribulations! And that the hypocrite will finally realize that he is deceived; As he finds out that God will ultimately take his soul away, he would have no more hope, his prayer would not be answered, and anguish would certainly dwell upon him. Concerning the wicked, although he conformed with his friends’ point of view, that God will bring them into account; Yet he differed in believing that His punishment would not necessarily be prompt, but may be delayed a little while, before destruction chases them together with their children.

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1- ‘JOB’ PROVES HIS INTEGRITY:

“Moreover ‘Job’ continued his discourse, and said: ‘As God lives, who has denied me justice And the Almighty who has made my soul bitter...’” (Job 27: 1, 2)

Now ‘Job’ talks with authority as though he has overcome his opponents; and ends the debate by an oath: “*As God lives*”, as “*An oath for confirmation is an end of all disputes*” (Hebrew 6: 16); ‘Job’ vows to confirm his integrity, and to proclaim his innocence of the charges presented against him.

He vows by the living God, the only Judge with absolute authority, who, being aware of the heart depths, and the inner thoughts, His judgment is true and sound.

“*Who has denied me justice*”; namely, refused to back him up in the debate, to reveal his innocence, and to defend him; Something on which Eliphaz has previously rebuked him (Job 24: 5); As God is Just in all His ways, and would never deny justice to anyone.

“*And the Almighty who has made my soul bitter*”. There is no doubt that ‘Job’ knows for sure that the Almighty is as both Compassionate and Wise; Namely that, together with His might, He has compassionate fatherhood, and wisely chooses the fitting time to reveal the innocence of His believers, and to comfort them. Yet ‘Job’ uttered this in his moments of weakness. It could not be God who makes our souls bitter; but it is our

lack of patience, and our inability to conceive God's love and wisdom, that bring bitterness on us.

If the devil would not stop intending by his wicked will to destroy men, seeking to tempt them unjustly and oppressively, Yet God, by His good will, allows for men to be so tempted, for the sake of their justification, purification, spiritual growth, and their enjoyment of glory. Therefore the believer, who is sure of God's care for him, when tempted, should count it through an allowance of God for his edification.

❖ ***“As God lives, who denies me my right and the Almighty who brings bitterness to my soul” (2).*** By these same words, ‘Job’ provides us with a portrait of the church under affliction, surrounded by the daring of non-believers, and thrown around by the bitterness of the persecutors. The church is tempted by her adversaries either by words or by the sword. Now the church by her great strife, seeks to acquire wisdom and perseverance: To practice wisdom when tempted by words; And to practice perseverance when tempted by the sword.

Anyway, he is now speaking about the persecution, not by the sword, but by vain words. We know that some, either deny the existence of God altogether, or, although they believe in Him, yet they count him not caring for the affairs of men.

About the former, David says: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’* (Psalm 14: 1); and about the later, he says: *“They say,” ‘The Lord does not see’, ‘The God of Jacob does not perceive’* (Psalm 94: 7).

Thus, ‘Job’, who bore a symbol of the holy church, amid the bitterness of his grief, responds to these two groups: He proclaims that God exists, by saying: ***“As God lives”***; and tells us as well that He cares for the mortals, by adding: ***“Who denies my right, and brings bitterness to my soul”***; and testifying that the evils he is going through, are not haphazard, but are allowed by God, by whose command everything happen. By that he refers his bitterness to his tempter, and not to his Creator.

Although the will of Satan is evil, Yet God, with His power, justly allows it. On his part, Satan seeks to tempt man, oppressively and without care; Yet, God allows for those intended to be tempted, to be tempted only justly.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ We should know that all men are tempted for one of three reasons”

- a- Mostly, for the sake of testing (or justifying) them.
- b- Sometimes, for the sake of reforming them.
- c- Sometimes, as punishment because of their sins.
- d- Sometimes, simply for the sake of revealing God's glory and works
- e- There are other punishments that dwell upon those who have gone too far in the bonds of evil in their life.

1- For testing (or justifying) them: As we read about the blessed Abraham and ‘Job’, and many saints who endure temptations without count.

2- For reforming them: When God chastens His righteous for the sake of simple (involuntary) sins or faults, to exalt them to a higher degree of purity, and to purify them from unclean thoughts; according to the words: *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous”* (Psalm 34: 19); *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him, For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; For what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without*

chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Hebrew 12: 5-8); In the book of Revelation we read: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”* (Revelation 3: 19); In a prayer for the sake of purification, David says: *“Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart”* (Psalm 26: 2); knowing the value of temptations, the prophet says: *“O Lord, Correct me, but with justice, Not in Your anger”* (Jeremiah 10: 24); And: *“O Lord, I praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me”* (Isaiah 12: 1).

3- As punishment because of their sins: Like when God threatened to send pestilences upon the children of Israel because of their Sins: *“... I will send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust* (Deuteronomy 32: 24); *“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked”* (Psalm 32: 10); And in the gospel, the Lord says to the man He just healed: *“See, You have been made well, Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you”* (John 5: 14).

4- For the sake of revealing God’s glory and works: Like what came in the gospel: *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him”* (John 9: 3); And: *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it”* (Jon 11: 4).

5- As punishment for those who have gone too far in the bonds of evil in their life: Like what we read about how Dathan, Abiram, and Korah, were punished And those about whom the apostle says: *“God gave them up to vile passion”, and “gave them over to a debased mind”* (Romans 1: 26, 28). These are considered the most bitter of all punishments, being found unworthy of being healed by the visitation of God, the Grantor of life; *“having given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”* (Ephesians 4: 19); And because of the hardness of their hearts, and of going far in their practice of evil habits, they had to be punished in this world without purification, to be rebuked by the holy word uttered on the tongue of the prophet: *“I overthrew some of you, As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me”* (Amos 4: 11).

And Jeremiah says: *“I will bereave them of children; I will destroy My people, since they do not return from their ways”* (Jeremiah 15: 7); *“You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock. They have refused to return”* (Jeremiah 5: 3). And believing that all the remedies in this life failed to heal them, the prophet proclaims that he despaired of their life, saying: *“The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by fire; The smelter refines in vain, For the wicked are not drawn off; People will call them rejected silver, Because the Lord has rejected them”* (Jeremiah 6: 29, 30).

God mourns them, because He intended for them to be purified by fire; but having hardened their hearts in their sins, they got no benefit; He mourns them in the person of Jerusalem that was covered with rust, saying to His prophet Ezekiel: *“Set the pot empty on the coals, that it may become hot and its bronze may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that its scum may be consumed. She has wearied herself with lies, And her great scum has not gone from her. Let her scum be in the fire! In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I have purged you, and you were not purged, You will not be purged of your filthiness anymore”* (Ezekiel 24: 11-13).

He is like a clever Physician who has used every way of healing; and as there was nothing left to be used He says: “*I will lay to rest My fury toward you, And My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more*” (Ezekiel 16: 42) ¹.

Father Theodore

- ❖ When God intends to give man conquest and greatness, He delivers him first to evil (temptations) to be tested; Then He would reveal to the world his beauty by the goodness He does for him.

When God intended to do that to Joseph, He first allowed for him to be caught by his brothers, insulted, ridiculed; stripped his clothes, cast in a well, cut off every hope, then sold to a caravan of merchants, who in turn sold that beautiful sun of the free, who did nothing wrong, as a slave!

No one would ever imagine that all those evil deeds, would ultimately turn to his own good. But God, who knew beforehand what He intended to do, did not show him any compassion while he was going through those tribulations; After which, He let his beauty shine like the sun, revealed his truth like gold, scattered all his anguishes as smoke, made him ride the chariot as a king, And gave him all the greatness prepared for him; He humiliated him to raise him high²!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“As long as my breath is in me, and the (Spirit) of God in my nostrils ...” (Job 27: 3)

In the name of every believer, serious in his spiritual life, ‘Job’ proclaims the true zeal to live a holy life, to reject every sin, and as long as there is a breath of life in him, never to utter an unfitting word. Realizing that, as long as his life is nothing but swift breaths; namely, just moments, he is committed to stay faithful up to his last breath.

From another aspect, ‘Job’ realizes that the breath of life is a gift from God, who breathed it in his father Adam, Therefore, As it is God who grants all life, soul, and every thing (17: 25), It would be fitting for man to glorify Him as long as he has a breath of life.

Attached to the expression of St. Ambrose Job "puff of God in my nose," saying that he did not mean physical nose, but a man's nose internal Itensm smell of eternal life³.

- ❖ There is no doubt that by “*The Spirit of God in my nostrils*”, he means the nostrils of the inner man, by which he smells the sweet fragrance of the eternal life, and the dew of the heavenly ointment, as a sense of a double nature⁴.

St. Ambrose

The Holy Spirit of God, which renews our inner man, would draw our whole being to enjoy the heavenly God, to rejoice in His heavenly divine fragrance. God smells in His beloved children, a pleasing odor (Genesis 8: 21); like what happened after the great flood when Noah offered a sacrifice to God. And as the Lord Christ sings to His bride (the human soul or the church), saying: “*The fragrance of your breath is like apples*” (Songs 7: 8); we, in turn breathe in our Christ the fragrance of the eternal life.

- ❖ The Spirit of God could never dwell in someone who walks according to carnal things¹.

¹ Cassian: Conferences,6:11.

³ The Holy Spirit, 2:7: 67.

⁴ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 2:7:67.

² الرسالة الثانية والثلاثون.

Father Ambrose

“My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit” (Job 27: 4)

Pope Gregory the Great has an amazing commentary on this phrase; saying that ‘Job’ does not say: ‘I will not *think* wickedness’, but says “*My lips will not speak wickedness*”; as speaking wickedness is less serious than thinking it. Oftentimes, unfitting words unwillingly get out of our lips; but, as far as our thoughts are concerned, they are mostly the object of evil and wicked preoccupation. ‘Job’ pledges that his lips would never speak a wicked word, nor his tongue would utter deceit; that he would always utter the truth, even if it involves a judgment against himself; and that he would never cover up a sin in his life by a word of deceit; namely, that hypocrisy would have no place in his life or his words.

- ❖ There is a great difference between the term ‘**speak**’ and the terms ‘**think** or **meditate**’. Sometimes thinking vanity is worse than uttering it. In most cases, when someone speaks, fault may happen unwillingly; whereas thinking, on the other hand, bears a deadly evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Far be it from me that I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me” (Job 27: 5)

‘Job’ was not ready to flatter his friends by a word of deceit, in order to gain their favor at the expense of the purity of his heart; He utters only what he embraces inside it. The apostle says: “*For we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably*” (Hebrew 13: 18). The prophet Ezekiel attacked the false prophets, because, for the sake of material or social benefit, they used to flatter the wicked, saying: “*Peace! When there is no peace*” (Ezekiel 13: 10); or as the prophet Isaiah says: “*They spoke to us smooth things*” (Isaiah 30: 10).

- ❖ Having put his death before his eyes It was not possible for ‘Job’ to flatter his friends by justifying their faults; and, whatever the cost is, he would is not intending to depart from this world, having lost his innocence.

He would lose his innocence if he counts the wicked as good, as testified by Solomon, saying: “*He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are abomination to the Lord*” (Proverbs 17: 15). As there are people who glorify the evil deeds of men, that they should rebuke; according to the words of the prophet, against those who, in order to win the favor of men, sew cushions under elbows, and place pillows under every reclining head (See Ezekiel 13: 18).

Pope Gregory the Great

‘Job’ would rather die holding fast to his integrity, than flatter the wicked, As, according to the prophet: “*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*” (Isaiah 5: 20).

“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live” (Job 27: 6)

‘Job’ confirms to his friends that their bitter criticism against him will not shake his depths; As he knows for sure what is in his heart of love for God, and firm zeal for practicing what is good; And that no one can take away from him his inner joy for this

¹ Commentary on Rom 8:9.

kind of life. Despite their reproach, he will never allow his heart to reproach him. He is not preoccupied with the criticism of men against him, as much as with the purity of his own heart. When David did wrong, his heart stroke him, and said: *“I have sinned greatly in what I have done; But now, I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly”* (2 Samuel 24: 10). What complains against us is our heart in which the Holy Spirit of God works, reproaching us on iniquity.

❖ ***“I shall never let go my righteousness to which I started to hold fast” (6).***

“My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live” (6). Someone may wonder: How could he proclaim that his heart will never reproach him, when he has previously accused himself, saying: *“Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O Watcher of men?”* (Job 7; 20); and confirmed it by saying: *“If I justify myself, my own mouth would condemn me!”* (Job 9: 20)?!

We should know that there are sins that the righteous can avoid; while there are other sins, that even the righteous cannot avoid.

Where could ever be a heart of man, bound to the corrupt body that would not slide to a thought inclining to evil, even if he does not hasten to fall into the pit of approving it? Yet, although the mere evil thinking is a sin, yet through resisting it, the soul is liberated from confusion. Therefore even though the righteous may be free of practicing evil, Yet he, sometimes fall into evil thinking.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Although God’s ministers and friends keep themselves away of the sins that are for death, and practice several good works, Yet we can not expect that they would be completely free of little sins. God would never lie when He says on the tongue of ‘Job’: *“No infant of one day of age on this earth would be without sin”* (Job 14: 4-5 LXX). Beside what the blessed John the Evangelist, who is not less worthy than ‘Job’ says: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 8); And in someplace else we read: *“A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again”* (Proverbs 24: 16) ¹.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

2- ‘JOB’ IS HORRIFIED OF BEING ACCUSED OF HYPOCRISY:

“May my enemy be like the wicked, And he who rises up against me like the unrighteous” (Job 27: 7)

Shocked for being accused of being wicked, worthy of punishment more severe than what has actually dwelt upon him, and that he should expect an utter perdition, ‘Job’ tries to confirm to his friends that he is not as wicked as they portray him; and says to them that he is far from receiving any evil way, or finding any pleasure in it; to the extent that, he would wish for his worst enemy to be wicked, as this is the worst thing to be. This does not mean that ‘Job’ has enemies whom he hates, and that he so wishes for them, But it is a form of speech to reveal how much he detests wickedness; The same way the prophet Daniel said to king Nebuchadnezzar: *“May the dream concern those who hate you”* (Daniel 4: 19).

It is as though ‘Job’ says that he would rather be poor, a despised slave, or bereaved of his children, than to be a sinner; The Lord Christ says: *“Most assuredly, I say*

¹ Sermons, 91:4.

to you, *Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin*” (John 8: 34); The apostle Paul says: “*Sin might become exceedingly sinful*” (Romans 7: 13); And the apostle John says: “*Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; Sin is lawlessness*” (1 John 3: 4). And, “*He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3: 8).

❖ “***May my enemy be like the wicked***”. Sometimes the word ‘**like**’ comes, not to simulate, but to portray an actual fact; as for example, saying: “*And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory (like) that of a father’s only son*” (John 1; 14), Here the word (like) comes to confirm and not to simulate.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Although sins harm the soul in a way worse than that done by worms to the body, Yet we do not conceive the extent of their corruption, and do not feel the necessity of purifying ourselves of them. We are like a drunkard who cannot realize how detestable wine tastes, which someone reasonable can easily do. It is the same way with sins; whoever lives honorably, can easily discern between mire and corruption; while he, who lives in wickedness, is like a drunkard who cannot realize that he is really sick. The worst thing about sin, is that it deprives those who fall into it of the ability to realize the extent of their actual condition; They are as though lying in mire, and imagining that they are lying in perfumes, and therefore have no intention of setting themselves free; Boasting that the worms devouring their flesh are precious jewels, they have no intention to have them killed, but rather to have them fed and nourished, until they bring them over to the worms in the coming life¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“***For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts them off, when God takes away their lives?***” (Job 27: 8)

Or, as it came in King James’ version: “***For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain much, If God takes away his life?***” The wicked, and in particular the hypocrite, lives without hope, as he is destined for eternal perdition.

Having been accused by his friends of being a hypocrite, ‘Job’ confirms to them that he is not foolish enough to practice hypocrisy that would destroy hope; As, even, if hypocrisy offers a temporal gain, like being commended by people, or getting temporal wealth, it would only be a temporary deceit, to be exposed, once the soul of the hypocrite is taken away, and all what is in his heart is revealed.

The Psalmist says about the hypocrite: “*For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him*” (Psalm 49: 17); And Ben-Sirach says: “*Do not be a hypocrite before others, And keep watch over your lips*” (Sirach 1: 37).

❖ “***As what is the hope of the hypocrite, if he is taken over by greed, and his soul is not freed by God?***” (8). the hypocrite, called a ‘simulator’ in Latin, has no other goal but to show off.

Father Gregory the Great

❖ Hypocrisy is hated by God, detested by men; brings no reward or benefit for the salvation of the soul; But would rather be the cause of its perdition.

¹ Homilies on Rom., 40.

If hypocrisy is not exposed for sometime, that would be only temporary, then everything would be revealed, bringing woe over man; The same way when an ugly woman takes off her outer make-up, and the ugliness of her real face is seen by everyone!.

- ❖ Hypocrisy is alien to the saints; as nothing of what we do or say would escape the eyes of the Holy Trinity; “Nothing hidden would not be proclaimed and known” on the great day of judgment. As hypocrisy is both troublesome and without benefit; It is befitting for us to be justified as true worshippers, who minister to God with open and honest countenances¹.

St. Cyril the Great

“Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?” (Job 27: 9)

The prayer of the hypocrite would not be heard; when trouble comes upon him, he would cry out in vain; God would never listen to the cries of the hypocrite until he forsakes his hypocrisy, offer repentance, and return to Him. God says to the prophet Isaiah: “*Trembling has seized the hypocrite*” (Isaiah 33: 14); It is written: “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear*” (Psalm 66: 18); and, “*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer shall be an abomination*” (Proverbs 28: 9). On the day of the Lord, the wicked will cry out, and He will not hear them; He says: “*Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, Because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof*” (Proverbs 1: 24, 25).

How miserable is the hypocrite! He will never experience God’s peace and comfort, and would never enjoy the Almighty; because he is only interested in the riches of this world, in its temporary glories, and in the pleasures and lusts of the body. He does not know how to call God; because in the time of prosperity, he is preoccupied with what he has, and despises the spiritual worship; And in the time of affliction, he murmurs and blasphemes against God. He does not know how to call God, because He has no place in his heart; God does not dwell together with hypocrisy, Nor Truth, together with deceit.

The hypocrite may believe that God exists, that He is the Almighty, and that He should be worshipped; Yet practically, he has no place for Him in his depths. He assumes that his own real might is in what he gains of temporal things, and leans upon his possessions, authority, friends, and not upon the Almighty God!

The goal of the church is to present the Lord Christ to the world, to tell everyone about the Father, And to proclaim His mighty plan for the salvation of humanity.

Experiencing the fellowship with her Groom, the Lord Jesus, called ‘the Hand of God’, the church tastes the sweetness of the secrets of God, and experience His power and might, and calls upon every one to share with her this joyful experience.

- ❖ **“Will God hear his cry, when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty²?” (9).** God will not hear his cry in his time of trouble; because in the time of peace he did not listen to the Lord who cries in His commandments. It is written: “*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer will be an abomination*” (Proverbs 28: 9).

¹ In Luc Ser 86.

² التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

The prophet says: “*seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near*” (Isaiah 55: 6). Now God, though near, could not be seen; whereas later on, He will be seen and will not be near. As He has not appeared yet for judgment, If He is sought He will be there; but when He appears for judgment in an amazing way, He will be seen, but He will not be there.

Solomon describing how wisdom embraces with sweetness, and judges with awe, says: “*Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares*” (Proverbs 1: 20).

Pope Gregory the Great

The Lord Christ admonishes us on the secret prayer, in order to keep us from the hypocrisy that corrupts the prayer and makes it unheard.

❖ The Savior teaches us, saying: “*When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly*” (Matthew 6: 6)

My beloved brethren, why does our Savior instruct us, saying: “Pray to your Father with your heart in the secret place, and where the door is closed?” I shall try to explain this as much as I can.

What is the door that you should close, but your mouth? It is the door of the temple where Christ lives; according to the words of the apostle: “*Do not you know that you are the temple of God?*” (1 Corinthians 3: 16). In order for God to enter into that dwelling place of your inner man, it has to be cleaned of everything filthy, while its door, namely, your mouth is closed¹.

St. Aphrahat

- ❖ Because God, Himself, is unseen, He wants your prayer likewise to be unseen².
- ❖ Before anything else, we should observe the evangelic commandment that commands us to enter into our secret place, to close our door, and to pray to our Father. This could be realized as follows:
 - We enter into our secret place, when we take away from our hearts all the disturbing thoughts, and the vain interests, Then enter into a secret and closed talk between us and God.
 - We pray with closed doors, when we pray with closed lips, quietly and in complete silence. to Him who demands the hearts and not the words.
 - We pray in a secret place, when we keep our supplications that come from our hearts and flaring minds, under cover; reveal them only to God, so that the adversary hosts (the demons) would not be aware of them. We should pray in complete silence; not only to avoid disturbing those praying near us by our whispers or loud words, But also to conceal our supplications from the adversaries who keep watching us, especially in the time of prayers; By this we consummate the commandment, saying: “*Guard the doors of your mouth (even) from her who lies in your bosom*” (Micah 7: 5)³.

Father Isaac

“*Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call on God?*” (Job 27: 10)

¹ Demonstrations, 4:10 (Of Prayer).

² In Matt., hom., 19:4.

³ Cassian: Conferences, 9:35.

Some¹ believe that here, he means to say; what hope would the wicked or the hypocrite have, even if they get all the riches desired by their hearts? Will God hear their cries the moment they are in anguish²?

3- PUNISHING THE WICKED IN SPITE OF THEIR SUCCESS:

“I will teach you about the hand of God; what is with the Almighty, I will not conceal” (Job 27: 11)

Here, ‘Job’ confirms that his knowledge of the divine secrets that he has got, are as though from the hand of God; which he will not hesitate to proclaim. In this, he is a symbol of the holy church that was given the Truth from the Lord Christ, being He the Truth; who came to tell us about the Father.

Symbolizing the persecuted church, ‘Job’, in her name, proclaims her mission; namely, to teach people by the hand of God; namely, by the hand of Jesus Christ; As the hand of God refers to the Son Word; And the finger of God refers to the Holy Spirit.

St. Clement of Alexandria often refers to the Lord Christ, as the Teacher, or a Guardian -- ‘the Paedagogus’. He used to discern between the divine Logos, as a Guide – ‘Protrepikos’, and a Guardian – ‘Paedagogus’, and a Teacher – ‘a Didaskelos³’. He is the **Guide** when He calls people to salvation; and He is a **Guardian** when He incites the believers toward a better life, and heals their sufferings, through practicing His spiritual work in them; And He, Himself, is the **Teacher**, who teaches and explains the basic knowledge, and interprets the symbolic utterances.

The words of **St. Clement of Alexandria** are: [The divine Logos – is called, ‘A Guide’ when He calls upon humanity for salvation But when He acts as a Physician, He is called ‘A Guardian’ As the sick soul needs a Physician or a Guardian to heal her of her sufferings. Then it needs ‘A Teacher’ to give her the conception. Thus, intending for us to have salvation, step by step, He follows an excellent scheme: Starting by guiding, then reforming, then teaching⁴].

❖ There is no knowledge without faith; and there is no faith without knowledge The Son is the true Teacher about the Father. We believe in the Son in order to know the Father, with who is also the Son. Again, In order to know the Father, we have to believe in the Son, the Son of the Father.

Knowing both the Father and the Son, in the true Gnostic way, is nothing but reaching the Truth through the truth Indeed, few are they who believe and know⁵.

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ The blessed ‘Job’ talks here about something that concerns us. The holy church in her teaching, presents the truth to us to know, and hides no part of it. Because “the hand of God” is the name of the Son, as all things were made through Him (John 1:3), the church confirms that by the hand of God, she teaches those whom she sees persistent on their ignorance through holding fast to their self-wisdom. It is as though she says: On my own, I know nothing; the truth I apprehend is through the generosity of the Truth.

¹ Cf. Barnes’ notes on this verse.

² Cf. Matthew Henry Commentary.

³ Osborn : The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria, Cambridge 1957, p 5.

⁴ Paedagogus 1: 1.

⁵ Strom 5: 1.

Pope Gregory the Great

“All of you have seen it yourselves; why then have you become altogether vain?” (Job 27: 12)

Here, he rebukes those who, although knowledgeable, yet they do nothing, which is a sin according to the apostle (James 4: 17).

What have they got against ‘Job’? His soul is utterly embittered by their vain accusations, which add to his anguish a lot worse. Yet, despite all that, he does not blaspheme against God, nor refers oppression to Him. In the bitterness of his soul, he seeks to stand before God for trial; with confidence that, being Just and Loving, He will surely vindicate him.

In admonishment he says to them: Why do you utter vain? Why do you search elaborately for my faults? Why do not you judge me by the situation I am going through? Why do not you apprehend what is behind my words of a living faith in the Almighty God?

“This is the portion of a wicked man with God, And the heritage of the oppressors from the Almighty” (Job 27: 13)

He says to them: ‘Why do you utter vain against me? If I am suffering from tribulations and calamities, Looking at the portion of the wicked and the heritage of the oppressors in this world, You would realize that although many of them are prosperous, of authority, and rich ...; Yet all that would be for a limited time, after which everything would completely collapse, If not in this world, It would be in the coming one. Seeing that not all the righteous are prosperous, and not all the wicked are in anguish, You should not hasten to judge me.

“If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword; and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread” (Job 27: 14)

The descendants of the wicked would suffer hunger, and would not get satisfied even with the necessary bread *“They eat, but not have enough”* (Haggai 1: 6). It would also mean that they would lack the taste of the heavenly bread, the word of God that fulfills the soul; They would fall under a famine for the word of God; according to the words of the prophet, saying: *“Behold, the days are coming”, says the Lord God, ‘That ,I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord”* (Amos 8: 11).

“Those who survive him, the pestilence buries, and their widows make no lamentation” (Job 27: 15)

His seed would be a burden on the society; Even in their death, they will not be honored, but, according to the prophet, *“They shall be buried with the burial of a donkey”* (Jeremiah 22: 19); their widows would make no lamentation, counting their death as a profit for them.

❖ ‘Job’ here, describes the miserable portion of the wicked; although they may have many children; Yet, lacking the good seed, and the appreciated good works, they are counted as childless. As it is not the descendants left back on earth, but those in heaven, such people are counted as lacking the real heritage, and death would be their end. In spite of their great riches, they beg; when they die, they find no rest, and no one would show compassion on their widows¹.

¹The Prayer of Job and David. (Frs. of the Church vol. 65, p. 366).

St. Ambrose

“Though he heaps up silver like dust, and piles up clothing like clay ...” (Job 27: 16)

Silver and gold for the wicked would be like dust, And clothing would be like clay; Their treasures would be a burden upon them.

As silver in the Holy Book often refers to the word of God, The wicked, even if they acquire the Holy Book, It would become for them like dust, Because they receive it, not to enjoy the advance payment of the heavenly things, but for the sake of getting temporal blessings.

And as the clothing refer to the righteousness of Christ that covers the believer and keeps him from sin; The wicked, on the other hand, even if he practices some virtues, It would be for the sake of temporal glory in hypocrisy; And his underwear would be dirty like clay.

Up to a recent time, people of the Orient used to include their expensive apparel among their wealth like gold and silver. The apostle says: *“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel”* (Acts 20: 33); and, referred to the: *“costly clothing”* in (1 Timothy 2: 9). Addressing the rich oppressors, the apostle James says: *“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten”* (James 5: 2). And favoring his brother Benjamin, **Joseph** *“gave him three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments”* (Genesis 45: 22).

In the old days, precious pearl used to be among the gifts given as a form of appreciation and honor: Samson promised to give linen garments to those who correctly solve and explain his riddle (Judges 14: 12-13, 19). Naaman the leper took with him, together with gold and silver, changes of clothing, as a gift to the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5: 5); Solomon in all his glory, found no offense to accept clothing as precious gifts (2 Chronicles 9: 24); And Daniel was honored by the king by clothing him with a purple garment (Daniel 5: 29).

Says the famous poet from east in the nineteenth century that gave him many gifts in his life, and when his death was with 100 crew full of clothes, 200 and 500 T-shirt turbans. Hindus still give at the end of feast clothes for each new guest attended the feast..

❖ Silver was often used to refer to the purity of the Holy Book: *“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”* (Psalm 12: 6). Yet, as some longed to have the word of God, not to treasure them in their hearts, and to follow, but outwards to parade and to boast, They were described by the prophet as *“All who weigh out silver are cut off”* (Zephaniah 1: 11).

Pope Gregory the Great

The wicked buries the silver he gathered underground; but the righteous shares it with the poor, *“He gives a serving to seven and also to eight”* (Ecclesiastes 11: 2); He deposits it in a secure safe where it would support him on the great day of the Lord.

❖ *“The innocent distributes the silver”*; Namely, he shares the words and proclamations of the Lord that came in the Holy Book with others with discernment, giving everyone what suits him. The word of God, are called here, ‘silver’, ‘apparel’, are even called ‘spoil’, as testified by the Psalmist, saying: *“I rejoice at Your word, like one who finds great spoil”* (Psalm 119: 162).

Pope Gregory the Great

“He builds his house like a moth, like a booth which a watchman makes” (Job 27: 18)

The wicked may build luxurious palaces, assuming that they would grant them happiness and comfort in their life, and would endure as a memorial for their names; They are not aware that they are actually like what the moth make in an old garment, that would eventually go away.

❖ **“He builds his house like a moth”** (Clothes moth) "[18]. moth build a house for the same corruption.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The rich man will lie down but not be gathered up; He opens his eyes, and he is no more” (Job 27: 19)

When he goes to sleep, he says: *“O my soul, relax”* (Luke 12: 19). Having gathered what would be sufficient for life, for himself, his children, and grandchildren; He may seem to others as very happy and at ease; Yet, in his depths, he finds no true comfort; As it is written: *“The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep”* (Ecclesiastes 5: 12).

When the wicked lies on his deathbed, he finds out that all what he has gathered has been scattered, and would never support him before the divine Judge.

❖ **“When the rich lies down, he takes nothing with him; He opens his eyes to find nothing” (19)**. In harmony with this phrase, the Psalmist says: *“The stouthearted (the rich) were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; none of the troops was able to lift a hand”* (Psalm 76: 5). That is why, in order to find something in their hands, after their death, the rich are advised by the Lord, while still living: *“Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation”* (Luke 16: 9).

❖ When the body of the rich lies down in death, his soul wakes up in true knowledge, to find out that everything it acquired is naught; and finds herself in void; It used to rejoice in being filled with goods more than the rest of the world; And now it lies down in death, and takes nothing along, other than the sin of acquiring what she had.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Terrors overtake him like a flood; a tempest steals him away in the night” (Job 27: 20)

For the wicked, death becomes the king of horror; He would be terrified to depart of this world; and as though drowning in a flood; A tempest of God’s wrath would come over him by night, and would take him away amid the darkness he has chosen for himself; No one would be there to save him. Having deprived himself of the shining of the Son of righteousness, who would have poured His mercy upon him; he finds himself being put under the divine justice.

❖ **“Need would overtake him like water, and a tempest would sweep him away by night” (20)**. It is not strange to liken the need to water, the same way Hades is likened to ‘a pit’ (or a lake), that swallows those thrown into its depths; That is why it was said by the prophet, on the tongue of humanity: *“They flung me alive into a pit”* (Lamentations 3: 53); Whereas the victorious who escape from it sing, *“O Lord my*

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

God, I cried out to You, and You have healed me; O Lord, You have brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit” (Psalm 30: 2-3).

- ❖ **“A tempest steals him away in the night¹” (20).** What is that he calls ‘night’, other than that hidden time of the sudden departure?

Pope Gregory the Great

“The east wind carries him away, and he is gone; It sweeps him out of his place” (Job 27: 21)

On the wicked, the tempest of God’s wrath would blow like a violent and extremely horrible east wind that would carry him away to eternal perdition. While on the righteous, a breeze of God’s love and mercy blows, to bring him over to the bosom of the Father in heaven. Death for the wicked is destructive, whereas for the righteous, it is utterly rejoicing.

Pope Gregory (the Great) See the east wind is the Holocaust, evil spirit arrow firearms, which raise the desires of the wicked, and introduces him to eternal hell.

- ❖ **“The burning east wind would carry him by force and drive him away²” (21).** The burning-hot east wind here is the evil spirit that, by the evil suggestions, it flares the hearts of the wicked by the earthly lusts, to draw him to the eternal punishment.
- ❖ **“Like a tempest it sweeps him out of his place” (21).** The place of the wicked is that where he enjoys the temporal life, and the pleasure of the body. That is why every individual by some way is swept out of his place by a tempest, when he is swallowed by fear of the last day, when he is separated from his pleasures.

Pope Gregory the Great

“It hurls at them without pity; they flee from its power in headlong flight” (Job 27: 22)

While still in the world, God would have compassion on him. Even while firmly chastening him, He opens the door before him to return by repentance. But on the Day of Judgment, when there is no more mercy or longsuffering, he would not be able to flee from the divine justice.

“Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place” (Job 27: 23)

After talking about the temporary prosperity of the wicked, and portraying the bitterness of his soul while confronting death; Now he notices how some of the weak and sinners, seeing in this a practical example of the bitter fruit of evil, clap their hands in astonishment, and tend to return from their evil ways to God.

“Men clap their hands at him”; Clapping their hands may also mean rejoicing in the punishment that puts an end to oppression, and brings the devil and his hosts down to Hades. It is written: *“When the wicked perish, there is shouting”* (Proverbs 11: 10); *“The righteous will see and fear, and will laugh at the evildoer”* (Psalm 52: 6); *“You shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet”* (Malachi 4: 3)

- ❖ As the sinner dies, those watching his death mute their mouths, hissing (like the sound of a serpent). Then, they may probably return to the spiritual words which they used to

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

²التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

despise; and may start to believe what they did not believe before; when they assumed that the wicked will perpetually live in prosperity. *“When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise”* (Proverbs 21: 11).

- ❖ Every strike from God is meant, either to purify the present life in us, or as a start of a coming chastisement... As to those, on the other hand, for whom the strikes from God are a curse, and not a chastisement; about them it is written: *“O Lord, You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; you have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction”* (Jeremiah 5: 3).

For them, their strikes start in this world, and will continue as eternal ones. The Lord says by Moses: *“For a fire is kindled in My anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell”* (Deuteronomy 32: 22).

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 27

WHO CAN SUPPORT ME IN MY TEMPTATIONS BUT YOU, O LORD?

- ❖ You, the only Mighty, who became tempted, to help me,
Grant me the wisdom, when I confront the temptations of vain accusations.
And grant me the perseverance, when a bitter anguish dwells upon me.
I believe that You are living, and that You care for all my affairs.
You allow for bitterness to come over me; then You turn my bitterness into sweetness.
- ❖ Let the anguish be for my spiritual growth.
Let my tongue not hasten to utter any unbecoming word.
Nor my thoughts fall into denial.
Nor flatter the wicked at the expense of the purity of my heart.
But let me behave with a good conscience all the time.
My death would be better for me than to flatter the wicked.
- ❖ Take away from me every evil, that kills my soul.
Take away from me every hypocrisy, that to me is deceit.
- ❖ Instruct me on how to enter into my secret place;
And on how to talk to You, O Heavenly Father.
I have nothing greater than to acquire You.
- ❖ You are the Guide, who guides me along the way to salvation.
You are the Guardian, who carries me, and instructs me on Your grace.
You are the Teacher, who grants me Yourself, O the divine Wisdom.
- ❖ Why would I fear the wicked?
Even if he succeeds, it would be for a limited time, before his eternal punishment.
Even if he has a multitude of descendants, they will suffer hunger.
His seed would be a burden on society.
And when they die, they would not be honored; And would not even be lamented by
their widows.
And if they get rich in silver and apparel;
How would silver benefit them, without the Word of God, the pure silver?
And how would the apparel benefit them, if they are not covered by the blood of
Christ?
They build palaces to keep their memory, to become eventually like a moth-eaten
garment.
They gather riches; Then within moments, their soul is required from them.
The tempest of death would come over them, as though in the darkness of the night.
They would open their eyes to see the pit with eternal fire waiting for them.
The devil will draw them to live eternally together with him.

CHAPTER 28

THE WISDOM; WHO CAN APPREHEND IT?

'Job' starts this final talk by proclaiming that God is the Creator, who alone has the wisdom; that His creation reveals His exalted wisdom; and that the role of man, as far as the wisdom is concerned, is to fear the Lord, and to keep away from evil.

The tune of this chapter differs completely from that of the other chapters, in that in it we can see a prominent amount of natural and literal philosophy. This chapter is considered the oldest document of natural history in the world. In which we see him demonstrate:

1- How man seeks and labors to search the worldly wealth. He searches for the treasures hidden underground in mines; for what the birds and beasts would not reach.

2- As far the wisdom is concerned, he says that generally, it is of great price, of an immeasurable value, and its place is securely hidden. There is wisdom of God, whose place is known by no one but him; and there is a wisdom proclaimed to men. We should not seek the former, and strive to acquire the later; Wisdom is a very precious gift.

Whoever acquires the wisdom would be richer and happier than him who acquires gold and precious stones. Through the obedience to God, and the enjoyment of the fear of the Lord, man can acquire the wisdom, necessary to discern between good and evil, to recognize what is true and sound, to worship God and to lean upon Him. *"The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding"* (Job 28: 28). That is the wisdom that God made as the portion of man.

1- The divine wisdom surpasses the human thought	1 – 6
2- The exalted secret of Christ	7 – 11
3- Where to find wisdom!	12 – 14
4- How great is wisdom!	15 – 19
5- The hidden wisdom of God	20 – 26

1- THE DIVINE WISDOM SURPASSES THE HUMAN THOUGHT:

"Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold to be refined" (Job 28: 1)

Men strive to know the secrets of nature; and manage to discover the precious minerals, as gold and silver. For the sake of riches, man labors hard; But foolishly, he does not care enough to recognize the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. For the sake of temporal riches, and of curiosity and knowledge, he searches for what is buried underground, But he does not search for the salvation of his own soul, and his eternal glory.

❖ *"There is a place for silver to be taken, and a place for gold to be refined; Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from ore"* (1-2 LXX). By this he means that, besides setting a special system for the general issues, God also set a system for the human ones, which He Himself foresees and for which He cares. Nothing happens haphazardly. He also means that, although establishing the natural facts is obviously seen, Yet God's plan is unseen. The places of silver and copper may be well known, But that of the wisdom is unknown to anyone, except to God who says to man: "Piety is wisdom; and doing good is understanding".

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ As Silver is mostly refined, So is the righteous, to become a coin for the Lord, with the royal image. Solomon proclaims: *“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, refined by fire”* (Proverbs 10: 20); Meaning that the teaching which is tested, and whose wisdom is well established, is commended and well received; is refined on the ground, when the soul of the Gnostic (the spiritual man with knowledge) is sanctified by several means; Whereas the body in which this soul dwells, would be purified and has the purity befitting for a holy temple.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us a symbolic interpretation for this phrase, that if man searches for silver and gold among the rocks, It would be fitting for preachers to labor incessantly to acquire the spiritual silver, namely, *“the pure word of God, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”* (Psalm 12: 6); and the gold, that refers to the heavenly, wise, and splendid way of life.

The Pope discerns between the true preaching that offers the pure silver and gold of the holy books, interpreted according to the thoughts of the fathers, as lived by the early church, and that of the heretics, who offer neither silver nor gold refined by fire, but their own teachings, intended for the sake of their own human honor and glory.

- ❖ **“Silver is found in the veins (of rocks), and for gold there is a place to be refined¹”** (1). Silver refers to the power of words, and gold to the splendor of life, or the splendor of wisdom As though he obviously says: Who prepares himself for words of true preaching, is committed to extract the sources of his material from the holy books, setting everything he says upon a divine foundation, for the benefit of his listeners.

The heretics, on the other hand, mostly seek to support what they present of wrong issues of their own, upon unauthentic sources they claim to take from the holy books.

That is why the great preacher Paul advises his disciple Timothy, saying: *“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge”* (1 Timothy 6: 20). Longing to be glorified as clever and wise thinkers, the heretics present new issues that did not come from the old books of the fathers; casting the seeds of ignorance to their miserable listeners.

It is as though he clearly says: [The true wisdom for the believers, has its place in the catholic church, who, although suffering from troubles coming from you, and from your persecution against her, Yet she is purified from the impurities of all the sins by the fire of your persecution; according to what is written: *“Gold is tested in the fire, and those found acceptable, in the furnace of humiliation”* (Sirach 2: 5)].

The apostle Paul teaches us, saying: *“Though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing”* (1 Timothy 13: 3). Some may have wrong thoughts about God; And others, although they may have true thoughts about the Creator, Yet they do not keep the unity with their brethren. The former would be cut off the church, because of their wrong faith; and the later would be cut off because of their dissension. That is why the foremost part of the ten commandments came against the sin of both parties, uttered by the divine voice, saying: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your*

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6: 5; Mark 12: 30-31)) ,and then directly added: *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”*. He who wrongly believes concerning God, surely do not love God; And he who, although having true concepts concerning God, Yet he splits open the unity of the holy church, obviously do not love his neighbor.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ *“The words of the Lord are pure words”* (Psalm 12: 6) “pure” of the impurities of fake appearance; As there are many who preach the truth, yet unpurified, for the sake of getting temporal benefit¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ (Dissension) is a weapon of Satan, by which he turns everything upside down. As long as the body is intact without dissension, Satan would have no gap through which he can enter. Dissension comes from those thoughts not conforming to the teachings of the apostles, that come in turn from the servitude of some to their belly and other lusts About whom Paul wrote to the Philippians, saying: *“Whose god is their belly”* (Philippians 3: 19)².

St. John Chrysostom

It is befitting for every preacher, and for every believer, to present gold and silver from God; namely, His exalted heavenly peace; not the peace of the mortal world; to present God the Savior, the true Peace.

- ❖ Peace would be your gold, your silver, your earth, and your life; **Your God is Peace.** Peace would be yours in everything you may desire³.

St. Augustine

Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore” (Job 28: 2)

Although greater labor is needed for the extraction of silver and gold, than for the extraction of iron and copper, Yet the later two are of more benefit to man; And because of their more abundance, they are much cheaper than silver and gold. Man can live without silver and gold, but it would be very difficult for him, especially nowadays, to live without iron and copper. It is the great wisdom of God that makes what is essential for the life of man, more abundant, and easier to extract, than what is for his luxury and mere pleasure.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the extraction of all these minerals: silver, gold, iron, and copper, from earth and stones, is a reference to the role of the saintly men of God – different in their spiritual level, their role in the preaching work, and their testimony to God; to extract things of value from earth and stones. We have been all, earth and stones, preoccupied with temporal things, then, the grace of God set out of us witnesses to God, who enjoy fellowship in the divine nature, of love, compassion, meekness, humility, purity, holiness, etc. These are all not from us, but are gifts of God, freely given to the believers, who are serious in seeking the salvation of their souls and of the souls of their brethren in humanity.

¹ On Ps 12.

² In Rom. hom 32.

³ On Ps 37.

❖ **“Iron is taken from the earth” (2).** Those powerful men who, by their tongues sharper than swords, have become like iron in this fierce battle for the defense of faith; have been before “earth”, concerning lowly works! When man errs, It is said to him: *“You are dust, and to dust you will return”*. But *“Iron is taken from the earth”* when the firm church warrior separates himself from the earthly behavior.

‘Matthew’ has been before a tax-collector, preoccupied with earthly things; Yet, taken out of the earth, he was given the strength of iron, and was committed by God to preaching the gospel, to tear apart the non-believers by a tongue as sharp as an iron sword. He, **who was before, weak and preoccupied with earthly works, became strong by the heavenly preaching.**

“And stone is smelted by fire to become copper¹”. The hard and cold hearts are smelted by fire, when they get in contact with the fire of the divine love that pours into that of the flaring spirit; then it would have the life flared hot in work. **As much as he was before hard in his love for the world, he would become strong in his love for God.**

Pope Gregory the Great

St. Gregory the Nezenzian believes that the thought of the pious believer is like iron extracted from rocks and stones.

❖ They are like the iron extracted from flint fire radiates from gold rich finalist to light, the small spark that can form inside the flame of the right quickly².

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

Speaking about the resurrection of the body, **St. Cyril of Jerusalem** says that it becomes like iron heated by fire; although it is the same body we have in this life, Yet, it will acquire a fiery nature fit for eternity.

❖ Concerning that, Paul openly says: *“For this corruptible must put on incorruption”* (1 Corinthians 15: 53). Therefore this same body will be resurrected, will put on incorruption, and will become newly conformed. And as iron by mixing with fire becomes fire; according to the Lord who resurrects us: This body will be resurrected, but will not stay the same as it is now.

It will be become an eternal body that needs no nutrition to sustain it as it is now, nor stairs to ascend, as it will be spiritual. It is actually an amazing subject we are unworthy to discuss; and about which it is written in the gospel of Matthew the Evangelist:

“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13: 43); and, *“like the brightness of the firmament”* (Daniel 12: 3)³.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“Man put an end to darkness, and searches every recess for ore in the darkness and the shadow of death” (Job 28: 3)

‘Job’ says that man, in order to search for minerals in the dark mines underground, uses torches to scatter the darkness; and risks his life to reach his goal.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Oration 2. In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, 40.

³ Catech. Lectures 18:18.

Those who have no experience in the profession of mining, may not appreciate the hard labor and risk of death that the miners face, and may even consider them unwarranted. It is the same when some see God extract, from our earth and stones, minerals that are precious in His sight; Unaware of God's plan, they may consider Him as entering into the darkness, and searching for things of little value!

In other words, It is befitting for us to trust in God's plan, care, and work for our sake; That, because of His prior knowledge of the glories we shall enjoy, He presents to us salvation, whatever the cost may be; He sees gold, silver, iron, and copper, in our earth and stones; and according to the apostle: *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord"* (Ephesians 5: 8).

❖ *"He puts the darkness in its place"* (3). As though he also says: *"He puts the human mind in its place"*. As darkness knows when to retract its paces and quenches itself (before sun rise) He admonishes us not to bring God into account, saying: *'Why should there be darkness?'* Don't you know that He is the Almighty, who does everything with wisdom?

St. John Chrysostom

❖ *"He put certain limitation for darkness; And He Himself searches everything and everyone¹"* (3). He put limitation to darkness; namely to the wicked, to stop being wicked; to whom the apostle says: *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord"* (Ephesians 5: 8). And to other disciples the great apostle says: *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the day"* (Romans 13: 12, 13).. In the Book of the Song of Songs, it came about the coming of the church: *"Who is this that looks forth like the morning?"* (Songs 6: 10). The church here is likened to the morning; namely, by the knowledge of faith, she transforms from the darkness of sins to the splendor of the light of righteousness.

By doing and ordaining what is good, and not what is evil, God restrains the wicked, to keep things from turning to the worse; by searching the end of everything and everyone, by enduring everything with longsuffering, and by foreseeing, how evil, as far as the elect are concerned, turns into good.

Foreseeing how far Saul would go in his persecution of the church, God let him fall to the ground, and say: *"Lord, What do You want me to do?"* (Acts 9: 6).

And foreseeing how far the people of Nineveh would go in their rebellion, God let them practice repentance.

And foreseeing how far the people of Sodom and Gomorrah would go in their wickedness, He ordained for their lust to burn by fire and brimstone.

And foreseeing the darkness of evil with which the Gentiles were preoccupied, He ordained for them a day to enjoy the splendor of the light of faith.

Pope Gregory the Great

God, the amazing Creator, created the earth, and on it the reptiles and beasts. He created man from its dust; and he still is a new nature worthy of the eternal life.

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

- ❖ From one and the same earth, the reptiles, the fierce beasts, and the mild flocks come; the trees grow, and gold, silver, iron, copper, and stones are found¹!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“He breaks open a shaft away from people; In places forgotten by feet, they hang far away from men; They swing to and fro” (Job 28: 4)

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**, it came as: “The **rocks of the darkness** and the shadow of the valley of the (**sweeping flood**), they break away from the people”.

Seen by some, digging in rocky uninhabited terrain, they are ridiculed as fools searching for underground water in vain. The same way, the Jews ridiculed God’s work for salvation; and the apostles’ preaching among the heathen nations; likening them to those who dig mines in rocky terrain, where there is no water, nor goal or hope.

- ❖ How were the Jewish people, cruelly, and violently refusing faith, long proclaimed for them by the prophecies, but “**rocks of darkness**”?!

And by the valley of the “**sweeping flood**”, he probably refers to the fulfillment through the holy preaching, as expressed by Solomon: “*The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley (of the sweeping flood) will pick it out*” (Proverbs 30: 17).

The wicked, who find wrong in God’s ordinances, are mocking their Father; and the heretics of every kind, who scorns the Preaching of the holy church, and ridicule her fruit, are scorning the sufferings of their mother. It is not strange to call the church their mother, as from her came her adversaries, as testified by St. John, saying: “*They went out of us, but they were not of us; For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us*” (1 John 2: 10). Yet “*The ravens of the valley*” will come to avenge the true preachers who defend the holy church, by the waters of the rivers of the holy books.

Pope Gregory the Great

“As for the earth, out of it comes bread; But underneath it is turned up as by fire” (Job 28: 5)

Some believe that, through the wisdom of the Creator, the same earth that provides us with the wheat on which we feed, provides us as well with the petroleum, as a source of energy.

Others believe that ‘Job’ here, refers to Sodom and Gomorrah, whose land was very fertile and productive to feed a multitude of people; before it, through the wickedness of their inhabitants, turned into a furnace of fire and brimstone.

While others still believe, that he talks about man’s strife to extract minerals from underground mines; turning the earth, from producing food for multitudes, into mines, where many perish, because of the risks of working in such unpredictable and dangerous atmosphere, that sometimes turn into a furnace of underground fire.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that this is a prophecy about the land of Judea that, instead of testifying to the Lord and preaching Him when He came, to present to the world the Bread of Life; On account of the envy of the Jewish leadership, it turned into a hidden fire destructive to the souls: “*The earth that should produce the bread, is turned up by fire*” (5). The children of perdition in Judea, who were preoccupied with giving

¹ Catech. Lectures 9:10.

bread to the people; namely, with providing them with the words of the law; became incapable of interpreting the law; And on them the prophet Jeremiah laments, saying: *“The young children ask for bread, But no one breaks it for them”* (Lamentation 4: 4). **“The earth, that should produce bread, is turned up by fire”**, by the burning coal of envy, when they saw the signs performed by our Savior, and said: *“What shall we do, for this Man works many signs”* (John 11: 47) *“Look, the world has gone after Him”* (John 12: 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Its stones are the source of sapphires, and it contains gold dust” (Job 28: 6)

It was fitting for the religious leaderships of Judea to present Christ, the Bread of Life; to become by that, living stones in the temple of the Lord, stones of blue Sapphire (which is next to diamond in value), namely, to bear the heavenly feature; and their dust to turn into gold, namely, to turn the earthly into heavenly people.

Some believe that God with His exalted wisdom, intended for the precious minerals like silver, gold, and petroleum, to be concealed underground, or within the stones; so that man would not concentrate his sight on them, but tread on them with his feet; And that he would instead raise his eyes up to heaven, and attach his heart to God¹.

❖ ***“Its stones are the source of sapphires, and it contains gold dust) (6).*** Stones refer to the minds of the mighty saints, as addressed by Peter, saying: *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood”* (1 Peter 2: 5). And as promised by the Lord to the church to come, saying through the prophet: *“Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord”* (Isaiah 54: 11-13). He sets its stones according to a certain system; discerning the holy souls according to their worthiness.... *“lays its foundations with sapphires”*, bearing the color of heaven; Namely, the might of the church would be set in the souls that seek the heavenly things.

And, as it would shine by faith in the splendor of the exalted life, he adds: *“It contains gold dust”* But, because this golden shine got dimmed by the darkness of lack of faith, the prophet Jeremiah lamented its blackness, saying: *“How the gold has become dim! How the fine gold has changed!”* (Lamentations 4: 1). The old splendor of faith has become dim, and the innocence turned into a night of evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

2- THE EXALTED SECRET OF CHRIST:

“That path no bird knows, Nor has the falcon’s eyes seen it” (Job 28: 7)

If it is within man’s ability to exploit the earth, to provide him with grains for his food, and to extract from its belly and its rocks silver, gold, precious stones, and petroleum; Yet, there is another gem, not given except to him who seeks it; namely, the possibility to recognize the divine secrets; and in particular, those of the divine incarnation, and of salvation. However man enjoys of sharp sight, like that of eagles, and other birds of prey, he would not be able to see the divine things on his own.

¹ Cf. Matthew Henery Commentary.

He mentioned the birds of prey, on account of that they fly very high in search of food, can spot their prey, dive down to it like lightening, then fly back to their nests, without losing their way.

According to an interpretation of this phrase in the Chaldean ‘Tergom’, Satan, flying like a bird of prey, could not see nor recognize the ‘tree of life’; Eve, as well, could not look at it, and the serpent could not approach it¹.

Some² believe that those preoccupied with extracting the precious minerals possess eyes as sharp as those of the eagle, with which they can detect their locations, and dig after them.

To acquire riches and wealth, nothing keep man from digging deep in the earth to extract precious minerals; And to acquire food, nothing keep the mighty lions from finding their ways through the forests and wilderness to hunt for preys for themselves and their young; And the high altitudes would not hinder the birds of prey from spotting their food. Yet, the secrets of the divine wisdom remain hidden from sight of man without the exalted grace of God.

While the human wisdom is a natural gift given by God according to levels befitting to each man, by whom one is recognized from another; The divine wisdom, on the other hand, is a gift given to him who covets it and faithfully seeks it.

- ❖ The wisdom of this world differs from that of God. While God’s wisdom is true, and would never be corrupted; that of the world is foolish. Because of the simplicity of the divine wisdom, the believers who get it may be counted as foolish in the sight of the world³.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ Paul says that the true wisdom of God teaches harmony with the Lord; and is to be granted by the Son⁴.

St. Clement of Alexandria

“The (young) wild beasts have not trodden it; The lion has not passed over it” (Job 28: 8)

The young lion walks like a king, proudly among the forests and the wilderness, knows their hidden ways, and nothing can come between it and its prey. So are those who work in the mining industry, who dig paths not trodden by wild beasts, nor even by a lion.

He who intends to acquire the wisdom of God “The exalted secret of Christ”, walks by the Holy Spirit, along a unique path that no one can tread on his own, Even if he is a great king of exalted authority and mighty power.

Our Christ is the Way, Walking along it, we become like spiritual lions, kings, and priests for God His Father (Revelation1: 6).

- ❖ Paul mentions three kinds of wisdom (1 Corinthians 1: 20-25), the first one, the wisdom of God, or the wisdom of the cross, called ‘foolishness’ by the world, is greater than the other two. A second kind is the natural wisdom granted to man, by

¹ Cf. Adam Clarke Commentary.

² Barne’s Notes.

³ Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1: 7: 1-7.

⁴ Stromata 1: 90: 1.

which we reason, work, discover, and make progress. Then there is a third kind of wisdom, by which we meditate in creation.

Although the last two, may lead man to the Creator, Yet it is only the first kind of wisdom counted by the world as ‘foolishness’, which is granted to us by the Savior, that we may have salvation¹.

Father Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus

❖ By the teaching of the Savior, being the power and the wisdom of God, we do not need any other help².

St. Clement of Alexandria

“He puts his hand on the flint; He overturns the mountains at the roots” (Job 28: 9)

Talking about the exalted secret of Christ, being the Wisdom of God, ‘Job’ saw wonder; He saw the Lord Christ in His love, might, and wisdom, stretches His arms on the cross to embrace the Gentile nations, who have been like solid flint, *“to set out of the rocks, children of Abraham”*; namely, children of faith. Before Him no foundations of mighty mountains; namely, no men of temporal authority, could stand.

By the simplicity of the cross, the Wisdom of God, counted as ‘foolishness’ by the heathen world, and as ‘offense’ by the Jews, the Lord caught the philosophers and those of authority; according to the apostle Paul: *“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; And the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are”* (1 Corinthians 1: 27-28).

- ❖ The philosophers could not realize what few illiterate men did; namely, to bring the whole world back to God. By talking about things of little importance, the philosophers could only convince a minority; whereas, by talking about God, righteousness, and judgment, the apostles could convince a huge multitude³.
- ❖ By human standards, It would be impossible for simple fishermen to bring overcome philosophers; And yet, that is what actually happened by the grace of God⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ ***“He puts His hand on the flint; He overturns the mountains at the roots”*** (9). He puts His hand on the flint; by stretching the arm of His preaching to the hardness of the Gentiles. Prophesying that the Gentiles will get to know God, the blessed ‘Job’ says: *“Oh, that my words were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever!”* (Job 19: 24).

How could the mountains here mean, other than those with authority in this world, who are puffed up because of their vain earthly being? About whom the Psalmist say: *“O Lord, touch the mountains, and they shall smoke”* (Psalm 144: 5).

¹ Theodoret of Cyrus: *Commentary on, Corinthians, 171.*

² *Stromata 1: 100: 1.*

³ *Homilies on Corinthians, homily 4: 6.*

⁴ *Ibid, 5: 5.*

The “*roots*” of the mountains are their deep haughty thoughts; The Mountains will be overturned at the roots, as the worship of God would bring down to earth the rulers of the world, and destroy their lowly thoughts.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The Book of the Song of songs lifts the bride up to the highest summit of glory, by giving her the name “*The fountain of living waters*” flowing from Lebanon. The Holy Book, to teach us about the life-giving nature of God, as a prophecy, says: “*They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters*” (Jeremiah 2: 13); And the Lord Christ says to the Samaritan woman: “*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink’, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water*” (John 4:10); Then He adds: “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’*. *This He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive*” (John 7; 37-39).

As all these quotations indicate that the living water is the holy Nature, it is truly fitting for the Song to call the bride “**A fountain of living water flowing from Lebanon**”. Although this contradicts with the well known fact that the waters of wells (or the fountains) are a deep well, that continually flow!

Who is able and is worthy to understand the wonders granted to the bride – the human soul, or the church of Christ -- will know that she has reached the climax of her hopes:

Her beauty is compared to the eternal beauty from which every beauty has evolved; her fountain to that of her Groom; Her life to His; And that by her water, His living word, every soul that receives Him will live. These waters flow from the Lord – the Fountain of the living water, “*For I proceeded forth, and came from God*” (John 8: 42).

By possessing that fountain, we came to be in a fellowship with God, to realize the commandment of the Wisdom (Proverbs 5: 17, 18), to drink water from our own fountain, and not from any other, to enjoy that in Christ, our Lord, to whom is the glory and might, forever, Amen¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

“*He cuts out channels in the rocks; And His eye sees every precious thing*” (Job 28: 10)

‘Job’ stands in awe before the might and love of the Savior, who grants man, who became as hard as rock, to have inside him fountains of living water; And at the same time, He does not despise, nor condemn him for having such a rocky heart, but looks at him as a living icon of Himself, very precious in His eyes; He takes away from man the hardness of his rocky heart, and replaces it by one full of love.

Some take into consideration those miners, in order to expose the (veins) of minerals they intend to extract. They usually cut out channels of water in the rocks

❖ “*He cuts out channels of water in the rocks*”. He cuts out channels of preaching in the hard hearts of the Gentile.

In the same way, the prophet prophesying about the fulfillment of the wilderness of the Gentiles, says: “*He turns a wilderness into Pools of water, And dry land into water*

¹ نشيد الأناشيد للقديس غريغوريوس أسقف نيصص، تعريب الدكتور جورج نوار، عظة 9.

springs” (Psalm 107: 35); And the Lord promises in the Gospel: “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*” (John 7: 38); A promise that is already realized.

Don’t you see how the saintly preachers have flowed like a fountain from Judea through the catholic church dispersed all over the world, as channels for the heavenly commandments, that abundantly flow from the mouths of the Gentiles? That is realized because He has cut out channels of water in the rocks, and let a river of holy preaching flow from the hard hearts.

“***And His eye sees every precious thing***” (10). It should be taken into consideration, that every individual soul, as much as she despises herself for the sake of her love for the Truth, is counted precious in the sight of God: “*When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel?*” (1 Samuel 15: 17); on the contrary, He who counts himself as very precious, is belittled in the sight of God: “*who regards the lowly, but the proud He knows from afar*” (Psalm 138: 6).

In the Holy Book, the expression “*God sees*” is sometimes used instead of “*God chooses*”. “*Because it chooses the humble*”. “*God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong*” (1 Cor 27:1). “*He sees every precious thing*”, when He visited the human soul despising herself, and enjoying the enlightenment of His grace; About this soul, it is said by the prophet: “*If you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth*” (Jeremiah 15: 19). For to God, the present world is vile, whereas to Him the human soul is very precious. Whoever separates the precious from the vile is called “*as God’s mouth*”; As to such a man, God gives His words.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The Holy Spirit is the River that flows – according to the Epistle to the Hebrews – from Christ to the lands; which we accepted, as prophesied by the mouth of Isaiah (66; 12). This great River that perpetually and incessantly flows, is not a single one, but one of many streams, about which David says: “*A river whose streams shall make glad the city of God*” (Psalm 46: 4). The heavenly Jerusalem is not watered by an earthly river, but by the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Source of life; The stream that comes from Him who fulfills us, seems to flow abundantly among the heavenly thrones, the principalities, the hosts, the angels, and the archangels, bringing over the greatest portion of the seven virtues of the Spirit¹.

St. Ambrose

❖ What does the Lord Christ mean by the “heart” in His saying: “*He who believes in Me, (as the Scripture said), Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*” (John 7: 38)? Where in the Holy Scripture, this is said of someone else? “*He who believes in me, as the Scripture said...*” is a confirmation that it is said about Christ. Many have said: “This is Christ”, and others said: “When Christ comes, will he do more wonders?” This demonstrates the need for the right knowledge, and for the conviction, not through the wonders, but from the Scripture itself.

He already said: “*Search the Scripture*” (John 5: 39); “*It is written in the prophets*”; “*They shall be all taught by God*” (John 6: 45); and “*Moses will accuse you*”

¹ *Of the Holy Spirit 1:16:177-178.*

(John 5: 45); And here He says: “As it is written in the Scripture, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”, hinting to its greatness and abundance In another location He called it “eternal life”; while here He calls it “rivers of living water”.

The grace of the Spirit, entering into the mind and dwelling there, will flow more than any fountain. It will never stop, and will never fail.

Giving unfailing help, and, at the same time, giving an unfailing energy, He calls it ‘a fountain’ and ‘rivers’, not a single river, but many.

One can appreciate what that means, if he takes into consideration the wisdom of Steven, the eloquence of Peter, and the zeal Of Paul¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Which, of all the living beings, was created in the image of God, but man?

To which of the living beings, the authority over nature and all its creatures, was given, to become his own, but man?

What a great honor to crown his forehead, and to exalt him to heaven, above the stars, and the sun, in haughtiness and dignity!

Although his rank is lower than that of the angels - being bound to a material body - Yet he is granted the power to conceive and to recognize his God and Creator².

St. Basil the Great

“He dams up the streams from trickling; what is hidden He brings forth to light” (Job 28: 11)

A poetic expression of God’s care toward man; Beside supporting man by giving him knowledge of the minerals hidden underground; God protects his life from the dangers of this risky practice. Cutting out channels of water in the rocks, any seepage or trickling, may bring down the walls or the ceiling of the mine over his head. To protect him against this danger, God “*dams up the streams from trickling (seepage)*”.

Pope Gregory the great presents a symbolic interpretation of these channels or streams of water; seeing in them the abundance of the teachings of the early fathers.

❖ ***“He searches the depths of the great flood; and what is hidden He brings forth to light³” (11).*** What are these so-called ‘Great flood’ but the sayings of the early fathers? Who can appreciate the great abundance of teaching flowing from the chest of Moses, as he presents the law? From the chest of David? From the lips of Solomon, Or from those of all the prophets?

Pope Gregory the Great

3- WHERE CAN WISDOM BE FOUND?

“But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” (Job 28: 12)

If the treasures of minerals are hidden underground; How much more would be the wisdom of God. Who can know on his own where it can be found? And from where can he acquire the true understanding?

Wisdom is the treasure hidden in the gospel, which no man can enjoy it; unless, on him, God shines with His light, to reveal to him the secret of the word.

¹ Hom 51. PG 59:300-301.

² Hom. In Ps 48, 8, PG 29:450 b.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

❖ The true wisdom is the gospel, the way to salvation through the cross of Christ¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living” (Job 28: 13)

Wisdom is the second Person of Deity, “The Wisdom of God”. While we are still in the body, we cannot conceive the depth of the secret of the Wisdom, and recognize the Person of the Wisdom; As He, who is in the bosom of the God the Father, incarnated to encounter with us, and we with Him in our world.

❖ Saying: “We speak God’s wisdom in a mystery” (1 Corinthians 2: 7), Paul does not mean that he utters secret things and riddles; But that the message he preaches “was hidden before the ages”².

Father Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus

❖ Wisdom could not be found within a certain time or place; as being within a certain time means that it is created! How could it be as such, when it has been since the beginning? And how could it be within a certain place, that which was always with God? In case someone searches for the Only-begotten Son; According to the evangelic sense, He is in the bosom of God the Father. Do you think that the bosom of the Father is a place? Do you seek to know how Wisdom was born; when the prophet says: “Man does not know its value” (Job 28: 13)? Do you think its origin is in mankind; when ‘Job’ says: “It is not found in the land of the living”. Do you refer death to Wisdom; about which “The deep says ‘it is not in me’, and the sea says, ‘It is not with me’” (Job28: 14)³.

St. Ambrose

❖ Paul testifies (1 Corinthians 2: 7), that he is sent to proclaim the secret of wisdom, unknown to the rulers of this world, hence called fools. God’s wisdom is hidden, because it is not words, but power, impossible to talk about in human terms, But to believe in it by the power of the Spirit⁴.

Father Amroseaster

❖ “(Wisdom) is not found in the land of those living in pleasure⁵” (13). The ‘land’ here refers to the soul of man. The Psalmist says: “My soul longs for you like a thirsty land” (Psalm 143: 6). It could not be found in the land of those living in pleasure; as he who still feeds on the pleasures of this life, would be deprived of conceiving the eternal wisdom.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me’” (Job 28: 14)

It is as though, nature, with all its beauties and possibilities, is debating man and drawing his attention to the Creator as the source of the true wisdom; so as not to seek it in nature, in books, nor in events, but only from God Himself.

¹ Homilies on Corinthians, homily 7: 1.

² Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on. Corinth., 175.

³ The Sacrament of Incarnation of our Lord, 4: 42.

⁴ Commentary on Paul’s Epistles (1 Cor. 2: 7).

⁵ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

St. Augustine believes that God made wisdom hidden, not intending to deprive us from it, But to make us long to get it more seriously¹.

- ❖ “*The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me;’*” (14). The Holy Book often personalizes irrational things, like saying for example: The sea says “*It is not with me*” “*The deep says It is not in me*”, “The heaven declares the glory of God” (Psalm 19: 1), “*Awake, O sword ...*”, or when asking the mountains “*why they skipped like rams*” (Psalm 114: 6), etc².

Pope Gregory the Nezenzian

- ❖ When ‘Job’ was asked about where to find the true wisdom, and he answered: “*The deep says, It is not in me*”; he does not refer to where it is found, but rather to where it is not!

Again when he said that it cannot be valued by man (15), “*It cannot be purchased for Gold*”; he does not reveal what is its price, but rather what is not!

Namely, it is obvious to everyone that wisdom is not to be found anywhere, nor to be purchased for any riches. But a holy man, full of thoughts of mystery, would set forth with us to discover other things; not to seek a created wisdom, but to seek Wisdom the Creator.

As, unless we search the hidden symbolic depths in these words, all what is uttered would be of no value, if interpreted only from the historical aspect.

Therefore, what is the wisdom meditated by such a saintly man, but what is expressed by the apostle Paul, saying: “*Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1: 24)?

On which Solomon wrote: “*Wisdom has built her house*” (Proverbs 9: 1); The Psalmist says, (addressing God): “*In wisdom, you have made them all*” (Psalm 104: 24); and ‘Job’ says: “*Man does not know its value*” (13); as its price is beyond everything.

Now, what would we give in order to be qualified to get the wisdom, which is Christ? When “*By grace we have been saved*” (Ephesians 2: 8), While by justice, man only deserves one thing; namely, death? ...

Yet Paul says: “*While we were still sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly*” (Romans 5: 8, 6). While we are still found ungodly, When Wisdom came, **what good have we presented to be worthy of this wisdom, which could not be valued for anything?** “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*” (Ephesians 2: 8-9); and then Paul says about himself: “*But by the grace of God, I am what I am*” (1 Corinthians 15: 10).

- ❖ To what does the term ‘*Sea*’ in (14) refer, but to the worldly human minds that suffer from bitter confusion; and foolishly enter into controversies with others, and successively set forth with animosity from one person to another? Because human minds destroy one another, and chase one another like waves; worldly persons are fittingly correlated to a stormy sea in a continuous condition of disturbance; Being deprived of peace and abidance of the inner wisdom. In contradiction to this, it is well said by the Lord, through His prophet: “*Upon whom shall my Spirit settle? But upon*

¹ St. Augustine: Sermon 51: 5.

² The Fourth Theological Oration, 2.

him who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my words” (Isaiah 66: 2). And while being under such disturbance, God calls on us, saying: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11: 28).

What would be more exhaustive for man, than to suffer from the fever of earthly lusts? And what would be more rest than when he covets nothing in this world? That is why, keeping the Sabbath was given to the Israelites as a gift the people who follow God receive the Sabbath namely, the rest of the spirit by not being disturbed by the carnal pleasures of this life.

But how could most of the early fathers abide to this wisdom in their inner life, while from outside, they were preoccupied with ordaining the affairs of the world?

Shall we count **Joseph** deprived of this wisdom, he, on whose shoulders, at the time of famine, the needs of the whole population of Egypt were laid?

Was **Daniel** stranger to this wisdom, he who was given such huge responsibilities above all the rulers by the king of the Chaldeans?

Therefore, it is obvious that even the good were also preoccupied with earthly commitments without any confusion! Those who have got peace of mind, while their hearts were filled with this true wisdom, their responsibilities and outer commitments would never enter into their inner depths, and bring them confusion.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- HOW GREAT IS THE WISDOM:

“It cannot be purchased for Gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price” (Job 28: 15)

As the Wisdom of God is the Person of the Word, Whoever acquires it, acquires the Creator Himself, with whom no creature could be compared.

❖ To whom the pure gold refers, but the angels who are so called. They are gold, on account of, that they shine with the splendor of righteousness; And they are pure gold, as they are not blemished with any defilement of sin. Humans, on the other hand, as long as they are in the corruptible body, and are mortals, Even if they are gold, Yet they would never be pure gold, *“for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind” (Wisdom of Solomon 9: 15).* In this life, Even if they shine with an exalted splendor of righteousness, Yet they could never completely get rid of the impurity of sins; as testified by John, saying: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1: 8);* as well as by James, saying: *“For we all stumble in many things” (James 3: 2);* And for which the prophet prays, saying: *“Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight, no one living is righteous” (Psalm 143: 2).*

Wisdom proclaims itself. To save the human race from sin, not even an angel could be sent in the place of Wisdom; As a creature is to be made free, by the Creator Himself; according to the words of the Lord in the gospel: *“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8: 36).*

But the good man ‘Job’, having been filled with the spirit of wisdom, has already seen, that in Judea, there would be those who put their hope in the man by whom the law was given, and made out of Moses the source of their salvation; When even uttering evil,

they said to the man whom Jesus healed: “*You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples*” (John 9: 28).

Pope Gregory the Great

“It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire” (Job 28: 16)

In the Septuagint version, it came as: “**Not even the colors of the dyes of India could be compared with it**”. **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that the wisdom of God could not be blemished with the adornment of eloquence; as testified by Paul, saying: “*These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Corinthians 2: 13). The apostle chose to use the wisdom in the simplicity of the pure truth alone, not blemished by the dye of words.

“Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold” (Job 28: 17)

Having been incarnated and became Man, neither gold nor silver with their shine and purity, nor crystal with its transparency, could equal the Word of God.

❖ John, in Revelation saw that, saying: “*The construction of its walls was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass*” (Revelation 21: 18); Because all saints will shine with an exalted splendor, the higher Jerusalem was described as a construction of gold Yet, as long as we are still in this life, and our hearts could not be vessels of crystal, but of ceramic, of mire; the prophet prays in fear, saying: “*Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink*” (Psalm 69: 14). And our bodies are called by Paul, “*earthly tent*”, saying: “*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” (2 Corinthians 5; 1)...Although **the saints may shine with such amazing splendor and exalted purity**, to have the image of wisdom, Yet they are not equal to it. All saints are brought to the eternal joys, to become “*like God*”, as is written: “*We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3: 2); “*O Lord God of hosts, who is like you?*” (Psalm 89: 8, 6); And: “*Who, among the children of God, can be like Him?*” **How can they be like Him, and, at the same time, not like Him? But because they will be in the image of this wisdom, but not equal to it.** They are like Him, on account that they are blessed; And not like Him, because, He, being the Creator, the incomprehensible; they, being comprehensible, could not be equal to Him. Whatever are the splendor and the purity of the saints, they may be wise in God; While He is the Wisdom of God; An utterly great difference.

“Nor can be exchanged for (vessels) of fine gold” (17) The church would never exchange this wisdom, even for very precious and exalted golden vessels, But will hold fast to Christ the Son of God; not as one of the prophets, but as the One Lord of the prophets.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ The Son gives Himself; that, being Himself the righteousness, would take away evil from us; The Wisdom presents itself, to take the place of ignorance¹.

St. Jerome

¹ Epistle to Galatians, 1: 1: 3.

“No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, For the price of wisdom is above rubies. The (yellow) topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, Nor can it be valued in pure gold” (Job 28: 18, 19)

Wisdom is Jesus the Lord of glory, more precious than all rubies, coral, or quartz.

- ❖ We often said that Christ is Wisdom, Justice, Peace, Joy, Compassion, etc. All these names of virtues, beloved even by those who do not seek them; No one can arrogantly proclaim that he does not like wisdom or justice¹!

St. Jerome

5- THE HIDDEN WISDOM OF GOD:

“From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?” (Job 28: 20)

Men of God often cry out seeking wisdom and understanding from no One but the Heavenly God!

- ❖ He grants knowledge, not to be taught from a book, But by the enlightenment of the Spirit².

Father Ambrose

- ❖ Those who humbly forsake their own knowledge, are the wise of this world; who, by their own choice become like a suckling, learning the wisdom, that could not be acquired through the labor of study³.

St. (Mar) Ephram, the Syrian

- ❖ It comes from Him, who produces it. Now its way is hidden, being born from the Unseen, the Partner in eternity with the Father; the prophet interprets the two words: *“From where”*, by saying: *“Who can speak of His generation?”* Now the place of understanding is man’s mind, made holy and filled with God’s wisdom.

Pope Gregory the Great

“It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air” (Job 28: 21)

The desire of the heart of every believer, true Theologian, and the elect, is to be given the privilege to behold God in the eternal life; as proclaimed by the apostle John: *“For we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3: 2), Although in the same epistle he says: *“No one has seen God at any time”* (1 John 4: 12). And the apostle Paul confirms: *“dwelling in an unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see”* (1 Timothy 6: 16). That raised many questions, among which:

1- Is this vision reserved only for the eternal life? Or can it begin here as an inner experience in the depths of the soul?

2- Can the heavenlies and the believers in heaven enjoy the vision of the divine Essence?

St. John Chrysostom wrote an article with the title: ‘The Incomprehensible Nature of God⁴’, in which he confirms that it is impossible to see the Essence of God as

¹ Epistle to the Ephesians, 3: 6: 17.

² Com. On Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. 12: 8).

³ Ascetical Homilies, 72.

⁴ راجع للمؤلف: القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم، 1981.

He is. And the Councils of Constantinople in the fourth century (1341, 1351, 1368 AD), confirmed as well, that the Essence of God is unapproachable; It is not the object of knowledge nor of vision of the angels or the saints; But could only be seen through His un-created divine energies; About this theory, **Father Gregory Palamas** spoke abundantly.

❖ When we hear that the Seraphim fly around the exalted throne, covering their faces with two of their wings, and their legs with the other two, and crying out with trembling voice, We should not figure them as having feathers, legs, or wings, As they are actually unseen hosts.

Even to those hosts, God is incomprehensible, and unapproachable. He condescends to appear in the way mentioned in the book of Revelation He is not limited to one place, Sitting on a throne, surrounded by heavenly hosts is out of His love for them. ...

Splendor of His light, they cover their faces with their wings; ...And would only be allowed to sing praises, full of glory and holy trembling; amazing songs that testify to the holiness of the One who sits on the throne.

He who dares to search God's care, that the heavenly hosts cannot touch nor express, should rather hide himself beneath the hills¹!

St. John Chrysostom

Many fathers of the church, and the scholars along the generations, were preoccupied with whether the believers would be able to see God as He is, or within certain limits²!

❖ If the Wisdom, that is God, is hidden from the eyes of the living; No one of the saints would surely be able to see it; I hear John, in accordance to this, saying: "**No one has seen God at any time**" (1 John 1: 18).

However, according to the testimony of the Holy Book itself, several fathers of the Old Testament have seen God: **Jacob** saw Him, and said: "*For I have seen God face to face*" (Genesis 32: 30).

"The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33: 11).

'Job' also saw God, and said: "*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You*" (Job 42: 5).

The prophet Isaiah saw God, and said: "*In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple*" (Isaiah 6: 1).

The prophet Micaiah saw the Lord, and said: "*I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left*" (1 Kings 22: 19).

What does it mean, that several of the fathers of the Old Testament testify that they saw God, Then it is said that the Wisdom, that is God: "*is hidden from the eyes of all living*" (Job 28: 21); And John says: "*No one has seen God at any time*" (John 1: 18)?

¹ Divine Providence.

² سيصدر قريباً بمشينة الله كتاب: ماذا يقول الآباء عن رؤية الله؟

We should understand that as long as we are living here a mortal life, we can see God only by ways of apparitions; But a vision of His true nature is not possible.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Destruction and death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears’” (Job 28: 22)

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Destruction and death refer to the evil spirits that cause perdition; *“His (Satan’s) name was death”* (Revelation 6: 8). These spirits cannot see the Wisdom, having, because of their pride, been driven away before Him, *“They are those who rebel against the light; They do not know its ways, nor abide in its path”* (See Job 24: 13).

“God understands its way, And He knows its place” (Job 28: 23)

No one knows the divine Wisdom; namely, the Son, except the Father; He knows the way of the Wisdom, proceeding eternally from Him; There is no separation between the Father and the Son.

- ❖ The Wisdom, a Partner in eternity with God, Has its way in one concept, and its place in another. The place of the Wisdom is the Father, and the place of the Father is the Wisdom; according to the testimony of the Wisdom Himself, saying: *“I am in the Father, and the Father in Me”* (John 14: 10).

Pope Gregory the Great

“For He looks to the ends of the earth, And sees under the whole heavens” (Job 28: 24)

- ❖ God’s vision is His renewal of the things that were lost and got corrupted; as it is written: *“A king who sits on the throne of judgment, scatters all evil with His eyes”* (Proverbs 20: 8). By His vision, He puts an end to the evils of our foolishness, and grants a great appreciation to maturity.

Pope Gregory the Great

“To establish a weight for the wind, and mete out the waters by measure” (Job 28: 25)

- ❖ In the Holy Book, the velocity and the light weight of the wind, generally refer to the souls; As said by the Psalmist about God, *“Who walks on the wings of the wind”* (Psalm 104: 3), And because He walks on the virtues of the soul, He accordingly, ***“establishes a weight for the wind”***; Meaning, that the Wisdom from above fills the souls, makes them heavy with the weight of maturity, and not with that, about which is said: *“How long, O you sons of men, (will your hearts be heavy)”*? (Psalm 4: 2). Being heavy by the weight of the good counsel is one thing, and being heavy with sin is something else; Being heavy with commitment is one thing, and being heavy with disobedience is another.

“And mete out the waters by measure” (25). ‘Waters’ in the Holy Book may refer to the flow of the **Holy Spirit**, as it came in the gospel: *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living waters”*, then adds, *“This He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive”* (John 7: 38, 39). It may refer to the **holy knowledge**; as it is said, *“He shall give him the water of wisdom to drink”* (Sirach 15: 3). Or may refer to the **evil knowledge**, as it is said about

the woman mentioned in Solomon, who bears a symbol of the heretics, and deceives by her deceitful ways: “*Stolen water is sweet*” (Proverbs 9: 17).

Or may refer to **temptations**, as said by the Psalmist: “*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck*” (psalm 69: 1).

Or may refer to **people**, as is said by John: “*The waters are peoples*” (Revelation 17: 15); Not only to those **going astray**, but also to the good peoples, **those who follow preaching by faith**, as is said by the prophet: “*Blessed are you who sow beside all waters*” (Isaiah 32: 20); And by the Psalmist: “*The voice of the Lord is over the waters*” (Psalm 29: 3).

Here, to what do ‘waters’ refer but to the hearts of the elect who, by the understanding of the Wisdom, they are granted to hear the heavenly voice.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt*” (Job 28: 26)

❖ By the ‘rain’ he refers to the **words of the preachers**, as said by Moses: “*Let my teaching drop as the rain*” (Deuteronomy 32: 2); Meaning, When his words are presented with mild convincing, they are like rain; Whereas when they include horrible things Concerning the coming judgment, they are producing voices like thunderbolts.

Words lose their authority when they are not supported by work; as according to the Psalmist: “*But to the wicked, God says, ‘What rights have you to declare my statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you?’*” (Psalm 50: 16-17) And concerning the law of preaching, it is written that he who does not keep these commandments, and yet he teaches people, will be called the smallest in the kingdom of heavens; But he who works and teaches, will be called great in the kingdom of heaven; “*The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness*” (Matthew 13: 41).... Now, “*He made a path for the thunderbolt*” (26); when He sets a connection with the hearts of men, struck by terror from the coming judgment of those preachers.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out*” (Job 28: 27)

Pope Gregory the Great believes that it is fitting for us to notice that he mentions four points concerning the wisdom, saying: “*Then He saw, declared, prepared, and searched it out*” (27).

❖ “He saw it”, being (the image); “declared it”, being (the Word); “prepared it”, being the (cure); And “searched it out”, being (hidden from sight). The eternal Wisdom of God is the “image and Word of the Father”, when penetrated by the mind of whoever intends to understand it, being the word with no time, and the image with no limit.

Pope Gregory the Great

It is fitting for us to let the Wisdom of God absorb our whole being, feelings, and senses.

- ❖ If Christ is the believer's head, "*the wise man's eyes are in his head*" (Ecclesiastes 2: 14); And consequently, all our senses, mind, thoughts, words, and counsel (if we are wise) will be concentrated in Christ¹

St. Jerome

"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil, is understanding'" (Job 28: 28)

Commenting on this phrase, **St. Augustine** says: As the Greek word for wisdom is sometimes translated as 'piety', "Piety, namely, "worshipping God", would then be wisdom. And as the main point in worship is that the soul would not deny God, the true and sound sacrifice would therefore be to offer thanksgiving to the Lord our God. Wisdom is the inner thanksgiving of the soul to God, expressed by spiritually worshipping Him².

Again he confirms that, he who refers wisdom to himself, is not wise, but foolish; Not giving thanks to God, he would subsequently bear no fear toward Him, and would not be pious³.

- ❖ ***"Behold piety is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding" (28).***

Concerning discernment between wisdom and understanding, we should know that wisdom concerns meditation, while understanding concerns work. Here, wisdom means worshipping God... Which is nothing but loving God, by which we long to believe in Him, and to see Him (relatively) while we are still in this world, Then (clearly) when we depart.... To depart from evil, said by 'Job' to be the understanding, undoubtedly concerns temporal things. As, concerning the time (in this world), we are in evil, from which we should depart, in order to reach the eternal goods⁴.

- ❖ There is another kind of wicked who, "*having known God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful*" (Romans 1: 21). In this, I have also fallen, but "*Your right hand has held me up*" (Psalm 18: 35), carried me away, and put me where I could be healed. You told man: "*Behold, the fear of the Lord That is wisdom*" (Job 28: 28); and "*Do not be wise in your own eyes*" (Proverbs 3: 7); as while they claim to be wise, they became unwise.(romans1: 22) But now, although I found the one pearl of great price, I hesitated to go and Sell everything else and buy it⁵ (Matthew 13: 46).

- ❖ **In case knowledge is of the upright kind, It would be analogous to love; As without love, "*knowledge puffs up*" (1 Corinthians 8: 1);** But where there is love, the heart would be full of edification, and knowledge would find no void place to puff up! Moreover, 'Job' demonstrates the beneficial knowledge, that he identifies by saying: "***The fear of the Lord, That is wisdom, And to depart from evil, is understanding***"⁶.

- ❖ ***"Behold, Worshipping the Lord, That is wisdom"***. The mind then would be wise, not by its own light, but through the fellowship in that exalted and eternal Light, in whom he possesses in the beatitude⁷.

¹ Epistle to the Ephesians, 3: 6: 17.

² St. Augustine: On the Spirit and the Letter ch. 18 (11).

³ cf. Augustine: On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 19 (12).

⁴ On the Trinity 12:14:22.

⁵ Confession, 8:1:2.

⁶ Letters, 167:11 (To Jerome on James 2:10).

⁷ On the Trinity 14:12:15.

St. Augustine

- ❖ ***“Behold, Piety, is wisdom; And to depart from evil, is understanding” (28).*** There is nothing comparable to this practical concept; And there is nothing stronger than this wisdom; *“The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge”* (Proverbs 1: 7), And there is good understanding for him who practices it. Honoring God is the exalted wisdom.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Man, go back to yourself! Search the secrets of your heart. If you find out that you fear the Lord, Then it would be obvious, that you are full of wisdom that the angels call *“The fear of God”*. You truly acquire wisdom if you fear the Lord.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 28

LET ME ACQUIRE YOU, O DIVINE WISDOM!

- ❖ You granted man a mind, to search and work;
By his human wisdom, he can search for precious minerals.
But foolishly, he does not seek the secrets of God.
Grant me to discover the silver of Your pure wisdom;
And to acquire the gold of the heavenly life.
- ❖ Man can, out of rocks, extract silver and gold;
Out of me, the dust; O Lord, Extract a witness to You.
To become in Your sight, more precious than any precious stone.
You are capable of turning the dust into heaven;
And the heart of stone, into one spacious with love.
- ❖ You are the maker of wonders and miracles;
Out of Saul of Tarsus, You brought forth a unique apostle;
Out of the wicked inhabitants in Nineveh, a repentant people;
Out of the Gentiles, a holy church.
Out of dust, You brought forth man;
And out of the earthly sinner, You set an almost angelic being.
- ❖ Here I am in Your hands;
Set Your kingdom in me;
Let me join the ranks of Your angels;
Let me get in touch with Your love;
And recognize Your divine secrets;
You are the Way, through which I can come into the Father's bosom;
You are my riches and pleasure.
- ❖ Let me acquire You, O the divine Wisdom;
By You, I enter into the secrets of heaven;
And enjoy the fellowship in the divine nature;
By You, my eyes would open, to see what no eye has ever seen!
+To acquire wealth, man learned the mining industry.
Because of hunger, the lion got knowledge of the ways through the forests and wilderness.
To have fulfillment, eagles could see from very high altitudes;
And for the sake of Love, I acquire You, to offer me the exalted divine secrets.
- ❖ Your wisdom is mighty and exalted.
It Brings me forth into the impossible, And reveals to me exalted wonders.
It raises the humble up to heaven.
It turns the stones into children for Abraham!
It shakes those with authority and power!
It will turn my heart of stone, into a fountain of sweet water of love.
It will turn me into something very precious in Your sight, O Lover of mankind.
- ❖ Let me acquire You, O the amazing Wisdom of God.

To bear inside me, a treasure of every wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
You are my amazing treasure.
No gold, silver, nor precious stones, would compare to You.

- ❖ Behold, the whole nature, with all its beauties, cry out to me, saying:
Acquire the beauty Himself;
The Creator of everything.
- ❖ How amazing! You are both hidden and manifest!
Your secrets are hidden, even from the Cherubim.
Who cover their faces, because of the greatness of Your splendor.
You have for so long, hidden Yourself from me,
Yet, not to deprive me of You;
But to flare the longing of my heart for You.
Then You incarnated and came down to me, to find You inside me.
You are very near to me.
My depths cry out to You.
Show me Your Glory!

CHAPTER 29

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN, AS A SYMBOL OF THE MESSIAH

'Job' reveals the way in which he used to fear the Lord, and depart from evil. He does not think just of the material happiness, but appreciates the friendship with God (4-5). He has not abused the authority like many kings. He is capable of drinking from the cup of suffering without losing his inner peace and his smile.

It seems that 'Job', after talking about wisdom and understanding in the previous chapter, stopped talking for a while, expecting to hear some comment on his words from one of his friends; But as they found nothing to say, 'Job' resumed his talk, presenting some memories of his golden days.

1- Job's past happiness in the Lord	1 – 6
2- "Job" used to be honored by people of all levels	7 – 10
3- Job's services to everyone	11 – 17
4- Job's hope for resuming his past prosperity	18 – 25

1- JOB'S PAST HAPPINESS IN THE LORD:

"Job" further continued his discourse, and said: 'Oh, that I were as in months past, As in the days when God watched over me" (Job 29: 1)

Here we hear the sick, sad, and confused man, remember the days of his prosperity and comfort, and tell us how the Lord watched over him, how all people used to respect him, how they arose as he went out to the gate of the city, and how they made him their ruler. But now, even the socially lowliest of the low, despise and ridicule him.

He confirms that he has never been guilty of committing any secret sin nor a crime of lust, never oppressed the poor or the widow, nor kept food from the fatherless; And he confirms how he rejected lies, deceit, oppression, meanness, greed, idol worship, gloating, hypocrisy, etc. Yet, while proclaiming his innocence, he does not claim that it was his own doing, as much as it was out of God's care for him. The secret of his past prosperity has been because God watched over him

Looking back at his past, and comparing it to his present condition, 'Job' coveted that time would somehow come back, and he would resume what he used to be. Overall, he does not refer his past success, happiness and prosperity to his own efforts, nor to his personal abilities and talents, but rather to God's mercies, saying: "**The Lord watched over me**". He did not consider his wealth as his stronghold (Proverbs 10: 15); nor "*trusted in the abundance of his riches*" (Psalm 52: 7), but "*The name of the Lord was his strong tower*" (Proverbs 18: 10). He admits that the Lord has been like a wall of fire around him, He was the secret of his security.

❖ *"Job" further continued his discourse, and said: 'Oh that I were as in months past" (29). Oh, that I live again, for just one month, my past good life, to reveal to you how I have been before, and to shut up your mouths! He does not ask for something much, but to resume his past happiness, for only thirty days, to enjoy the good days that he does not owes to any one of them!*

¹التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم كما هي.

Notice the piety of the good man; referring everything to God; Saying that no man without the help of God would be able to enjoy such good life; He adds: “*As in the days when God watched over me*” (29); He recalls his past good life, as an actual testimony to God’s care for him.

- ❖ The apostle Paul tells us that God is the fountain, the source of every goodness, with no need for a partner or a counselor; the Beginning; the Foundation; the Initiator of all good things; And the Creator, who ordains, and controls everything according to His will¹.

“When His lamp shone upon my head, and when by His light I walked through the darkness” (Job 29: 3)

The light shining from him was that of God, who shone His lamp upon his head; It is as though ‘Job’ is like a ‘lighthouse’, which would be of no value without the divine lamp. He is indebted to the “*true light*”, which guides him in the midst of darkness, grants him comfort in the midst of sorrows, and keep him away from offenses.

With a spirit of humility, together with thanksgiving, ‘Job’ presents himself to God as a ‘lighthouse’, whose power, whatever its material or form, is in the light put on its top, to guide ships from several miles afar. ‘Job’ confesses that, even if he is a ‘lighthouse’, Yet the light over his head is the light of God, and not his own; it is the lamp of God, the true Light.

While the prophet David sees in the word of God, “*a lamp to (his) feet and a light to (his) path*” (Psalm 119: 105), to help him walk in the darkness of this life; ‘Job’, on the other hand sees in the word of God a divine lamp placed over his head, to guide several ships to a secure haven.

It is fitting for the believer to bow before God to fill his life with His Holy Spirit, the Grantor of enlightenment; Then to praise God, saying: “*In Your light we see light*” (Psalm 36: 9). He does not say, “I see”, but “We see”. As once the believer get enlightened, he draws many to enjoy the divine light together with him.

- ❖ Talking about his good works, “Job’ ads: “**When His lamp shone upon my head” (3)**. That lamp is lighted by the oil of the good works of each of us; Yet, once we practice evil, and our works become wicked, We would, not only stop giving light, but that lamp upon our heads would be extinguished; And in us would be realized what is written in the Holy Book: “**He who hates his brother is in darkness, and does not know where he is going**” (1 John 2: 11). Is it not obvious here, that he who extinguishes the light of love, is extinguishing that lamp? Whereas he who loves his brother abides in the light (of love) (see 1John4: 21); and would be able to say together with David: “As for me, I am like a fruitful Olive tree in the house of God” (52: 8) and about him it would be said: “*His children are like olive plants all around his table*” (Psalm 128: 3)².

The scholar Origen

- ❖ By the term “**lamp**”, is meant the light of the Holy Book, about which the apostle Peter says: “*We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in the dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in*

¹ Divine Providence.

² Homilies on Leviticus, homily 13: 2: 4.

your hearts” (2 Peter 1: 19); And the psalmist says: “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119: 105).

Now, because the uppermost part of the body is the mind, namely, ‘the head’, the Psalmist says: “*You anoint my head with oil*” (psalm 23: 5); as though he says: ‘You fill my soul with the oil of love’. Now, the lamp of God shines on the head of the church, where the holy commandments shine on the darkness of our minds. In the darkness of this life, we receive the light of the word of God.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The Holy Book enlightens the eyes of the soul; Read it, O man of reason, and get filled with its love; as by reading the holy books, the sun would shine on the minds that feed on them with discernment.

As God has put the Holy Books in the world as a lamp of light to lighten its darkness; he who seeks his own good, should get enlightened by reading its commandments, and walking according to its statutes.

With love, approach the Book; Meditate in its beauty, As You will not have benefit without love, which is the entrance into understanding.

The Book has to be read with love; if you do not love it, do not read it.

It talks to you; if you get bored, it would deny you its inspirations.

You should open it, love it, read it, and meditate in its beauty; Otherwise, Do not read it, because if you do not love it, you will not benefit from it.

St. (Mar.) Jacob El-Serougi

“Just as I was in the days of my prime, when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent” (Job 29: 4)

In the writings of **Pope Gregory the Great**, it came as: “***When God was sitting with me in my tent***”; A phrase that reveals the exalted humility of God, and His amazing love for man! It probably also refers to the incarnation of the divine Word, who, by receiving Manhood, came to be in our tent.

‘Job’ looked back on the days of his youth, counting them as ‘the days of his autumn’, during which he felt God’s pleasure over his tent. In other words, he realized that, in the days of his youth, because he did not walk according to the lusts of his body, He entered, as though in a friendship with God, who found His pleasure in Job’s tent, sat with him, cared for him, and guided him, to bring him over to his eternal dwelling place.

- ❖ ***“Just as I was in the days of my prime, When God used to sit with me in my tent” (4)***... Whoever meditates in silence in God’s commandments, will have God sit with him in secret in his tent.

Pope Gregory the Great

‘Job’ does not say how he enjoyed in the days of his youth, the sweetness of sitting together with his wife and among his little children; Or of being honored by the elite in his tent; But he remembers only, how God’s care was over his tent, and His condescendence to sit with him, as his own beloved son! What a marvelous portrait of the man of God, who is only preoccupied with God’s pleasure in him, His love for him, His condescendence to sit with him, talk to him, and listen to him.

If God made 'Job' a lighthouse that bears the flame of divine light, to guide the ships of men to the secure heavenly haven; On another aspect, He made out of Job's tent another heaven, where God found pleasure to sit together with His beloved subject.

If we consider our bodies as tents, where our souls dwell during their journey in this world, God, the Creator, would not despise these tents, being the work of His hands. He sanctifies our bodies, with all their emotions, feelings, and energies; He dwells in them, and guides them to enjoy the glories of the eternity forever.

“When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me” (Job 29: 5)

In the days of his youth, feeling the love of God; was the secret of Job's fulfillment and satisfaction. He used to feel as though living in a heavenly palace; and yet, he was not preoccupied with the riches, dignity, or authority; but, together with his family, all were living in a fellowship with God, the true Head of the household.

❖ Why do you reject to follow the role models of the saintly men and women of the Old Testament? Tell me! Especially you, O mothers! Think about 'Hannah', and meditate in how she brought her only toddler son 'Samuel' to live in the temple.

Who among you, does not wish for her son to be like 'Samuel', who was thousands of times better than any king in this world? You may say: 'It is impossible that my son would be as great as 'Samuel'! Why would it be? It would be impossible because you do not want it to be! Just hand him to God, who is can make him as great as 'Samuel', whom 'Hannah' put in His hands.

'Eli' the High priest was actually, not in a position to conform the little boy, having failed to conform his own two sons; but it was the faith of the boy's mother and her zeal, which made it possible. Although he was then, her only son, and she did not know if she would have any other children; yet she, not for one single moment, thought in her mind of waiting for some time until he grows up a little, to give him the chance to taste the pleasures of this world, at least in his youth. No, her only goal was to dedicate the joy of her heart to God.

O men, You should feel ashamed before the wisdom of that woman, who presented Samuel, her baby, the joy of her heart to God; Her only goal was spiritual; to dedicate the first fruit of her womb to God. By that her marriage was more sanctified, God granted her many more children; and let her see how Samuel was honored even in this life.

If people pay back honor with honor; God pays back, the one who honors Him with greater honor! He gives in abundance, even to those who do not honor Him altogether!

Until when shall we remain like that, a lump of bodies?! Until when shall we remain attached to the earth?! Let our care for our children have the priority over anything else; Let us *“bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6; 4)

¹

St. John Chrysostom

“When my steps were washed with milk and the rock poured out for me streams of oil” (Job 29: 6)

¹ On Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring up Their Children.

God gave him an abundance of everything; So many sheep to imagine that he can wash his feet in milk; and so many olive trees to imagine that the rocks surrounding him flow with oil.

Washing the believer's steps with milk or cream; and having the rocks flow for him with oil, refer to his feeling of inner fulfillment; not just enough to anoint his body members with oil, but to feel as though his soul plunged in streams of holy oil; According to the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "*I will make their rivers run like oil*", says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 32: 14); to those in a song by Moses before his departure: "*He made him to draw honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock*" (Deuteronomy 32: 13); And in a praise by David: "*The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing*" (Psalm 145: 15-16).

And representing the church, 'Job' hints to the fact that, preaching the gospel of Christ, the church provides the world with an inner fulfillment and satisfaction; preaching the One crucified and rejected by the world, in whom are all the treasures of knowledge, all the treasures of heaven.

❖ ***"When my feet were washed with cream¹" (6)*** The feet are washed with cream, when the saintly preachers are filled with good works.

"And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me" (6). By the 'Rock' he means Christ, according to Paul, the great preacher (1Corinthians 10: 4). A Rock that now pours rivers of oil to be used by the holy church, where the Lord speaks and preaches.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Do you seek the fulfillment of the body, after which it would soon get hungry again? According to the words of The Lord Christ to the Samaritan woman: "*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again*" (John 4: 13).

I wish our inner man would rather hunger for righteousness, to get fulfilled with the Lord, "*the bread which came down from heaven*" (John 6: 41); and would thirst for Him, "*For with Him is the fountain of life*" (Psalm 36: 9).

The spiritual Elder

❖ I shall never be fulfilled until your glory is transfigured before me!

Yes, My Lord, You, alone can give me back my happy life.

To You, I confess my misery, on the day I depart from the vanity of this world, while deprived of You, the sole object of my love; when my carnal desires were scattered among several deceiving pleasures, that carry only poverty and troubles without limit; when I used to move from one pleasure to another, Yet none of them brought fulfillment to my soul, that lived only in You!

Yes, In You alone is the beauty O, You, the only everlasting, exalted, and perpetually perfect!

Whoever follows your footsteps would never get lost, and whoever reaches out for you, would never have despair!

Although I know that whoever possesses you, all his desires will be fulfilled! Yet I am so miserable! My heart tends to flee from

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

You, O, the true riches, and the true joy; to follow the world, where there is only grief and sorrow!

St. Augustine

2- 'JOB' USED TO BE HONORED BY PEOPLE OF ALL LEVELS:

“When I went out to the gate by the city, when I took my seat in the open square” (Job 29: 7)

He was not so preoccupied with his great happiness at home to forget his duties toward others. He used to go out to the gate by the city to reside over the court of justice; not to enjoy authority, but rather to lift oppression, and to bring justice to everyone.

- ❖ Historically, It was the custom in the old days for the elders, like ‘Job’ to sit by the gates of the city to reside over providing justice to those entering; So that no oppression would find its way into it.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The young men saw me and hid, and the aged arose and stood” (Job 29: 8)

According to the words of the apostle: *“Let the elders who rule well be worthy of double honor”* (1 Timothy 5: 17).; And, *“Render therefore to all their due, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor”* (Romans 13: 7).

Job’s person was so surrounded by awe, that, on his arrival, the reckless young men used to hide, lest their wickedness would be revealed; and the mature and wise used to arise and stand aright in reverence

- ❖ ***“The boys saw me and hid, And the elders arose upright” (8)***. Historically, what he says is true; But, symbolically: Those whose hearts are not weighed with wise counsel, are called ‘boys’; Whereas those with long experience, in the Holy Book, are called ‘aged’; *“For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years; but understanding is gray hair for anyone, and a blameless life is ripe old age”* (Wisdom 4: 8-9).

Now, seeing the holy church, *‘the boys’* hide and *‘the aged’* arise and stand aright; because the immature fear its uprightness, and the ages glorify it. Those of lean thoughts and the reckless, would ridicule its order and love, would flee away and hide, lest their secret behavior would be exposed; while the serious and blameless would commend it

Pope Gregory the Great

“The nobles refrained from talking, and put their hand on their mouth; the voice of the princes was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth” (Job 29: 9, 10)

Because ‘Job’ enjoyed a strong personality, based on his wisdom, abilities, and talents, he was revered by the nobles and the princes; in his presence all tend to keep silent to listen to him, and to benefit from his vast experience. They used to find with him the decisive solution for any of their controversies.

- ❖ Those described here as nobles and princes, may also refer to those who proclaim evil heresies, about whom is said: *“He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wonder in the wilderness where there is no way”* (Psalm 107: 40). Such people do not fear to give wrong interpretations of God’s ordinances, by which they may draw the

flocks of sheep submitted to them, to lead them astray to a wilderness where there is no way; and not to the true 'Way', that is Christ.

On such people, contempt is truly poured, to look as though putting their hand on their mouth! Their tongue is stuck to the roof of their mouth, not daring to utter what is evil beyond control, in an attempt to cover up what is against the true faith. It is as though the church says: Once I have the chance to preach loud and clear, I would be feared by everyone not submitted to the truth.

Pope Gregory the Great

As much as God grants honor to His children; fearing lest they may fall into pride, they work with the spirit of humility; yet not without a flaring zeal. If their work is manifest, it would be for the glory of God; And if it remains hidden, it would be to keep them in the security of the stronghold of humility.

❖ Of the features of the saints, is to hide the good works they do, lest they may fall into haughtiness. That is why the 'Truth' says: "*Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them*" (Matthew 6: 1). Having granted the light to the two blind men on the road, He commanded them, saying: "*See that no one knows it*". Yet, "*When they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country*" (Matthew 9: 30, 31). They should have hidden themselves for their own sake, and not proclaimed it except when it is necessary, for the benefit of others; according to the words of the Savior: "*They do not light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, to give light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matthew 5: 15-16). There is time when the righteous are committed to do good deeds before men, Or to tell them about what they did; But not in order to be glorified, but to glorify their Father in heaven.

That is why preachers try to avoid being honored; yet in certain situations, they do, in order to let others follow their lead.

That was certainly the way the apostle Paul acted, when he, although avoiding to be honored, he was keen to confirm his true worthiness, when he said to the Thessalonians: "*Nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you*" (1Thessalonians 2: 6-7). Again, in his epistle to the Corinthians, avoiding being honored, he says: "*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 4: 5)... By this, he both marvelously revealed the grace of humility, and sought an abundance of benefit; Proclaiming about himself as serving his disciples; and proving at the same time, that he is better than his enemies.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- JOB'S SERVICES FOR EVERYONE:

"When the ear heard, then It blessed me, and when the eye saw it approved"
(Job 29: 11)

His dignity was not based upon his wealth, nor upon his authority, but upon his practical behavior. Everyone testified to him through hearing his wisdom and ordinances; and through seeing his love and compassion. Because he attempted to follow the lead of the Lord the Lover of mankind, everyone testified to him.

Pope Gregory the Great sees in the person of the blessed ‘Job’ a symbol of the church, blessed and honored by all who listen to her, and who see her holy life. She may stay persecuted, yet she is also blessed, respected, and honored, even by her opponents.

“Because I delivered the poor who cried out, and the fatherless, and he who had no helper” (Job 29: 12)

Being blessed by all was based upon his good deeds; He used to find no rest before the poor has his comfort; nor find pleasure in his food, until the fatherless gets help from him.

St. Basil the Great demands from us to follow the lead of the righteous ‘Job’, who became a father and a helper for the fatherless (12), and presented a spiritual concept for this ministry, saying that helping the fatherless does not stop at supporting them financially, but extends to embracing the young among them, to dedicate their hearts and life to the Lord. In his response to a question about what would be the right age to allow someone to dedicate himself to God; And when should the vow of virginity considered safe, he said: [As the Lord Himself says: “*Let the little children come to Me*” (Matthew 19: 14); And as the apostle commends those who know the holy Scripture from childhood (2Timothy 3: 15); And those who bring up their children in the training and admonition of the lord (Ephesians 6: 4); It so seems to me that all times of life, even the very early stages, are convenient for accepting those who apply for discipleship (monasticism). Moreover, we should embrace under our care, those children who are deprived of their parents, to become fathers of the fatherless, like the blessed ‘Job’ (12)¹.

- ❖ To clarify the reason why he is blessed, he quotes his good deeds, saying: **“Because I delivered the poor who cried out” (12)**. Yet that comes after referring every worthiness to God, who was with him and kept him safe to glorify the Lord (1 Corinthians 1: 31).
- ❖ Notice how he does not boast that he departed from evil, nor that he offered sacrifices to the Lord, as the Jews used to do, But he boasts that he consummates what God demands (deliverance of the poor) through His prophet, saying: **“Seek justice for the fatherless, And plead for the widow”** (Isaiah 1: 17).. Notice how he does not abuse his authority, but uses it when he needs to; How he has been a father and advocate for all; Has not used his riches for oppression, his glory for boasting, nor his wisdom for evil; But used it to deliver those who are burdened under the oppression of the wicked.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Now, the church, besides presenting works of compassion on the material aspect, she keeps on presenting them spiritually. Besides materially delivering the poor who cries out, she forgives the sins of him when commits and repents. About those poor, it is written: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5: 3); and by their cries they say in the voice of the Psalmist: **“Let your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, for we have been brought very low”** (Psalm 79: 8).

The church **“delivers the fatherless who has no helper” (12)**, when anyone flee from the lusts of this world, to find in her bosom the help of good counsel... We can see

¹ *The Long Rules, Question 15.*

in the “*fatherless*”, any believer, who, when he separates himself from his divine Father, is deprived of His care and compassion, and becomes “fatherless” for some time.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy” (Job 29: 13)

The blessings and prayers of all those under devastating pressure, who found their deliverance in him, came upon him. And the contrite hearts of the widows sang for joy, because of his compassion and works of love.

If God refers Him to the afflicted, the needy, and the contrite in heart, being a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge for the widows, ‘Job’ likewise, found pleasure in caring for these suffering categories.

- ❖ Understanding the exaltation of death, ‘Job’ says: “***Let the blessings of him who is near to death, come upon me” (13)*** If we see someone poor dying, Let us come to his help; And if we see someone weak, in his final moments, Let us not forsake him; Helping those dying of old age, of serious wound, or of a deadly illness, at the last moments of their life, has brought blessings to many Let the final words of someone about to die, be uttering your name¹.
- ❖ If it is our duty to extend mercy to all; would we rather not extend it to a believer in jail?! If your money dearer to you than the life of someone you see being led to his death, and you refrain from coming to his help, how horrible would be your sin! Let us always remember the marvelous words uttered by the blessed ‘Job’: “***I wish the blessings of someone on his way to death, come upon me” (13)***².

St. Ambrose

- ❖ “***The blessings of a perishing man” (13)*** comes upon the church, when she, anticipating the perdition of a sinner, hastens, by her holy counsel, to haul him up from the pit of sin; according to the holy Scripture: “*He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sin” (James 5: 20)*. If it would be a great achievement to save from death, someone who, sooner or later would die; how much more would it be to save a soul from perdition, to live forever in the heavenly eternal city!

Pope Gregory the Great

“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban” (Job 29: 14)

His works of compassion – by letting no one be not oppressed or insulted, nor a needy be humiliated – was not just a commitment, But it was like a robe he never took off. He counted those deeds, not as something of secondary importance in his life, but very essential, without which he would be bared before God Himself, and would come to be like his early parents Adam and Eve, while hiding among the trees in fear, nakedness and shame.

He counted his works of righteousness, not as a gift given from him to others, but as a divine gift that clothes him with glory, and a royal turban (crown) over his head. His crown as a king was not for the sake of honor or prestige; His real crown was justice and

¹ *Death is Good, 8: 37.*

² *Duties of the Clergy, 1:30:148.*

mercy. His real dignity was not in his purple royal robe, nor in his turban and scepter, But was in the robe of righteousness, and the crown of truth.

St. John Chrysostom believes that ‘Job’, who put on righteousness as a robe, was not appointed a judge by anyone, But it was his holy virtuous life that recommended him for that position, and made the people readily submit to his ordinances; As it was the case with Moses, whose virtuous life qualified him for leadership.

❖ He says: **“I put on righteousness” (14)**. Some people, although, socially superior to others, Yet they practice oppression. But ‘Job’ always walked the way of righteousness.

“Justice clothed me like a robe”. Some may consider the work of a judge as a burden, and a very wearisome duty; but not the blessed ‘Job’. He, who denies virtue, would have someone to judge him.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ We are committed to judge ourselves; when we condemn ourselves for our sins, what is against us, would turn into our favor. According to the Holy Scripture, ‘the righteous begins his talk by condemning himself’; and: **“I put on righteousness; it clothed me like a robe” (14)**. As long as we submit to lust, we are usually clothed with armor, ready for war, rather than for peace. Yet, everything would be different, once our last enemy is scattered, and our righteousness becomes perfect¹.

St. Augustine

❖ He, against whom Jacob wrestled, would not let him go empty-handed, but blessed him (Genesis 31: 29). A wise man would never go empty-handed, but is perpetually clothed in a robe of reason, and would have the right to say together with ‘Job’: **“I put on righteousness, and I am clothed with justice” (14)**. This is indeed the inner clothing of the Spirit that no one can take off from man, unless he himself does, by his wrong doing against the truth. While Adam got himself naked (Genesis 3: 10-11), Joseph, on the other hand, never did; not even when his outer robe was taken away from him; He remained clothed with the secure robe of virtue. How would the wise ever be empty-handed, When his soul is perpetually fulfilled, securely clothed in the robe it has received².

St. Ambrose

❖ The way to wisdom is not like when someone emerges out of water all of a sudden, and gasps for air; but it would rather be like when someone comes out of darkness, and light gradually shines on him, the more he advances toward the entrance of the cave. The light he acquires would come from that toward which he advances, while any darkness that remains in him would be from that He leaves behind. Although it is truly said: **“In His sight no one living is righteous” (Psalm 143: 2)**; yet, it is also written: **“The righteous lives by his faith” (Habakkuk 2: 4)**. **On one aspect, the saints are clothed with righteousness; And on another, No one lives completely without sin. Some may sin more, and some may sin less; the best of all is he who sins the least**³.

¹ *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness, 27.*

² *Jacob and the Happy Life, 5: 22.*

³ *Letter 167:3:13.*

St. Augustine

- ❖ ***“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me” (14).*** When we put on a robe, we are indeed clothed by it all around. When we put on the robe of righteousness, and leave no bare gap for sin to enter into us, we would be guarded on every side by our good works.

But if we are righteous in some works, and oppressive in others, we would be as though have covered a part of our body, and left another part bare.

The good deeds that are later on defiled by evil deeds, would never produce goodness; according to the words of Solomon: *“One sin destroys much good”* (Ecclesiastes 9: 18 – Vulgate); And according to James: *“Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2: 10); Then, to clarify this he added: *“For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery’, also said, ‘Do not murder’. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law”* (James 2: 11).

Therefore, we should look by the eyes of the heart all around, and should always be alert; according to the words of Solomon: *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4: 23). And before the word ‘diligence’ he says ‘all’; As it is fitting for everyone of us, as long as he is still alive, to search himself diligently from all sides; he should be aware, that he is fighting a battle against spiritual enemies; lest he would lose the reward he earns through a group of certain works, by another one; Lest he would be closing the door in the face of the enemy on one side, to open before him another door on another. If a city is surrounded by a mighty wall, with gates securely guarded on every side against a crafty and deceitful enemy; Yet a single opening, not well guarded, is left through negligence, the enemy will certainly enter through it.

That Pharisee who ascended to the temple to pray; Let us listen to how he provided the city of his soul with strongholds of fasting twice a week, and of tithing everything he acquires; Yet he left a gap unguarded against the enemy! When he said: *“I am not like this tax-collector”* (Luke 18: 11-12). There you see, how he left the city of his heart open before the plots of the enemy through commending himself; how he left open, the city that he tried to secure tightly by fasting and giving!

Pope Gregory the Great

“I was eyes to the blind, and I was feet to the lame” (Job 29: 15)

God granted him the grace to become eyes for the blind, through giving good counsel to those who are confused; And to become feet to lead the lame on the way of truth, to bring them forth, by love, to the joyful life in the Lord.

- ❖ ***“I was eyes to the blind, and I was feet to the lame” (15).*** He does not say, ‘I made their sorrows lighter by consoling them for being blind, but *“I was eyes to them”* I turned every dark place for them into light.

St John Chrysostom

- ❖ By so saying, he refers to the fact that he stretched a hand to one, and carried the other along
- ❖ By preaching, the church lightens the way for the blind, who does not know where he goes; while supporting the lame, which is not able to go where he intends to. Sin is

mostly committed, either through ignorance (blindness), or through weakness (lameness). Man may not know what he should wish for, or may not be able to do all what he desires.

Pope Gregory the Great

“I was a father to the poor, and I took up cases I know nothing about” (Job 29: 16)

‘Job’ was not only an advocate of, and generous to the poor, but he also gave them a true fatherhood. Being a king, he did not shy from being also called a “*father to the poor*”.

If he takes up a case, he would not hasten to give a verdict before he listens to all parties concerned, and searches diligently every defense; “He does not answer a matter before he hears it” (Proverbs 18: 13); He always had before his eyes the principle that came in the Holy Book, saying: “*The first one to plead his cause seems right, until the other comes and **cross examines***” (Proverbs 18: 17).

Through his compassionate fatherhood, ‘Job’ did not only care for those who ask for his justice against oppression, but also cared for those who do not. He used to find pleasure in searching for the contrite hearts to save; and in taking up cases he was not asked to take, or knew nothing about.

Someone may ask, in showing fatherhood, or extending compassion toward others, whether we should also care for their physical needs; when the Lord Christ demands from him whom he calls for ministry, to “*let the dead bury their own dead*” (Luke 9: 60), and to concentrate his interest on the spiritual aspect alone. To this question, **Pope Gregory the Great** responds, saying: [Above anything else, those responsible to shine their spiritual ministry, are committed not to disregard the material need of their weak brothers, but should entrust them to others who are ready to take this task].

- ❖ Yes indeed, blessed is he who does not let the needy go out of his house empty-handed; who partakes of the afflictions of the weak and the helpless; On the day of judgment, he would get salvation from the Lord, who would consider Himself indebted to him for the sake of the works of mercy he has done¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ “***And I took up cases I know nothing about” (16)***. His role as a helping advocate, is not only set upon giving money, food, or clothing to the poor, But extends to keeping them out of harm’s way. I take interest even in cases that do not concern me; And go after him, whom no one seems to care for. It is as though my work is to search and investigate, whether anyone is ever oppressed!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If anyone wishes to know how we could call God “Father”, let him listen to Moses, the excellent teacher, saying: “*Is He not your Father who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?*” (Deuteronomy 32: 6); And to the prophet Isaiah, saying: “*But now, O Lord, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You are the Potter; And we are all the work of Your hand*” (Isaiah 64: 8).

¹ *Duties of the Clergy 1:11:39.*

The prophetic gift has more clearly proclaimed that, we call Him a Father according to nature, but by God's work through adoption.

And in order to learn from the divine Holy Book, how we call a 'father', not only him who is as such by nature, Let us listen to the apostle Paul, saying: "*For you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel*" (1 Corinthians 4: 15). To the Corinthians, Paul, although he was not a father according to the flesh, he was their father through teaching, and according to the Spirit as well.

When 'Job' says: "***I was a father to the poor***", It was not as though he has begotten them all, but because of his care for them¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

"I broke the fangs of the oppressor, and plucked the prey from his teeth" (Job 29: 17)

As much as he presented a compassionate fatherhood to the poor, he had no fear of the violent, oppressive and haughty wicked. He does not say that he avenges or kills them, but that he breaks down the forces of evil, and courageously snatches the prey from their fangs; the way David saved the goat from the mouth of the lion.

❖ "***I broke the fangs of the oppressor***"; That is what the apostle means by saying: "*...If it is leadership, let him govern with diligence*" (Romans 12: 8)

"And plucked the prey from his teeth". Notice the difficulty of the task! Of caring for those who are already devoured and caught If the situation warrants punishing, he punishes; And if it needs supporting, he supports.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Look how the church plucks the prey from the fangs of Satan! How she snatched Saul of Tarsus, while still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, on his way to Damascus, carrying letters from the high priest to gather preys to the account of Satan; How he Himself was gathered to the account of Christ, once he got faith (Acts 9: 12). The church often snatches the souls from evil through preaching.

By the "***fangs***" is meant the hidden plots of the devil; And by the "***teeth***", the practice of sin in public. About fangs and teeth, the Psalmist says: "*Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!*" (Psalm 58: 6).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Who can quietly meditate in the greatness of the divine glory during this task?! – "*Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him; Yes the poor and the needy from him who plunders him*" (Psalm 35: 10); "***Broke the fangs of the oppressor, and plucked the prey from his teeth***" (Job 29: 17). Who can meditate in the greatness of happiness; When, while being preoccupied with providing the poor with their every day needs, would have his heart, at the same time, risen above the filth of the earth?! **Who among men, even if he is a leading righteous saint, while being shackled by the bonds of this life, would reach that level of goodness; while keeping on his holy meditation?! Would he not, even for a short time be preoccupied with his**

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 7:8-9.*

earthly interests, or those of his brothers, like food, clothing, receiving guests, and building or repairing his own dwelling quarter¹!

Father Theonas

4- JOB'S HOPE FOR RESUMING HIS PAST HAPPINESS:

“Then I said, ‘I shall die in my nest. My days are as numerous as the grains of sand’” (Job 29: 18)

‘Job’ counted himself as though securely dwelling in a nest on the top of a tree, where no storm could shake it; until the moment he delivers his spirit. He amazingly assumed that the days of his life are as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea coast; and did not realize that they are more like the grains of sand that flow inside a sand clock, that would expire in a short time.

❖ ***“And I said that I shall die in my nest, And like a palm tree, my days will multiply”² (18)***. It is filling to liken the life of the righteous to a palm tree, which although downwards, it is covered by a dry cuticle, rough to touch; yet, upwards, it is marvelously green, and carries sweet fruits. So is the life of the elect; despicable downwards, and beautiful higher up.

Pope Gregory the Great

“My root is spread out to the waters, and the dew lies all night on my branch” (Job 29: 19)

‘Job’ looked at himself as a tree planted on streams of water; always fruitful, flourishing, and would never wither. And, at the same time, It receives heavenly due as blessing from above. He always believed that he is the object of the pleasure of God who cares for him.

❖ ***“My roots are open to the waters” (19)***. When the thoughts of the mind secretly extend to receive the waters of the truth. In the Holy Book, the roots refer to the hidden thoughts. We open our roots to the waters, when we spread out the hidden thought of our heart to the inner waters.

The Psalmist says that the righteous *“shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water”* (Psalm 1: 3).

“And the dew lies all night on my branch” The grace falling from above, makes us fit to carry good fruits, to be cropped in the world below; As is well expressed by Paul, saying: *“By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain”*(1 Corinthians 15: 10)... Looking at the harvest growing under the dew, we hear him saying: *“His grace toward me was not in vain I labored more abundantly than they all”* (1 Corinthians 15: 10).

Pope Gregory the Great

“My glory was fresh within me and my bow ever new in my hand” (Job 29: 20)

With every day passing by, he bears a new thought in the life of righteousness. Having love and compassion, his glory was fresh within him, would never wither, and he would never forsake striving with his whole might for the sake of the oppressed, ***“My bow was ever new in my hand”***.

¹ Cassian: Conferences, 23:5:1.

² التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

❖ ***“My glory was ever fresh within me, and my bow ever new in my hand” (20).*** Because aging or ‘ancientness’ is usually a sign of evil; whereas ‘newness’ is a sign of virtue; Paul says: *“since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man”* (Colossians 3: 9) As far as our zeal is concerned, when we are among our spiritual adversaries, or among our diverse carnal neighbors, and become submerged in their detestable atmosphere, we get ‘old’ or ‘ancient’, and our ‘newness, which we gained through prayers, reading, good life, serious sufferings, and daily watching, would be polluted; And, we would need to cleanse our life by tears, practice good works, and go through holy meditations, in order to renew our life again.

The ‘**bow**’ in the Holy Scripture, sometimes refers to the plots of the wicked, which *“bend their bows to shoot their arrows – bitter words”* (Psalm 64: 3); Or refers to the day of judgment, saying: *“You have made Your people suffer hard things; You have given us wine that makes us stagger. But for those who fear You, You gave a banner to be unfurled against the bow”* (Psalm 60: 3-4).

And, other times it refers to good things; as for example to the bow of the church, and the bow of the Lord, from which arrows – fiery words – are shot toward the hearts of men; As is said by the Psalmist: *“He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready. He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts”* (Psalm 7: 12-13).

The bow in the hand is the Holy Book at work. He who practices the divine proclamations, that he learned by reason, holds the bow in his hand. ***“The bow is ever new in the hand”***, when what we learn concerning the holy proclamation, is practically practiced.

The blessed ‘Job’ informs us about his circumstances, as well as about ours. While he refers to his own sorrows, At the same level, and with the same meaning, He refers to what concerns the holy church and her circumstances.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Men listened to me and waited, and kept silence for my counsel” (Job 29: 21)

His fatherhood to the poor, his wisdom and reverence; going hand in hand with his courageous struggle for the sake of the oppressed; made him the one with the first counsel; Being sure that he is blameless and perfect, Once he talks, everyone keeps silent to listen to him.

❖ ***“Those who heard, waited for my decision; And those who listened kept silent for my counsel”*** We actually miss such kind of reverence, addressed to the blessed ‘Job’ by those under him The holy church, suffering from the heretics or from the carnal-minded, recalls the good old days, when all the believers to whom she talked, used to listen to her in awe! Lamenting the daring of the oppressors, she sadly says: ***“Men listened to me and waited, and kept silence for my counsel” (21).***

Pope Gregory the Great

“After my words they did not speak again, and my speech settled on them as dew” (Job 29: 22)

After he talked, all felt that there is no need for any further research; being known for his diligence, nobody second-guessed him, or added to what he said.

Commenting on Job’s words, ***“After my words, they did not speak again”***, **Pope Gregory the Great** says: [While the believers did not dare to add anything of their own

to the words proclaimed by the holy church; the heretics, on the other hand, dared to correct her upright teachings and preaching].

“They waited for me as for the rain. And they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain” (Job 29: 23)

All, like a barren wilderness, were in need of the rain coming from Job’s lips, to turn their wilderness into a fruitful paradise. Being aware of the value of the wisdom coming out of Job’s mouth, they waited for it, and drank it, to bear fruit inside them, as well as to be reflected on their outer behavior.

❖ ***“They waited for me as for the rain, And they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain” (23).*** We submit to the words of preaching as for the rain, when we recognize with true humility, the dryness of our hearts, and long to be watered by doses of the holy preaching; according to the words of God on the tongue of the Psalmist: *“My soul longs for You like a thirsty land”* (Psalm 143: 6). The prophet advises us to be watered by the streams of teaching, saying: *“Ho, Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters”* (Isaiah 55: 1).

Pope Gregory the Great

“When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my countenance, they did not cast down” (Job 29: 24)

If he smiles to someone, it makes him very happy, and would even think he is dreaming; everyone sought his favor and pleasure. Whenever he smiles or laughs, he would spread all around him an atmosphere of love and joy; No body abused his simplicity, nor lessened his reverence toward him; But all looked at the splendor of his countenance with joy and respect.

❖ If we interpret that historically, we would understand that that saintly man carried himself before those under him, in such a way that, even in his laughing, he would still be revered. Having been, as he said, a father to the poor, and a comfort to the widows; it would certainly need a great power of discernment, to combine his firmness and seriousness, with delicacy, and compassion.

It would be fitting for man to learn how to control his relationship with others in such a way, that while laughing, he should still keep his composure; And when he gets angry, he should remain compassionate; In both his fun and anger, he should not cross the line. It often happens that we destroy those under our care by going too far in executing exaggerated justice that would turn it to injustice.

Let us see how Paul used to bear a smile through a grace from up high, even in the midst of his fears and afflictions He was *“caught up to the third heaven, into paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter”* (2 Corinthians 12: 2); And yet, he still remained on his fear; saying: *“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9: 27). There you see how, when the divine grace smiles upon him, he becomes filled with hope and surety; and still, he does not trust in depending upon himself.

Pope Gregory the Great

“I chose the way for them, and sat as a chief; so I lived like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners” (Job 29: 25)

Amiably, yet reverently, he smiled, in order to create a pleasant atmosphere around him; But at the same time, he, as the captain of the ship of their life, does not forsake its helm: ***“I chose the way for them, and sat as a chief”***.

His smile did not take away his dignity as a king, and a leader of the battle: Living ***“likes a king among his troops”***, his orders are obeyed: *“He says to this one, ‘Go’, and he goes; and to another, ‘Come’, and he comes, and to his servant, ‘Do this’, and he does it”* (Matthew 8: 9).

Because he does not covet authority, his leadership does not offend anyone. He leads to comfort the mourners by a compassionate heart, and through supporting all in the truth mixed with love.

❖ ***“I chose the way for them, and sat as a head (a chief)” (25)***. In the hearts of the children of perdition, the works of the body occupy the place of prominence; and those of the soul, the second place. With them, most surely, the Lord Christ does not occupy the foremost, but the last place. The elect on the other hand, above everything else, care for things of eternity; while temporal things are secondary, and occupy a lesser place. Concerning this the voice of Truth says: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6: 33).

“Though I sat like a king among his troops; Yet, I comforted the mourners” (25). The Lord sits in the heart as a King; controls the violent emotions of our mind; and in the soul where he dwells, he grants zeal to the slothful, controls the anxious, flares the cool, soothes the flared, softens the cruel, and binds the loose. **By such diversity of works, reigning on the minds of the elect, among a variety of virtues, He is as like a king among his troops.**

He, as well, ***“comforts the mourners”***, through his promise: *“Blessed are those who mourn”* (Matthew 5: 4); And: *“I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you”* (John 16: 22).

The hearts of mourners are comforted as well by the holy church, who guides the souls of the elect; while burdened by the woes of the present life, she cheers them up by the promise of the eternal city.

In her services, the holy church continuously mixes together hope with fear in the hearts of believers, to let them get in touch with both the compassion and the justice of the Savior. So she does, lest they depend on His mercy through slothfulness, or lose hope through fear from His justice. At the same time, she brings joy to their hearts, by saying to them: *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12: 32); Warns the daring, saying: *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation”* (Mark 14: 38); And soothes those in fear, saying: *“Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven”* Luke 10: 20).

While putting terror in the hearts of those who think high of themselves, saying: *“I saw Satan falling like lightening from heaven”*;

She calms down those terrified, by saying: *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”* (John 10: 27-28).

❖ Mixing compassion with firmness are shown in the ark of the testimony, in which both the rod and the Manna are kept together, beside the two tablets of the law. Together

with the knowledge of the Holy Book, in the chest of the good ruler, there is the rod of firmness, and also the sweetness of the manna; That led David to say: “*Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*” (Psalm 23: 4).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Like the sick who wishes to be cured, consents to every medication his physician prescribes, however bitter it may be, and would never refer any bad intention to the physician; So is the believer who wishes for his spiritual growth. He receives with humility the reproaches and advices of his spiritual guide, without assuming any probability of cruelty or hatred on his part.

So, if we, for the sake of the healing of our body, consent to take bitter and repulsive medications, may risk being cut with the surgeon’s knife, or being burned by fire; And would even thank the physicians and surgeons who take care of us; How much more should we do for he sake of the salvation of our souls?!

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ Softness with sinners is not a virtue, but weakness; not love or meekness, but slothfulness; and is even cruelty on the souls concerned, that would perish for the lack of proper warning of perdition.

St. Augustine

- ❖ A shepherd of sheep should be neither a lion nor a goat.

St. John El-Dargy

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 29

YOUR CARE FOR ME, O LORD, IS WORTHY OF MY PRAISE

- ❖ When I look back to the past, I see Your hand that kept me safe;
If there is any good in me, It would be of the riches of Your grace.
- ❖ Counting me as a lighthouse, You lighted Your lamp over my head.
You are the true Light.
Your word is a lamp to my feet, and light to my mind.
You set me as a lighthouse to carry Your light.
To testify to Your care; that through me, I may draw many to You.
- ❖ Having incarnated for my sake, You have blessed my nature in You.
In amazement, I stand before Your love; You, who sits together with me in my tent.
- ❖ When I stand among my family, and see You blessing them,
My soul covets to see You transfigure in Your love and care among all mankind.
- ❖ By Your care, You grant us an abundance of everything.
With Your presence among us, we need nothing more.
You cleanse and purify us as though with milk.
And flow on us with streams of oil out of the rocks.
- ❖ When I get fulfilled with You, I wish I can minister to everyone.
Not to seek what is for me, nor what is for my own dignity, But what is for Your beloved.
- ❖ Your care for the church is exalted.
With Your wisdom You granted her, She utters Your words, and bears Your amazing thoughts.
She judges among mankind.
Not to condemn, but to support and practice compassion.
You grant her honor;
Not to feel haughty, But to bow down, and wash the feet.
- ❖ In Your care, You even allow full freedom to heretics to oppress Your church.
Yet in the midst of oppression, she enjoys heavenly blessing.
And in the midst of opposition, she draws many to Your heaven.
With Your goodness, You bring out of the eater, something to eat;
And out of the evil, You set what is for the edification of many.
- ❖ You stretched Your arms to me, an orphan!
And God the Father became a Father to me;
My orphanhood turned into an exalted practical sonhood.
Grant me to feel compassion toward every orphan;
When shall I see all mankind enjoy the practical sonhood to God?!
- ❖ When will the orphaned souls be brought back to their heavenly Father?!
To enjoy their blessings on us?!
- ❖ Grant me to get covered by Your righteousness; To give incessantly.

Grant me to get adorned by Your crown; namely, by righteousness and mercy.
Your righteousness became the subject of my sweetness.
Acquiring it, I give compassion to all mankind.
Let the world take away my robe.
Like what the Egyptian woman did with Joseph.
But Do not allow the devil to take away the robe You granted me.
He has no right to take it away by force, as long as I treasure it.

- ❖ Grant me Your righteousness to cover up my whole being.
As long as I am kept by it, the enemy would find no place nor gap, through which he would enter into me.
- ❖ By Your grace, grant me to become eyes for the blind.
Lighten me, to set me light for others.
Take away my darkness, So that by You, I can support those who sit in the darkness.
- ❖ Grant me the compassionate spirit of fatherhood, O Father of all mankind.
Let me be compassionate toward all, And, as much as possible, let me care for all.
- ❖ Grant me Your grace from up above, like dew.
Water my life on earth by the water of Your Holy Spirit.
So that, like an eagle, my spiritual youth would be renewed.
So that my soul would never get old through the spirit of helplessness and weakness.
- ❖ Grant me, O Lord, to walk according to Your Spirit.
So that, if I become joyful, and if I laugh, I would still bear the spirit of firmness.
And If I become firm, I would still bear the spirit of compassion.
So that my joy would integrate with my firmness, And my firmness would integrate with my compassion.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of pleasantness, to become by You the source of joy.
And in my pleasantness, let me not become slothful to work seriously.
Grant me the spirit of un-haughty leadership.
To lead, not by a spirit of authority, but by that of fatherhood.
To support everyone, to bear the spirit of serious leadership.

CHAPTER 30

A BITTER LAMENTATION

After parading his past history of prosperity, and confirming his fear of God and his departure of evil; He soon came back to his present bitter situation, lying on a heap of trash and dust; And to how God's tempest has carried him over to the land of destruction. 'Job' might indeed have supported the oppressed and the needy; But he must have as well, condemned oppressors, who probably crawled in the darkness of the night to enjoy watching him, miserably lying on a heap of trash.

That led him now to write such a bitter lamentation. He does not anymore taste the sweet voice of music; But that of mourning and wailing has become his consistent song.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- People deride 'Job' | 1 – 8 |
| 2- Lowliness of those who despise 'Job' | 9 – 15 |
| 3- Job's collapse both is both physical and psychological | 16 - 31 |

1- PEOPLE DERIDE 'JOB':

"But now they mock at me, men younger than I, Whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock" (Job 30: 1)

Having lived a blameless and an upright life, fearing God, and shunning evil (Job 1; 1), as testified by God Himself, saying: *"here is none like him on the earth"* (Job 1: 8); He expected in his old age, to keep on serving others through his long experience; But he was shocked, instead, to find out, that he has come to be a laughingstock and an offense to those around him, even to the wicked.

He feels as though, all what he has achieved since his youth, and up to his old age, have passed by like vapor with no value. What utterly destroyed him psychologically, as well as physically, socially, and materially, and made him write this bitter lamentation, is that there is nothing whatsoever to warrant what dwelt upon him.

By saying *"men younger than I"*, he does not only mean younger in age, but also less in knowledge, wisdom, experience, social stature, and behavior. In that category, he includes, not only his three friends, but all those who came to him, even from far off places; Not to comfort him or to pray for him, but to despise and to deride him.

As dogs in those days were regarded as unclean animals (1 Samuel 17: 43; Proverbs 26: 11); 'Job' counted the dogs of his flock, cleaner than the fathers of those who, without cause, mocked and insulted him in his old age; although honoring the old was counted as honoring God Himself.

Although the Holy Book commands us to honor the aged; It is also fitting of the aged to take into consideration that the true honor is not only be because of old age, but because of wisdom and maturity. The divine command came saying: *"You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old, and you shall fear your God, I am the Lord"* (Leviticus 19: 32); *"My child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives"* (Sirach 3: 14); And, *"Do not disdain one who is old, for some of us are also growing old"* (Sirach 8: 7).

Do not marvel at the bitterness that the righteous 'Job' felt, as several of God's pious men have suffered the same from many. As an example, Paul suffered the bitterness of anguish, that made him almost despair of his life; saying: *"We were burdened beyond*

measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that He will still deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1: 8-10).

- ❖ Although Paul expected death, yet that did not happen; as according to the sequence of events, he should have eventually died, Yet God did not allow him to die as yet, in order to teach him a lesson, not to trust in himself, but in God¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If the apostles have suffered, How much more it is fitting for others to suffer as well².

Sepherian, Bishop of Gibalah

“What could I gain from the strength of their hands? All their vigor is gone” (Job 30: 2)

In bitterness, ‘Job’ looked at those who came to deride him in his old age. In his youth, he used to support, help and serve their like in love. Now, they come to him, although poor, helpless, and without any possibility, yet they count themselves in a position to support him; And they, unfortunately gave him what would break him down, instead of what would help him. Beside their poverty and lack of wisdom, being unable anymore to work, they probably were of no use to him.

Some believe that ‘Job’ means here, the young men who mock at him. If their aged fathers did not take a fitting stand to comfort him; their sons should have comforted him with some nice words. If their aged fathers have been cruel against him, and heaped vain accusations over his head; their sons should have stretched their hands to strengthen him in his tribulation.

“They are gaunt from want and famine, Fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate and waste” (Job 30: 3)

‘Job’ portrays those who came to him, not to comfort him, but to mock at him, as someone who suffer from poverty and hunger, that left them gaunt, like lifeless dry trees with no leaves nor fruits; as someone without any role in this life; cast away from society because of their slothfulness and non-commitment to any task; who became like fugitives in a wilderness, desolate and waste; And were probably reflecting what came upon them on ‘Job’.

That was what hatred did for them, that made them needy, hungry, and desolate; And even brought them over to death, while still living in their bodies.

- ❖ Our life should be love. If life is love, Then death is hatred³.

St. Augustine

“Who pluck mallow by the bushes, and broom tree roots for their food” (Job 30: 4)

‘Job’ portrays his adversaries as those who, finding nothing to eat, they resort to ‘mallow’, an acidic plant collected from among the bushes; And subsist on the bitter broom tree roots, also eaten by the poor⁴.

¹ In 2Cor. Hom. 2:3

² Pauline Commentary from the Greece Church.

³ On Ps. 55.

⁴ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary.

Such people who were once supported and sustained by 'Job', have come now to gloat at what dwelt upon him.

Pope Gregory the Great, who was greatly impressed by the writings of the fathers of the orient, especially those of the schools of Alexandria and Capaduk, believes that the gaunt poor, who subsist upon the cuticle of the trees rather than their fruits, are those who only care for the literal interpretation of the Holy Book, without enjoying the fruits of the Spirit, that fulfill the soul.

❖ **“Who suffer devastation and misery, and subsist upon grass and outer cuticle of the trees¹” (3-4)**. The false teachers who usually draw their followers to adopt their same vain valueless teachings; against whom the divine Truth warned us, saying: *“If they say to you, ‘look, He is in the desert’, Do not go out” (Matthew 24: 26)*; They are worthy of despise for their practices and their evil concepts.

In the Holy Book, **‘feeding on grass’**, refer to those who care for the minor commandments, while disregarding the major ones; About whom the divine Truth says: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matthew 23: 23)*.

Those, as well, feed upon the outer cuticle of the trees, as they care in the Holy Books, only for the letter, and disregard the spiritual meaning; Assuming that there is nothing else in God’s words, but superficial things! Possessed by the lust of vain glory, and despite all their shortcomings, they thirst for, and are captivated by dignity, and earthly profits; About whom the apostle Paul says: *“Those who are such, do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly” (Romans 16: 18)*.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Both Jews and the Christians believe that the Holy Book is written by the Holy Spirit; yet we differ in the way we interpret what it contains. Unlike the Jews, we believe that the literal interpretation of the law does not bear its spirit².
- ❖ If the Lord God is a Spirit, We should listen in a spiritual way to what the Spirit tells us³.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ The law is perfect and imperfect at the same time. It is perfect if we understand it spiritually (As it speaks to us about the secret of Christ). But it is also imperfect, in case the thought of people under its guidance does not go forth beyond the letter; as the material of the letter is only half the knowledge⁴.

St. Cyril the Great

“They were driven out from among men, they shouted as them as at a thief” (Job 30: 5)

The righteous ‘Job’ marvels to see around him, those driven out from among men, counted as unworthy to live in a civilized society, and go to live as fugitives outside the

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² *Contra Celsus* 5:60.

³ *In Lev. hom.* 1:1.

⁴ *Comment on Osee, Pusey* I:85, 25ff.

cities, and to be shouted at as thieves. Those, instead of reconsidering their faults and shortcomings, came to deride and mock at 'Job'.

"They had to live in the clefts of the valleys. In the caves of the earth and the rocks" (Job 30: 6)

Having been a ruler and a judge, he, together with the elders of the city, used to look into the major cases, like dealing with the dangerous fugitives who were driven out of the cities to live in caves in desolate valleys and mountains, away from the eyes of the law. Now, having heard about 'Job' and his miserable condition, and assuming that he became a homeless fugitive like them, homeless, with no one to comfort or receive him, they came to mock at him as the most miserable of them all.

Pope Gregory the Great, and others, believe that this kind of people represent those with no place in the city of God, who live in the wilderness, and in the caves of the earth and the rocks; and being in such horrible circumstances, they are not preoccupied with their return to God, as much as with deriding God's men and saints.

Those who chose for themselves to live a life of misery, depression, isolation, and bitterness, are preoccupied, not with enjoying good things, as much as with seeing others suffer evils and tribulations. That is always the work of hatred, that the mind of the envious is preoccupied with the destruction of others, rather than his own edification.

Whoever isolates himself from the church of Christ, is as though depriving himself of the spiritual paradise, to live in the midst of a barren wilderness; not able to partake of the of the praise of the church, singing: *"Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its pleasant fruits"* (Song 4: 16); *"My beloved has gone to his garden, to the bed of spices. To feed his flock in the gardens and to gather lilies"* (Song 6: 2).

❖ *"Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its pleasant fruits"* (Song 4: 16). It is an expression uttered by a soul full of zeal, admirably beyond any marvel. Whom does the bride invite to her banquet of her own fruits? For whom does she prepare the banquet she set from her own resources? It is for the One, *"for Him and through Him and to Him are all things"* (Romans 11: 36); *"Who gives everyone his food in dues season"* (Psalm 145: 15); Who opens up His hand, to fill every living being with his goodness; Who is *"the bread which come down from heaven"* (John 6: 41); Who gives life to the world, and who makes water flood from His own fountain for life. That is the One for whom the bride prepares her banquet -- The garden that produces the living trees, which symbolize us, whose saved spirits refer to the food offered to Him, who said to His disciples: *"I have food to eat of which you do not know"* (John 4: 32, 34); namely, the consummation of the holy will of God, *"Who desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2: 4). That salvation is the food prepared for Him; Our free will and our spirit as fruits to God, to pluck from their little branches. The bride, at the beginning enjoyed the apple fruit, "sweet to her taste" (Song 2: 3), then became herself the sweet beautiful fruit, offered to the shepherd to enjoy its taste¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

"Among the bushes they bray; under the nettles they huddle together" (Job 30: 7)

¹ عظات على نشيد الأناشيد، عظة 10، تعريب: الدكتور جورج نزار.

The righteous 'Job' likens his wicked envious enemies who came to deride him, to wild asses that live in the wilderness, huddling together among the nettles, stumbling in the midst of the thorns of hatred and envy, braying with horrible and ugly tunes, seeking their food which is the harm of others.

Huddling together with their wild beastly vicious nature, the wicked do things against reason, out of the strangling bitterness of their sins.

- ❖ Counted as Huddling together underneath the nettles, they find joy in producing daring thoughts, that conform with the thorns of sins they carry.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ I can liken this sort of spirit to a fat lazy donkey that shares the same yoke with a good horse; being too reluctant to proceed, the lazy donkey, with his heavy weight, hinders the progress of the good horse. So is the envious that, instead of setting himself free of his bad attitude, does his best to keep back those who intend to ascend to heaven, and even tries to make them fall back; Like Satan who, seeing someone in paradise, seeks to get him out of it. Instead of mending his ways, he strives to deprive others of going to heaven; earning for himself a worse kind of hell.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The envious would invest from his prayers, what the one planting the sea would expect to harvest. As the flame of fire could not be kept from going upward, So are the prayers of the merciful, that could not be kept from ascending up to heaven. And as water always flow downward, So also the might of anger, if it finds a place in our thoughts.
- ❖ Who acquires envy, would acquire together with it, Satan who brought it forth from the old.

St. (Mar) Isaac, the Syrian

“They are sons of fools, Yes, sons of vile men; they were scourged from the land” (Job 30: 8)

Being connected to ignorance and foolishness, they are counted as sons of fools, instead of being sons of men. And carrying hatred and envy, they are scourged from the land, to become fugitives wandering in the wilderness with no place to settle down.

- ❖ They are referred to, as the sons of fools, not being of their seeds, but because they follow their wrong teachings, and practice their vile life, and base behavior. He goes on saying: *“On the land they utterly fail to appear”*; as, although they try to achieve something, yet, they are scourged out of the land of the living.

Pope Gregory the Great

2- LOWLINESS OF THOSE WHO DESPISE 'JOB':

“And now I am their taunt-song; Yes I am their byword” (Job 30: 9)

The wicked often mock the righteous, and count them as a byword of disgrace. And in order to chasten His people, God sometimes allows for them to become a byword among the nations of the world.

“You make us a byword among the nations, A shaking of the head among the peoples” (Psalm 44: 14).

“I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them” (Psalm 69: 11).

“They will speak to one another in repentance, and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say: ‘These are persons whom we once held in derision, and made a byword of reproach’ (Wisdom 5: 3).

“I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse in all places where I shall drive them” (Jeremiah 24: 9).

“Let the priest, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, ‘Spare Your people, O Lord, , And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (Joel 2: 17).

- ❖ What hurt him more was to find himself held in derision by those he used to rebuke for the evil they commit.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ The more the righteous becomes worthy of commendation, the more he would be held in derision from others.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They abhor me, they keep far from me; they do not hesitate to spit in my face” (Job 30: 10)

Here, the righteous ‘Job’ is clearly a symbol of the Lord Christ who says about Himself: *“They will mock Him, scourge Him, spit on Him, will kill Him, and the third day He will rise again” (Mark 10: 34); “He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon” (Luke 18: 32).*

- ❖ The wicked flee away from the holy church, not by their feet, but by the features of their practices; They keep far, not from her place, but by deserting her values, and through pride, they publicly deride her; Spiting in the face of the righteous is done by belittling them, both in their absence, and in their presence. The wicked both mock them publicly, and revile them behind their backs. Yet, the holy church, (like ‘Job’), knows how to hold fast in the midst of suffering, and to live honorably amid the insults. She learned how not to collapse through tribulations, and how not to boast during times of prosperity.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Look at Christ; How He endured from the transgressors!

O ignorant man; How dare you **spit in His face**?!

O tongue; How dare you spit?!

O earth, How did you endure watching the derision against the Son?!

How amazing to see man, like wax, spit in the face of fire?

All that happened for the sake of Adam, who, on account of his sin, was worthy to receive spitting.

But in the place of the servant, the Master stood to kiss everyone!

Adam’s master, with compassion upon his weakness, received disgrace in his place!

Because He promised in Isaiah not to hide His face from the shame of spitting!

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy

“Now that God has loosened His bowstring and afflicted me, They have cast off restraint before me” (Job 30: 11)

‘Job’ says that what occurred could never be by chance, but is definitely allowed by God; although he does not know the cause of His anger against him. And once given the green light, his adversaries came against him like knights riding strong and vicious horses, loosing their reins to charge with all their might.

❖ ***“Now that God has loosened His bowstring and afflicted me” (11)***. What does he mean by God’s bowstring, but His secret counsel? The Lord loosens the arrow, when He sets forth an ordinance of his secret counsel. When someone is scourged; although we may not know the reason behind it; Yet, when we realize how his life is consequently reformed, the wisdom of the secret counsel of God is revealed to us.

The wicked, abusing that divine allowance, and assuming that they are given the green light to break down ‘Job’, loosened their tongues to revile him with no restraint. On the contrary, the children of God, knowing when to speak and when to keep silent, use the restraint of silence with wisdom and reason.

❖ ***“And He puts on restraint on my mouth”*** The saints seeing the restraint of silence, put on them, before the cruel hearts of the lost sinners, say by the prophet: *“How shall we sing the lord’s song in a foreign land?”* (Psalm 137: 4). Paul commanded his disciple to use such a restraint, saying to him: *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition”* (Titus 3: 10). The saintly teachers, through knowledge from up high, could search the hearts of their opponents; And when they realize that those hearts are forsaken by God, They sadly sigh and keep silent. Does not Solomon put a restraint on the teachers, by saying: *“Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hates you”* (Proverbs 9: 8).

The holy church that perpetually offers her words with the Spirit of love, would also keep silent for the sake of love, saying: *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips”* (Psalm 141: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great

“On my right hand the rabble rise up, They push away my feet, And they raise against me their ways of destruction” (Job 30: 12)

In some versions, it came as: ***“On my right hand the young people rise up”***; and in the version of the Jesuit’s it came as: ***“On my right hand the lowly rise up to make my feet stumble”***; and, to ***“set for me the ways of destruction”***.

Rising up “on the right hand” refers to pouring vain accusations against man. They rose against ‘Job’ with the violence of youth, set a snare for him, pushed him to fall in it, and then treaded upon him with their feet. So it did not stop at pouring vain accusations, but went so far to violently pushing him to fall, then treading upon him.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that rising up against man on the left, refers to the opposition by enemies from the outside; whereas rising up against him on the right, refers to the opposition from the inside, by those who were supposed to be defending him; which is more serious and bitterer.

❖ Tribulations come from the left when the church encounters opponents persecuting her from outside the (fold) of religion, who deny Christ. But troubles come from the right, from those who are supposed to be believers in Christ, and yet they oppose His Name.

The term “right” may also be used to describe those who are counted as (great): “*Then he showed Joshua (Jesus) the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him*” (Zechariah 3: 1-2).

- ❖ “*They stumble my feet, and press their paths like waves*¹” (12). By the feet of the church, he means her far-away or distant members who succumb to earthly practices; and because of their lack of understanding of the exalted issues, they are vulnerable to the faulty teachings of the enemies.

The stumbled feet of the weak cannot find the way, as they are either deceived by the promises of the persecutors, are terrified of their threats, or broken down by their tortures; and finally end up deviating from the straightforward way.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*They break up my path, they promote my calamity, They have no helper*” (Job 30: 13)

In the Catholic version it came as: “*They break up my path, they need no help to contribute to my destruction*”.

The devil and his followers remove the directing signs, to make man lose his way, and his peace during his journey.

- ❖ The righteous ‘Job’, may refer by these words to the evil spirits the hidden enemies; Or the Catholic Church, may refer to her wicked persecutors the manifest enemies; who “break up the path” of the weak souls, by opposing the way of the truth by their deception.

Pope Gregory the Great

If the deceiver, in his endeavor to destroy humanity, and to lead it astray, removes the signs of the way; The Savior has come and proclaimed: “*I am the Way*” (John 14: 6); for us to acquire Him, and to walk in Him, to enjoy the Kingdom inside us.

- ❖ This “Way” is good, and leads the good man to the good “Father”; He who “*Out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth well*”; “*The good and faithful servant*” (Matthew 7: 14; Luke 6: 45; Matthew 25: 21). But, although this way is narrow, and the majority, whose nature are more carnal, cannot walk on it; Yet, it is not said to be totally (blocked), but rather (narrow)².

The scholar Origen

- ❖ Now, this “Way” could never be wrong; Namely, It is Jesus Christ, who says: “*I am the way, the life, and the truth*”, the way that leads to the Father, as He adds: “*No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14: 6)³.

St. Agnatius of Antioch

“*They come as broad breakers; under the ruinous storm they roll along*” (Job 30: 14)

Coming on him like broad rock-breakers; however solid he may be, he would not be able to get away from them; they would crush him; they do not just walk toward him, but, like a ruinous storm, they roll along.

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

² Commentary on John, Book 6:105.

³ Epistle to Eph., 9

If the devil comes upon humanity like a rock-breaker to crush it, and to turn it into stones scattered over the way; The chief “Cornerstone” came down to us (Zechariah 4: 7; Ephesians 2: 20), to embrace us together in Him, and to set out of us a heavenly temple, that the enemy cannot touch.

St. Augustine¹ believes that by calling the Lord Christ, “The Cornerstone”, being the Head of the church; The church would become in turn, the “cornerstone” that embraces the Jews, on the one side, and the Gentiles on the other.

“Terrors are turned upon me; they pursued my honor as the wind, and my prosperity has passed like a cloud” (Job 30: 15)

In a lamentation on what dwelt upon him, ‘Job’ says that terrors are turned upon him with their full weight; Like by a storm, his honor (his grace) has been taken away; and like a cloud, his prosperity has passed.

‘Job’ marvels, as he always assumed that this could only happen to the wicked, which under calamities, would wither, and lose their prosperity and honor!

❖ ***“Like the wind, my interest was driven away Like the cloud, my well being has passed” (15)***. Like the cloud that fly high up, to be swept along by a breath of wind; so would certainly be the temporal goods of the wicked; they may appear in the climax of honor; but, being mortals, their life would soon come rolling down.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- JOB’S COLLAPSE, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY:

Having lamented his condition: how God has aimed His arrows against him; how the wicked. Exploiting the situation, violently and mercilessly attacked him in every possible way; And how calamities came down on him on all sides; Now he reveals the effect of all that on his well being, both physically and psychologically.

“Now my soul is poured out within me; Days of affliction have taken hold of me” (Job 30: 16)

❖ ***“Now my soul has dried up within me; Days of affliction have taken hold of me”³*** (16). If the souls of the elect now, are dried up; Yet, they will later on, turn green in the victorious eternity.

Now, the days of sorrow take hold of them; But they will be followed later on by days of joy; As it is written; ***“Those who fear the Lord will have a happy end”*** (Sirach 1: 13).

Again, it was said about the holy church: ***“She shall rejoice in time to come”*** (Proverbs 31: 25).

Now is the time of sorrow for the righteous; who have been ***“severely broken in the place of sorrow, and covered with the deep darkness”*** (Psalm 44: 19). But the day will come when glory will follow them instead of tears.

In “the place of sorrow”, namely, the present life, the righteous would be crushed; But in “the place of joy”, namely, the eternal life He would be lifted up high.

¹ Ser on N.T. 39: 4.

² التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

But when he said “*My soul has dried up*”, he did well by adding, “*Within me*” As “within us”, even if our souls are truly grieved, Yet in God they will rejoice.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*My bones are pierced in me by night, and my gnawing pains take no rest*” (Job 30: 17)

Here, as he did in (Job 3: 3). he speaks about the night as though a person. The night plays a serious role in the one in anguish, piercing his bones; and his (veins) with no rest would spread the gnawing pain all over his being.

“*By violence he seizes my garment; he grasps me by the collar of my coat*” (Job 30: 18)

‘Job’, having been a ruler and a judge, with a prominent role and an upper word in society; not only lost his garment of honor; But what is more serious, is that his clothing were completely worn out, because of the boils and soars that came upon him; They turned into tunics of perpetual grief and mourning, stuck on his body as his undergarments.

❖ According to the historical interpretation, Job’s garment refers to his body that was worn out by sickness.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes*” (Job 30: 19)

In the old, common people in the Orient, used to express their severe grief, either by sitting on the dust, or by putting it, while wailing, over their heads. Here, ‘Job’ portrays God as though has cast him into the dust to practice grief in its severest way. And what made his pain worse, is that he saw himself becoming like dust and ashes.

Anyway, this lamentation portrays the extent of soul contrition and humility that dwelt upon the righteous ‘Job’; who counted himself as dust and ashes. The same way Abraham said to God: “*Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes*” (Genesis 18: 27); And as it came in Ben-Sirach: “*The Lord marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all human beings are dust and ashes*” (Sirach 17: 31). That is how man sees the truth of himself as dust and ashes; Yet by Jesus Christ, he has become a new creation in the image of his Creator.

❖ ‘Job’ says: “*I despised myself, and counted it like dust and ashes*” (Job 30: 9 – Vulgate). Interceding with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham said: “*I am dust and ashes*” (Genesis 18: 27). Such humility is always be a feature of the repentant great saints¹?

St. Augustine

❖ O rich man, why do you feel haughty?! Why do you boast the glories of your ancestors? Why do you boast the beauty of your mortal body?! Remember that you are mortal, that “*you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (Genesis 3: 19) Bow and take a look at the graves. Can you distinguish between the bones of the poor and those of

¹ On Ps 147 (146).

the rich? Between the bones of the servants and those of the masters? Beware then and stop being boastful, mean, and hard in heart¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ It was said about **St. Anthony**, that when he entered into the inner wilderness, the demons gathered and looked at him and said: You little in age and in mind, How dare you come to our domain?! You are the first human to do that! When they started fighting him, he said to them: [O mighty ones, what do you want from me, such a weak and a miserable one? Who do you think I am, to gather together against me?! I am nothing but dirt and dust?! I am too weak to fight the least among you!]. Then he would cast himself on the ground and cry out, saying: O Lord, Help me and strengthen my weakness, Have mercy on me, Do not forsake me, Protect me against those who think of me as something worthy of fighting against!. It so happened that, hearing such prayer, full of humility, the demons became unable to confront him and disappear.

The garden of monks

“I cry out to You, But you do not answer me: I stand up, but you merely look at me” (Job 30: 20)

It often happens that some believers, in the bitterness of their souls, feel that, although God is called, *“He, who hear prayers”* (Psalm 65: 2). Yet He does not answer their prayers and supplications, God may respond positively to a prayer, but at a time He finds more convenient, like when He responded to Abraham’s prayer, and gave him his son Isaac, yet at His old age; Or He may reject it, on account of His prior knowledge that it is not for the good of the one who seek it.

- ❖ When the saints suffer the pressure of persecution of enemies, and consistently cry out for God’s interference to help them; With His great discretion, and intending to make them more justifiable in their sufferings, He may seem as though He does not hear them; *“O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear!”* (Psalm 22: 2).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Do not get discouraged, do not assume that your prayer will return empty!

Do not say: I prayed and prayed, with no response; and I may probably will never have².

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy

“You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me” (Job 30: 21)

In the bitterness of his soul, ‘Job’ wonders, how could God’s mighty hand be compared to man’s weakness; And how could he endure God’s persecution?!

Pope Gregory the Great believes that God, because of His opposition to their demands, may seem hard and cruel toward His saints.

“You lift me up on the wind, You make me ride on it, And You toss me about in the roar of the storm” (Job 30: 22).

¹ الأب الياس كوينز المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 96.

² الرسالة الثامنة والثلاثون.

'Job' probably counts the days of his prosperity as though God has lifted him up high on the wind that became his exalted chariot; but the higher he got, the lower God allowed him to fall, and to lose everything he has got.

The glory of this world is indeed vain, and as insecure as sitting on the wind. The higher man flies on them, the more destructive would be his fall!

- ❖ The glory of the present world may look exalted, Yet lacking security; Man, counted as though lifted up high on the wind, would be prone to fall any time!

Pope Gregory the Great

“For I know that you will bring me to death; and to the house appointed for all living” (Job 30: 23)

Men of the Old Testament used to believe that death is the destiny of every man, a bridge leading to the pit, the house of all living, and his home where he should return. But the Lord Christ came and brought over the believers, who died, from Hades to paradise, and as spoil, He snatched them from the hand of the devil, and from the authority of the eternal death.

- ❖ Before the Lord Savior came; After their death, the souls of even the righteous, were brought down to the pit, not to fall into woes, but to lie in comfort; A situation called by the righteous 'Job': ***“the house appointed for all living”***.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Surely He would not stretch out His hand against a heap of ruins, when he cries out for help in his distress” (Job 30: 24)

A magnificent view and a position of living faith by the righteous 'Job'. While God's hand may seem to him as cruel, and His actions, as though coming from an enemy; here he comes to confess, that the temporal devastation that God allows, is surely intended for eternal edification. Crying out in distress, he is positive that his tribulation is for the sake of his salvation, and is only a temporary collapse.

- ❖ ***“At any rate, you would never stretch your hand to bring devastation over them; and if they fall down, you will yourself¹ come to their rescue”***. 'Job' believes that when God stretches His hand to strike those who do wrong, it would actually be for their reform, and not for their perdition.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?” (Job 30: 25)

With a living faith 'Job' asks for divine intervention. Not justifying himself, he believes that, as he used to weep for the one in trouble and to grieve for the poor; God would surely pay back his compassion with compassion. It is as though he says to God: [According to Your law; ***“With the same measure you use, It will be measured back to you”*** (Matthew 7: 2); I have given compassion to the wounded and the suffering souls, and comfort to the poor; Now, as my own soul moans for its wounds, and is in need of Your divine comfort; Is it not my right to have it from You, O the only Righteous?].

- ❖ Notice how, while he was actually living in the abundance of riches, he trained himself on thinking of the sufferings and insults of the body! And used to care for the

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

tribulations of others. That is what he proclaimed when he said: ***“For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, And what I dreaded has happened to me”*** (Job 30: 25)¹.

- ❖ I wish our mercies are as abundant, I wish we give proofs of our great love for fellow man, whether through our money or our actions. I wish, when we see someone abused or stricken in public, If money is required for his sake, we pay it; Or words are needed to release him, we do not hesitate to say them; As words and even sighs have their reward².

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ ***“I used to weep for him who was in trouble, and my soul used to partake of the suffering of the poor”***³ (25). As far as we are concerned, although we believe that it would be true compassion to partake of the suffering of our fellow man; yet our hands may give more abundantly and more easily than our souls partake of his sorrow!

It is fitting for us to know **that our giving would be more perfect when, together with partaking of the material needs of the suffering, we bear their feelings within our souls.**

We should first bear the pains of the one who suffers, then share his sorrows in a practical way.

This model of compassion has actually been given to us by the divine Intercessor between God and men – the lord Jesus Christ – who could have given us salvation with no need for Him to die or to bear our wounds. Yet, He demonstrated the depth of His love for us, and the greatness of the virtue of compassion, by taking upon Himself to reach a situation that he did not wish us to go through.

This is what is fitting for the holy church to do. **Once she sees the tears of repentance of one of her children, she contributes her own tears with his, in a mutual prayer;** commiserates with the sorrowful, believing that his wounds are hers; **and strives to cleanse the iniquities of the sinners by her own tears.**

Pope Gregory the Great

“But when I looked for good, evil came to me; and when I waited for light, the came darkness” (Job 30: 26)

‘Job’ marvels that, in exchange for his acts of compassion toward his brethren; Instead of the blessings he expected, evil (temptations) poured over his head; Instead of the light he shed on their ways, he was paid back with darkness; and instead of the morning light he hoped to shine on his life, he found himself in pitch darkness.

These are the common feelings, even for the men of God occasionally, as they face severe temptations, when they, instead, expect to have an abundance of blessings.

- ❖ Hoping for good, the believers sometimes find evil; and waiting for light, they become overwhelmed with darkness; when, for the sake of the hope for the ultimate reward of the enjoyment of the joy of the angels up in heaven, they are temporarily delivered to the hands of those who persecute them in this lowly world.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 33:7.

² The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 15:14.

³ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

“My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest; Days of affliction confront me” (Job 30; 27)

This is a portrait of the righteous, or of the suffering church, partaking of the cross of her Christ; the turmoil inside her heart never stops; as she perpetually goes through days of affliction. Yet, she would find comfort when she puts before her eyes the words of the Psalmist, saying: “In the evening weeping dwells, But in the morning, there will be joy”

- ❖ The turmoil in the heart of the holy church is her perpetual endurance of the violence of persecution; **“Days of affliction confronts her”**; As even in the time of peace, she endures, with a heavy heart, the evil plots of the wicked heretics.

Pope Gregory the Great

“I got blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help” (Job 30: 28)

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Job’s talk here, is that of every righteous whose heart is (blackened), but not by the heat of the sun of temptations, as much as by the fire of the holy zeal, and the true wish for the salvation of every soul; The true believer would never have rest before he finds out that all have partaken of his rest in the Lord, and have enjoyed together with him the advance payment of heaven. He would cry out together with the prophet Jeremiah: **“My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent”** (Jeremiah 4: 19).

- ❖ **“I go about dressed in mourning black; I stand up in the assembly and cry out”¹ (28)**. In spite of his great riches and authority over those around him, Yet this man, as though in a state of continuous mourning, always offered God secret sacrifices of a contrite, and repentant heart **“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart”** (Psalm 51: 17). As for a saint, who always feels like an alien in this world, Everything, however full of prosperity, without beholding God, he counts as utter poverty. Although seeing everything, the elect still feel sad, because they are deprived of seeing the Creator of everything!

Pope Gregory the Great

“I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches” (Job 30: 29)

Finding no one to support him in his affliction, even among his own family, he counted the wild jackals as his brothers, among whom he lives like a meek lamb; And counted his friends as ostriches that despite their beautiful appearance, they cannot fly like other birds.

We should not marvel that we live in a world that cannot discern between the righteous and the wicked; and cannot separate the wheat from the chaff; until the time comes when the real discernment will take place before the great divine Judge.

- ❖ He says that he descended to the level of beasts and birds, and does not any more recognize his true nature; The same way David previously said: **“I am like an owl in the desert, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop”** (Psalm 102: 6-7).

St. John Chrysostom

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

❖ *I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches¹*” (29). The jackals refer to those with evil minds; about whom the prophet also says: “*They sniffed at the wind like jackals*” (Jeremiah 14: 6), being swallowed by the thought of evil pride.

Although the ostrich has two wings, yet it cannot fly; So are those referred to as ostriches, who covet showing off; Although they have the appearance of holiness, yet they lack its actual goodness.

That conforms with the words of the righteous ‘Job’ who was a good man, on a high standard of steadfastness and abidance, living among evil people; No perfect man could endure the wickedness of others with such solidity and longsuffering; And yet he humbly testifies that he is far from any abundance of goodness!

Whoever does not experience the envy of Cain, would refuse to be Abel!

On the threshing floor, you find the wheat underneath the chaff And the beautiful rose with the sweet fragrance growing among the prickly thistles.

Three of Noah’s children were together in the ark; Yet only two of them abided to their humility, while the third, arrogantly made fun of his father.

Abraham had two sons: One was righteous, and the other persecuted his brother.

Isaac had two sons: One was humble, while the other was rejected even before he was born.

Jacob had twelve sons; one was unjustly sold by his evil and envious brothers.

Twelve disciples were chosen for the holy church, Yet, by one of them they were tempted and persecuted.

The righteousness of the righteous mixes with the wickedness of the sinner; like when in a furnace, chaff is added to the gold; the chaff burn out, while the gold get purified. Those who hold fast to their goodness, even among the wicked, are good men indeed.

The holy church hears the voice of her divine Groom, saying to her: “*Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters*” (Songs 2: 2). And the Lord says to the prophet Ezekiel: “*And you, son of man, though briars and thorns are with you, and you dwell among scorpions, do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks*” (Ezekiel 2: 6)

Peter testifying to the life of the blessed ‘Lot’, says: “*(The Lord) delivered the righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy Conduct of the wicked; For the soul of this righteous man, dwelling among them, was tormented from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds*” (2 Peter 2: 7-8).

Paul by glorifying the life of his disciples, he strengthens them, saying: “*In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life*” (Philippians 2: 15-16). Likewise, through John, the angel of the church of Pergamos bears a like testimony, by the words: “*I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith*” (Revelation 2; 13).

Pope Gregory the Great

“My skin grows black and falls from me; My bones burn with fever” (Job 30: 30)

¹ التزمت بالنصوص الواردة في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس كما هي.

As 'Job' symbolizes the church, **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that this refers to the grief of the church on the weak souls whose skin is blackened and burnt by the heat of the sun of affliction; Counting what dwells upon them, being members in the church, as though dwelling upon her.

❖ **“My skin grows black, and falls from me” (Job 30: 30).** The 'skin' refers to the weak members of the church, who minister in her for the sake of their own benefit; Whereas the 'bones', connecting the whole body together, refer to her strong members.

The weak members in the church fall off the steadfastness of faith; either through material seduction or by violent persecution;

Then, because after they fall, they in turn persecute her; her skin becomes blackened.

“My bones burn with fever”. Paul, the strongest bone in the church, burned up through anxiety on others; as expressed by his words: *“Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is not made to stumble, And I do not burn with indignation?”* (2 Corinthians 11: 29). So the skin grows black, and the bones burned with fever, because the weak hasten to do evil, while the strong suffer the fire of their zeal.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ To whom can we compare Paul, who moans on a daily basis for the sake of every man in this world; for every race, city, and soul¹?

By what words can we describe the spirit of such a man, whose will was stronger than iron, and harder than steel?!

❖ How amazing would be the feeling of a shepherd, who says when one of his irrational sheep falls: I confirm my grief; And when one stumbles, he says: The fire of my sufferings flare?!

I wish all those who are entrusted to shepherd a rational herd, would follow this example; and would not be less caring than that shepherd who is consistent along the years on caring for his irrational herd.

Concerning the irrational herd, Even if there is some kind of negligence, the harm would not be so significant. Whereas in our case, If a single rational sheep perish or is devoured, the harm would be enormously horrible, and the punishment would be unutterable!

What excuse could a shepherd give, for neglecting the sheep for whom the Lord Himself cared, and for whose sake He has shed His precious blood²?!

St. John Chrysostom

“My harp is turned to mourning and my flute to the voice of those who weep” (Job 30: 31)

St. Augustine believes that 'Job' here refers to the Holy Spirit who plays on the strings of the human soul, as though on a harp or a flute, to dissolve with love for humanity in the Lord; Man spends his life grieving for the sake of every suffering soul, and weeping together with those who weep. Through the wisdom of God working in man,

¹ في مديح القديس بولس، عظة 2.

² On Genesis, hom 57.

he partakes of the feelings of everyone; and feels an exalted peace while grieving for the sufferings of others.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the believer is like a string in a harp or a guitar; that would produce no sound if stricken too lightly; and would produce a disturbing sound if strike too hard. Man, likewise, should act reasonably in every thing. In monasticism, for example, he should not overdo it, lest he would destroy his vitality; and should not loosen the reign too much, lest he would loose control over his body.

We are various strings in the guitar of God; if we work together, we shall produce a joyful symphony that would be well received by God as a sacrifice of praise. By that, the believer would enjoy the heavenly life, as a collective life in the Lord. Every member would individually feel the touch of the hand of God playing on his string; while, at the same time, the same divine hand of God plays on the other strings in a magnificent harmony.

❖ It is hard for us to doubt that “Job”, in this phrase, refers to the work of the Holy Spirit. The subject under discussion is the wisdom, and how it comes to men. It does not come through the number of years; But it is the Holy Spirit who (dwells) in the mortals, and the breath of the Almighty that brings it forth ...

Obviously, he does not mean the spirit of man in the phrase “the Spirit who dwells in the mortals”, He intends to reveal from where men get the wisdom; which is not their own¹.

St. Augustine

❖ ***“My harp turned to mourning and my flute to the voice of those who weep” (31).***

Taking into consideration that striking the string of a harp too lightly may not produce a sound; and striking it too hard, may produce a disturbing sound; So it is with the virtue of monasticism; It would be as nothing, if the body is not tamed as much as possible; But it would be wrongly done, by letting the body endure more than he can bear; It is the body lusts that should be eaten up, and not the body itself!

Man should control himself by an elaborate system, to keep his body from haughtiness and falling into sin; yet supported enough to practice righteousness. Concerning this, the great preacher Paul, while exhorting us to put to death the deeds of our body members on the earth; he wrote to his beloved disciple ‘Timothy’, saying: “*Use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities*” (1Timothy 5: 23).

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ *On the Soul and its Origin. 19.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 30

MY SOUL MOANS IN BITTERNESS

- ❖ I often, looking at my life, I see that it has passed swiftly and without fruit.
I wish I could have testified to you more along the years.
But with bitterness, I realize that I had no spiritual fruits in my life or my ministry.
Who can take the spirit of despair away from me, but Your cross, O Grantor of hope!
Let me attach myself to You, To carry me on Your arms;
To calm down my soul; You, who rescues the souls from corruption.
- ❖ Many deride me, even in my old age!
They reflect what lie in their hearts, of need, hunger, and shame;
And pour them on my soul to break it down.
But You, being my heavenly bread, my fulfillment, and my glory;
When I nail my eyes on You, I rise above the heap of trash, I am suffering from.
- ❖ Those who never tasted the truth, nor got fulfilled with Your grace;
Gathered together to mocking at me.
The way they have previously come out against You, as though on a thief!
And they are doing the same thing against Your church.
Do not to let my soul be disturbed.
- ❖ They have forsaken the city of God with all its blessings.
And instead of returning to it, they gloat in the sufferings of the men of God.
- ❖ They set forth to the barren wilderness;
Depriving themselves of the divine plantation, and of the waters of the Holy Spirit.
Thinking of themselves as strong;
They have come to ridicule the divine plantations, the amazing vineyard of God.
- ❖ Why does my soul moan because of the derision of the world?
When Your love fulfills my soul!
When my true comfort is in Your passion, the shame of Your cross, and Your death
for my sake?!
Who is worthy of partaking of Your glorious shame?!
Who is qualified to carry Your cross with You?!
- ❖ In the bitterness of my soul, I see you gave a free hand to those who persecute me!
You even seem as though You aim Your arrows against me!
Yet, In Your perfect love, You turn my bitterness into sweetness.
You turn the afflictions of my opponents into eternal glories!
While letting them ridicule me with their tongues, and pouring accusations against me,
While letting them practice their injustice with no control;
Your eyes, filled with compassion, are nailed on me;
You are my salvation and my glory.
- ❖ While falling under sufferings,
You transfigure before me, suffering for my sake.
I forget my own sufferings by Your vision, joyful to my heart.

And my lamentation turns into a joyful heavenly song, and into incessant rejoicing.

- ❖ The deceitful is only preoccupied with leading me astray from the truth.
He assumes that he can cut the way before me, to keep me from reaching the Kingdom.
How foolish he is; Because You are the Way, that no one can conceal from me.
He seeks my perdition, not aware that You are my mighty Savior.
- ❖ The enemy heads toward me like a tempest to destroy me.
He assumes he can crush me like a broad stone breaker;
He is not aware that You are the Cornerstone by whom I will be brought over to the heavenly temple.
No force can crush me, as long as I am in Your hands.
- ❖ My life became like a wind passing by, or like a cloud that would soon disappear.
It became as though without goal or taste.
It dried up like a tree with no life or fruit.
The night became as though digging into my bones;
My veins within me know no rest;
Sufferings clothe me up, as a robe attached to my body.
I am cast off in the midst of mire;
And my life has turned into dust and ashes.
- ❖ My life lost every security and safety.
My eyes are turned toward the grave, seeing in it the house where every man would ultimately settle down.
The light in my life has turned into darkness.
I no longer have anyone to console me, nor share my sufferings.
I became a brother to the wild jackals, and a companion to the ostriches that cannot fly.
I no longer am able to play on the harp of my soul, a song or praise.
All my being turned into a harp that only plays perpetual lamentations.
- ❖ Who can comfort me but You?
Who can bring me out of my grave, but He who is risen from the dead?
Who can lift me up from my dumpster, but the Heavenly One, who through His love, descended to me?
Who can give my life a taste, but He who turns bitterness into sweetness?
My lamentation will not destroy my soul;
But will grant me hope in You, O You who bring joy to the hearts.

CHAPTER 31

SELF-SEARCH

Having talked about his past days of prosperity, and the terror dwelling now on him; ‘Job’ starts now searching his depths, lest he may probably have committed hidden sins as claimed by his friends!

The self-search ‘Job’ conducted was not in the light of the law which was not delivered yet to the prophet Moses; But in the light of the Holy Bible. According to which, he proclaims that he is ready to answer any question that God may ask him.

1- The chastity of Job’s eyes	1
2- Job’s preoccupation with God, his eternal portion	2
3- Iniquity presents the destruction it entails	3
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11- ‘Job’ leaned on God and not on his wealth	24 – 25
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1- THE CHASTITY OF JOB’S EYES:

“I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully to a virgin” (Job 31:

1)

In the days preceding the Mosaic law, ‘Job’ by a divine help, could rise up to an exalted biblical level. He, did not only keep himself away from adultery and uncleanness, but went so far to close the door before sin at its beginning; namely; namely, the evil look. He did not allow himself to look lustfully to a virgin; counting this as an inner adultery that could infiltrate into his senses.

God granted us the senses to use as is befitting; a holy gift worthy of thanksgiving. By slothfully misusing them, we may open the door before sin to infiltrate gradually into us. Because of this, the fathers of the early church have forbidden the dwelling with virgins, however exalted the people concerned are; not considering them as sources of uncleanness, but for the sake of the purity of the eyes, the mind, and the heart.

❖ According to the prophet Jeremiah: *“Death has come through our windows, has entered our palaces”* (Jeremiah 9: 21); which happens when lust enters through the body senses into the mind. On the other hand, Isaiah speaking about the righteous says: *“Who are these who fly like a cloud, And like doves to their roosts?”* (Isaiah 60: 8); the righteous, rising above the filth of the earth, are said to fly like clouds.

In order to keep the chastity of the thoughts of his heart, 'Job' "***made a covenant with his eyes***", lest he may unintentionally see what he ought not.

Eve would not touch the forbidden tree if she did not care to look at it; according to what is written: "*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, she took of its fruit and ate*" (Genesis 3: 6). Therefore, if Eve, the mother of all living, came to death through her eyes, we, the mortals, should greatly control our looks toward the forbidden things.

As said by the prophet: "*My eyes bring suffering to my soul*" (Lamentation 3: 51); And by our Lord Himself: "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You should not commit adultery', But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matthew 5: 27-28).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Having kept away the cause of adultery, the Lord Christ exhorts us to care only for what concern the heart what then can those who share a dwelling place with virgins, say for themselves? According to this statute, they are actually committing adultery thousands of times every day, by lustfully looking at them. Because of that, the blessed 'Job' put this principle in mind from the beginning, to keep himself away from such looks¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You should not commit adultery', But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her, has already committed adultery with her in his hear*" (Matthew 5: 27-28).

The lesser righteousness is not to commit adultery by action; whereas the greater righteousness of the Kingdom of God is not to commit it by intention. The last commandment came to confirm the first one; As the Lord did not come to contradict the law, but to consummate it.

We should notice that He did not say 'Whoever lusts for a woman; but said: "*Whoever looks at a woman to lust her*"; namely, whoever looks at her with this intention; This look is not just a provocation to the bodily pleasure, but it is an actual execution of it; As, although it may be controlled, Yet, it could be consummated if the circumstances permit.

Sin is consummated in three successive stages: Provocation; feeling pleasure; then execution. Provocation happens either through memory, or through one or more of the senses, like seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. If this leads to feeling pleasure, it should be controlled. In case we are fasting, seeing food could provoke the lust of taste, and this in turn could result in feeling pleasure, which we should control, if our mind has the authority; otherwise, the sin would be consummated, and would be known to God, even if it is not to men.

The way the serpent crawled through Eve, Provocation of the wrong thoughts and images infiltrate into our souls from outside through our carnal senses. In case the spirit gets a hidden feeling by any way other than those five senses, This feeling would be only temporary, and would soon go away. The infiltration of these thoughts and images into the mind is as crafty as the serpent.

¹ *The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 17:2.*

The three stages of sin are similar to the fall of man mentioned in the Book of Genesis. The provocation comes from outside through the senses, like it did through the serpent; Feeling pleasure by the sin takes place in the carnal lust, like it did in Eve; Whereas its execution happens in the mind, as it did in Adam.

Because of the sin, man was driven out of paradise; namely, of the greater Light of Righteousness, out to death.

Who presents the pleasure of sin to man, does not compel him to receive it. Man should not descend from his exalted level created by God, in which the mind has the upper authority, down to the lesser level of irrational animals. He is not compelled to receive the pleasure of sin; Otherwise, he would be punished by the just law of God; on account of the fact that he erred by his own will.

However, before the sin turns into a habit, It may start in a simple way that may seem not to warrant much care! However, submission to it would be very serious, on account that it is forbidden by the law of God, and whoever surrenders to it commits evil in his heart. After executing it, man may assume that he has already fulfilled his desire, and the matter is done with; Yet, once what has provoked it in the first place, comes again, the pleasure would happen in a way more intense than before; and would turn into a habit difficult to overcome.

Yet, If man is faithful to his soul, and is ready for the spiritual war, He would be healed from the habit, by the help of His Christ, the Leader of the spiritual battle; By that man submits to Christ, and woman to man (1 Corinthians 11: 3; Ephesians 5: 23); according to the natural order¹.

St. Augustine

1- JOB'S PREOCCUPATION WITH GOD, HIS ETERNAL PORTION:

“For what is the allotment of God from above, and the portion from the Almighty on high? (Job 31: 2)

What is the allotment of God, or the high heavenly portion of the soul, but to sing: *“The Lord is my portion’, says my soul”* (Lamentation 3: 24).

Whoever enjoys the fellowship with the lord, and counts Him as his eternal portion, would never allow his depths to find pleasure in the earthly things, and the carnal lusts.

Many fathers believe that virtues are various and interwoven aspects of one fact, which is the enjoyment of the fellowship with God. Here, **Pope Gregory the Great**, connecting between the two verses (Job 31: 1 & 2), says: [Whoever puts in his heart to live pure and chaste, and does not allow for an evil look, would enjoy God’s support to practice humility; and his depths would exalt to seek God Himself as his portion.

Virtues support one another; by which the beauty them together is revealed as a heavenly pearl of various sides].

❖ It is as though he clearly says: If I defile my mind by evil thoughts, I would not be able to become an heir of Him who has created purity. Nothing would have any benefit, unless it is justified in the eyes of the hidden Judge, by testimony to purity. All virtues lift themselves up in the eyes of the Creator by their mutual help; Namely, Any virtue

¹ *Sermon on the Mount, Book 1, ch 12 (33-34).*

without the other, would either become altogether as good as nothing, or would be the least of all virtues; Virtues are supported through forming an alliance: If humility forsakes chastity; Or chastity forsakes humility, before the Creator of both, What would be the benefit of the haughty chastity, Or of the defiled humility, for us?

Pope Gregory the Great

The scholar Origen believes that virtues as a whole, in their essence, are acquiring the Lord Christ Himself; when man becomes one with Christ; He will be the virtue that fills him¹; He is the Justice, the Wisdom, and the Truth. A believer, who practices the virtue, would partake of the divine nature², namely, of the features of Christ, as much as he endures.

❖ To acquire Christ is to acquire the Word, the Wisdom, the Justice, the Truth, and the whole Might of God; As Christ is all that³.

The scholar Origen

3- INIQUITY PRESENTS THE DESTRUCTION IT ENTAILS:

“Is not destruction for the wicked and disaster for the workers of iniquity?”
(Job 31: 3)

In the Jesuit's version it came as: *“Is not calamity for the oppressor and disaster for the worker of iniquity?”*

If chastity for the believer demonstrated in being particular not to let an evil look infiltrate into him motivates him to long for the heavenly reward, to have the Lord as his portion; On the negative side, What would wickedness or uncleanness adultery in particular presents, except eternal destruction?

Through practical experience, we taste what the prophet Isaiah says: *“There is no peace for the wicked”, says the Lord*”. Sin takes from what it entails; namely, corruption, bitterness, and destruction, and gives them to him who acquires it; It presents to him, what he has chosen for himself.

By insisting on his wickedness, the wicked separates himself by himself from the holy church, deprives himself of the blessings of the Lord to her, and from her eternal portion in the glory.

❖ Let the sinners now; fulfill the desires of their pleasures; as on the ultimate Day of Judgment, they will feel that, in their evil life, they were actually in love with death.

Now, the righteous man is scourged and corrected by the rod of chastisement, in preparation to get the inheritance of the Father; As for the oppressor, Let him chase his pleasures; Let him get fulfilled of the temporary goods, as much as being deprived of the eternal ones. Chasing the death for which he is qualified, and enjoying pleasures with no control; he would be, the way calves, destined for slaughtering, are left for sometime to roam freely on pasture.

Let the righteous weigh well the evil things that await the wicked; let him not envy him for his passing-by happiness.

Is not disaster, (or the ‘Anathema’ of the Jews), for the workers of iniquity?! When they find themselves denied of the heritage of the firm Judge?!

¹ *Fragmenta in Ioanem. 9.*

² *Cf. H. Crouzel: Theologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origen, Pains, 1956, p. 239f..*

³ *Comm. on John 32:19; R. Cadiou: Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 131-2.*

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Things of grace are accompanied by joy, peace, love, and truth Whereas those of sin are accompanied by disturbance, and not by love, nor joy toward God¹.

St. Maccari the Great

What is sin according to the scholar Origen²?

1- As Christ is our virtue, Lacking His company, and the union with the Father, is a sin.

2- Virtue is the restoration of the original nature of the soul, as the image of the Logos; whereas sin is lacking this image.

3- Virtue refers the soul to God, as one of His children; whereas sin refers it to Satan. The soul that rejects its heavenly Father and Groom becomes deserted like Jerusalem; and would become an easy prey for her enemies.

4-GOD SEARCHES THE WAYS OF MEN:

“Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31: 4)

In searching himself, ‘Job’ proclaims that he talks according to the testimony of God Himself, who knows his behavior, life, thoughts, emotions, and all his intentions. All the ways of man are revealed to God, the hidden ways and the manifest; Being the One who searches the heart and mind.

Searching his own depths, man should take into consideration that God searches his ways, not to pick up his faults, but rather to sanctify him completely. God’s care, even for our intentions and hidden thoughts, are touches of an exalted divine love; He desire to set, even out of our depths, a living icon of heaven.

❖ What He calls ‘ways’ (4), are the (ways of our doings); According to Jeremiah: “Amend your ways and your doings” (Jeremiah 7:3).

The Truth calls on us to “*come*” to Him, saying: “*Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden*” (Matthew 11: 28). The Lord commands us to “come” to Him, not by the steps of the body, but by the advance of the heart The human works or (doings) are counted by the Lord as actual ‘steps’.

The prophet Jeremiah demonstrates the particularity of the Lord in searching, in his saying: “*The great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for Your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings*” (Jeremiah 32: 18-19).

Commending the angel (the Bishop or Priest) of the church of Paramus on some issues, and rebuking him on others, the Lord says: “*I know your work, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith*” (Revelation 2: 13). And then adds: “*But I have a few things against you, because you have there, those who hold the doctrine of Balaam*” (Revelation 2: 14). And to the angel of the church in Thyatira, He says: “*I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a*

.3:7 عظة¹

² The author: Origen, chapter 15 “The Spiritual Life.”

prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols” (Revelation2: 19-20).

Notice how the Lord, together with counting their good points, He did not let them go without punishment on their evil ones, which need to be cut off. That is because He searches the ways of everybody and, accordingly, brings them into account.

The saints, seeing how elaborately the Higher Judge searches their life, they themselves elaborately search the deepest depths of their minds and hearts, lest they would probably bear any wrong thought.

Pope Gregory the Great

5- ‘JOB’ DID NOT WALK WITH FALSEHOOD OR HASTEN TO DECEIT:

“If I have walked with falsehood, Or if my foot has hastened to deceit ...” (Job 31: 5)

After talking about how particular he is to sanctify his looks, lest he may lose the eternal heritage; he talks here about sanctifying his tongue, to keep it from uttering any word of lies, or hastening to deceit, namely, uttering what is contrary to what is actually in his heart.

God, being the ‘Truth’, Simple and with neither deceit nor twisting; he who is keen on enjoying the fellowship with the ‘Truth’, should have no place in him for the devil, which is called “*a liar, and the father of it*” (John 8: 44); and: “*a deceiver*” (2 John 7).

❖ We should all be greatly cautious, lest we may be robbed by lies; The liar would never unite with God; **he is rather a stranger to God.**

According to the Holy Book, the liar relates to Satan, who is called: “*A liar and the father of it*” (John 8: 44). While God is the “*Truth*”; saying Himself: “*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Way*” (John 14: 6).

Do you see then, how we could be strangers to God by lies, and by whom we unite through lies! Therefore, If we truly wish to be saved, we are committed to love the truth with all our might and zeal; and guard ourselves against lying, lest it would separate us from the ‘Truth’ and the ‘Life’¹, namely from the Lord.

Father Dorotheos

❖ Men use lies, not as something that befit them, but foreign to them².

❖ I wish no one deceives his neighbor; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*With flattering lips and a double heart they speak*” (Psalm 12: 2). As nothing would bring forth animosity more than deceit and guile³.

St. John Chrysostom

6- LET ME BE WEIGHED IN THE SAVIOR’S BALANCE:

“Let me be weighed in a just balance, that God may know my integrity” (Job 31: 6)

¹ *Philokalia, Book 1.*

² *Hom 54. PG 59:319.*

³ *Ibid.*

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the ‘Balance’ here, is the Intermediary between God and men; As in the balance of His love, all our worthiness are weighed; even though we recognize in ourselves the weaknesses of our life.

We are weighed in His balances, so as to follow the example of His life; As according to the apostle Peter: *“Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘He who committed no sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth’, who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten”* (1 Peter 2: 21-23). And according to the apostle Paul: *“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame”*(Hebrew 12: 1-2)

Although all mankind, in the balances, are indeed upward; and no one is justified before God -- the all-Holiness; Yet, being weighed by the balance of the ‘Truth’, namely, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; He cover us up in Himself, We bear His righteousness, By Him we are justified before the Father, and are counted the subject of His pleasure; As *“Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1: 30).

- ❖ God did not just make us wise, righteous, and saints in Christ; He, above all that, gave us Christ for the sake of our salvation¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If Christ is the ‘Way’ of the righteous, Satan, on the other hand is the way of the wicked.

St. Jerome

7- JOB’S PURITY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE:

“If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, Or if any spot adheres to my hand...” (Job 31: 7)

The righteous ‘Job’ believes that man’s life should not be separated into an inner life and an outer one. Man’s life is one, in which all what inside and what is outside react together. There is no separation between looking by the eye and the inner insight; Nor between what lie inside the heart and the manifest behavior. It is therefore befitting for the believer to be holy inside and outside; in his thought, senses, heart, words, and behavior.

‘Job’ has been apprehensive of sins; both concerning his practical behavior; Lest, through the look of the eye that may lead his heart astray, his step would turn away from the way of the truth; Or, that through the practice of oppression, “a spot adheres to his hand”.

- ❖ Notice how ‘Job’, by keeping the inner activity, he moves on to training his outer members. In case the heart covets something unbefitting, the eye, through teaching and instruction, should learn how to stop looking at it. Let us then go deep into our consciences through these points, to compare the exaltation of that righteous man, to the lawlessness into which we have plunged. In case it so happened that ‘Job’ imagines something not proper, **he, by the sword of the holy zeal, hastened to cut it off and**

¹ *Homilies on Corinthians, 5: 4.*

to bring it to death while still in the depths of his heart; He never allowed that imagination to transform into action **Sin would not transform into action, if it is brought to death inside its place of birth.**

Pope Gregory the Great

“Then let me sow and another eat; Yes, let my harvest be rooted out” (Job 31: 8)

‘Job’ proclaims his commitment to walk in all things by the spirit of truth; lest he would lose the divine blessing; would sow and not reap, but another would reap and enjoy what he has sown; and would have no fruit in his life, nor in his seed, **“his harvest is rooted out” (8).**

❖ According to the Holy Scripture, the preaching of the words of life is called: “sowing”. The prophet says: *“Blessed are you who sow beside all waters”* (Isaiah 32: 20). Preachers of the holy church are seen sowing beside all waters, presenting the words of life, like wheat of the heavenly bread, to all peoples in the far reaches of the world.

The ‘Truth’ says: *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me”* (John 4: 34). It is as though ‘Job’ clearly says: ‘If I do not practice what I utter with my tongue, **“Then, let me sow and another eat” (8)**’. The preacher, whose actions are different from his words, will sow and walk hungry, while another eats what he has sown. He would not feed on his own harvest, if his wrong behavior does not conform to the uprightness of his words.

And as his disciples, hearing him, and seeing that he does not act according to his good words, would consequently perish, he did well by adding: **“Let my harvest be rooted out”.(8).**

Pope Gregory the Great

8- THE SERIOUSNESS OF ADULTERY:

“If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door“(Job 31: 9)

After talking about keeping away from the evil look, the evil tongue, the deceit, and about the avoidance of the wicked way, the corruption of the heart, and the practice of oppression; He talks in more detail about keeping away from being enticed by the woman of another, or falling into sin with her; as it is a serious crime, because, on one aspect, it corrupts the purity of man, and on another, it is counted as a violation against the rights of the neighbor, and a defilement of his bed.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that ‘fornication’ is different from ‘adultery’ (1 Corinthians 6: 9). And that Job’s heart was not enticed to fornication with a woman; and he has not lurked at his neighbor’s door to commit adultery with his wife.

‘Job’ believes that defilement by fornication or adultery is not just a sin, but is a crime; as, besides being a consuming fire that destroys man’s life, and lets his harvest be rooted out; According to the law, it would bring man under judgment, to be condemned to death.

❖ Satan provokes carnal lust against monks, he strives to make them forsake their vows, by sowing in their souls the belief that their monasticism is of no avail.

In order to defile their soul, he paves the way through making them say or listen to some evil talks, until the (evil) practice seems as though practically performed before their eyes¹.

Father Oghris the monk

- ❖ Could he be counted, as though he did not actually commit the sin of adultery in his heart, if the woman concerned happened to be pure, and refused to go along with him?!

Or if the adulteress he sought happened to be away from home²?!

St. Augustine

- ❖ A brother once came to ask **Aba Matois**: Is backbiting (distorting the reputation of someone) to be counted as worse than adultery? To this the elder man answered saying: 'No, adultery is worse'. And explained by saying: Although backbiting is detestable, yet it could be eventually be corrected by blaming oneself and apologizing to the one concerned; whereas adultery is a sure death for the body.

The Garden of the monks

- ❖ When night approaches, be alert that you are not drawn to carnal lust. Be consistent on praying, until it goes away. And If again it comes to attack you while sitting, Get up and pray In case Satan tempts you a thousand times, pray a thousand times, together with persistent matanias (worshipping); God will surely drive Satan away from you³.

Pope Theophilus

- ❖ When **Aba Isaiah** was asked: 'Why is adultery so persistent on pressing and harming man? He answered: [Because Satan knows that adultery bares us of the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the Lord: "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is mortal" (Genesis 6: 3 – Septuagint Version).

Aba Isaiah

***"Then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her"* (Job 31: 10)**

Whoever forces himself on the bed of another, would fall into the humiliation of poverty; his wife would be taken away to work as a maidservant in the houses of others; there to practice hard work, and to be at the mercy of her master to perform with her carnal relationships whenever he desires.

What a horrible portrait of the sin of adultery that would deprive man of his freedom, honor, and the purity of his wife, and may even bring him over into the humiliation of slavery.

***"For that would be wickedness; Yes, it would be iniquity worthy of judgment"* (Job 31: 11)**

According to the divine law, whoever violates his neighbor's wife is worthy of death (Genesis 38: 24).

***"For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction, and would burn to the root all my harvest"* (Job 31: 12)**

¹ إلى أناتوليس *Anatolius* عن "الأفكار الثمانية"، 2.

² *Continnence*, 4.

³ رسالة إلى الرهبان.

“Job” likens adultery to a fire that consumes all what the adulterer has, would burn to the root all the fruit of his labor and strife, and would even destroy his soul to perdition.

The apostle John distinguishes between two kinds of sin, saying: “*There is a sin leading to death, I do not say (we) should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death*” (1 John 5: 16, 17). By the sin not leading to death, he probably means the involuntary human weakness, probably out of ignorance; Whereas the sin that leads to death refers to committing sin, with knowledge, arrogance and persistence on not repenting. Such a sin is a fire that destroys the one who commits it.

- ❖ Describing the candidate for the grace of priesthood, the great preacher Paul did not say that he has to be without ‘sin’, but should be “blameless” (See Titus 1: 6); namely, has not committed a ‘crime’. And the apostle John says: “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1; 8). With this discernment between sin and crime, we can say that, while the ordinary sin would defile the soul; a crime would bring it to death. That is why ‘Job’ says that the crime of adultery is “*a fire that consumes to destruction*” (12).

Pope Gregory the great

- ❖ If the man of lust is aware of the impact of his crime on his poor victim, he would probably not do it; if not out of the fear of God, it would be out of natural compassion; He most probably knows, Yet not the way the one who falls victim to oppression knows it.

St. John Chrysostom

9- THE RIGHT OF OTHERS TO DEBATE:

“If I have despised the cause of my manservant or my maidservant” (Job 31: 13)

With an amazing humility, the righteous ‘Job’, having lived before the Mosaic law, gave his manservant and maidservant, not only their human rights, that were disregarded by the world at that time; But he even gave them the right to debate with him, and to defend themselves, even if comes to putting him in the position of a defendant.

- ❖ Brethren, We should all be compassionate toward our servants, following the example of the righteous ‘Job’; As all humanity is of only one nature; “*For we are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3: 28)¹.

St. Agnatius of Antioch

- ❖ ‘Job’ was a righteous man who practiced all human virtues; not refraining from one iniquity and doing another. We should weigh everything uprightly; the gold the same way as the lead. That was how the righteous ‘Job’ behaved, not only in matters concerning wealth, but with no exception in all aspects of life, as is clear from his words, saying: “*If I have despised the cause of my manservant or my maidservant; Did not He who made me in the womb, make them?*” (Job 31: 13, 15)².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ Epistle to Philadelphians.

² On Ps. 4.

- ❖ He who does not refrain from being judged the same way like his manservant and maidservant, demonstrates that he is not swallowed by pride.

You can see how, while he was amazingly exalted among the rulers, he was ready to be debated by his servants. In the assembly of rulers, he observes his position as a ruler; While in dealing with his servants; because he puts before his eyes that he is a creature like them; a servant under one God, the true Master; he did not feel haughty over them.

Pope Gregory the Great

“What then shall I do when God rises up? When He makes enquiry, how shall I answer Him?” (Job 31: 14)

At that time, there was no written law nor statutes that protect the rights of manservant, and maidservant; Yet, Job’s faith in God, the Just Judge who does not look at the appearances, made him honor everyone, even his own servant.

- ❖ He who thinks about the coming judgment, and observes the eternal Lord with a trembling heart, is committed to reign his temporary authority over those under him. He would do well to become convinced that, in no way, he could ever be above others in this life; for the sake of the account he will one day present to Him, who has an authority with no limit! As he knows those who are under him, he should know as well, the Lord, under whom he is. And once he recognizes the true Lord, every haughty feeling of authority in him would be brought to death. **That was exactly how the righteous ‘Job’ felt; fearing the eternal One, who is above all, he practiced his temporary authority, as equal to those under him.**

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ God will hear the one who seeks Him with a contrite heart; that cares to stand before him blameless; who evaluates himself like any lowly outcast; and he who is keen on bringing pleasure to the Lord his God. As, even if he can perform wonders, heal infirmities, and possess indefinite knowledge; As long as he has fallen in sin, he cannot afford to disregard it; and would be required to repent it. And in case he sees someone who committed all sins, judged and despised him, his repentance would have no benefit, because he has cast from himself and judged a member of Christ, and did not leave the judgment to the Almighty Judge.

Bishop Isaiah

“Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31: 15)

- ❖ Those that bear authority should humbly bear in mind that all humans have been created equal; Because of a secret ordinance of diversity that was added to our nature, while uprightly controlled through the ordinances of God; some became above others, and submitted to others. However, the saints, remembering well that our forefathers did not live like kings, as much as like common shepherds of flocks of sheep, do not consider their own authority, but the equality of nature.

Having by nature the authority over irrational animals, and not over men, man has been told that he would be feared by the wild beasts, and not by men. Now, if you seek to be feared by those who are equal to you, You would be swallowed by pride against nature...

That is why, Peter, the Shepherd of the church, seeing Cornelius falling down at his feet in reverence; and considering this to be more than what he deserves, he hastened to draw the attention of the Gentile Centurion to the natural equality of creation, and said to him: “*Stand up; I myself am also a man*” (Acts 10: 26). The same thing happened when John, the Evangelist fell at the feet of the angel, The later hastened to confess that he is also a creature, saying to John: “*See that you do not do that; I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus*” (Revelation 19:10).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If we are masters, It is befitting of us not to treat our servant with cruelty, but with compassion¹.

In that, we should follow the example of the apostle Paul who was not ashamed to call a slave, a son and a beloved brother; And if our Lord Christ, Himself, honored us, His servants, by calling us brothers, friends, co-workers, and co-heirs, we should listen and tremble²!

St. John Chrysostom

10- JOB’S CARE FOR THE FATHERLESS, THE WIDOWS, AND THE POOR:

“If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail” (Job 31: 16)

‘Job’ believed in Him, who created all humans in their mothers’ wombs, the same way, and with no class discrimination

God allowed for the righteous ‘Job’ to enter into such a severe affliction, and allowed him to admonish Him publicly with such affection, to let all generations know, that there were righteous men, even before the law, who exalted in the living faith through the natural law, far above those who lived under the Mosaic law, and even above those who lived at the time of grace.

‘job’ lived free, not enslaved to the practice of oppression or cruelty; who coveted, and hastened to give the poor all their needs, whatever the cost might be; and did not let a widow supplicate by her tears.

- ❖ **“I have not deprived the poor of all what they desire; or caused the eyes of the widow to beg for anything” (16).** Notice how he avoided haughtiness; how he turned himself into a public haven, and a mutual resort to everyone in anguish.

By saying: “**All what they desire**”, does not mean to say ‘yes’ to one desire, and ‘no’ to another; but gives everyone without discrimination, and disregarding the risk or the cost. Notice also, how he used to help those from whom he does not expect any return: the fatherless, the widows, and the poor; He was not preoccupied with boasting, nor with glory, but gave for the sake of God.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ By these words, this saintly man shows how he, not only fulfills the needs of the poor, but also gives what they desire; And by adding: “**Or cause the eyes of the widow to**

¹ Constitution of the holy Apostles 8: 32

² Chrysostom: Homilies on Philemon.

beg for anything”, he acted according to the Scripture: “*Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it’*” (Proverbs 3: 28).

Pope Gregory the Great

“*Or eaten my morsel by myself, so that the fatherless may not eat of it*” (Job 31: 17)

His compassion went so far, not to eat alone by himself, or just together with his wife and children, but to search for a fatherless to partake of his every meal.

It was the custom of people in the Orient in the old days, particularly in the desert communities, at meal time, to let someone climb on a high place, and loudly call passers-by to come to share the household their food.

“*For from my youth I reared the orphan like a father, and from my mother’s womb, I guided the widow*” (Job 31: 18)

What he enjoyed of care even for the servants, was not according to a certain statute or law, but was something divine deep in his heart, granted to him by God while he was still in his mother’s womb. From his early youth, when he was still not committed to family rules, he used to treat the servants as his equals.

❖ **“*From my youth that compassion grew with me, And from my mother’s womb it was born with me*”**. Notice how he does not refer that exalted compassion to himself, but praises his Creator, who gave it to him as a gift from his mother’s womb.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing or any poor man without covering*” (Job 31: 19)

“*If his heart has not blessed me and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep*” (Job 31: 20)

He did not stop at giving food to the poor, but whenever he saw someone suffering for lack of clothing or cover, he did not wait for him to ask, but counted it as a blessing to present him with clothing made of the fleece of his own sheep.

❖ He combined the two virtues of humility and compassion, that should go together, and support one Revealing humility by not despising the poor; And revealing compassion by clothing him.

The apostle James strongly says: “*If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled’, but you did not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*” (James 2: 15, 16). That is also what the apostle John commands, saying: “*My children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth*”(1 John 3: 18). As the compassionate love, should always be revealed by the proper words, and at the same time by the actual ministry of giving.

The apostle Paul says: “*... that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack*” (2 Corinthians 8: 14). This means that those we see now lacking, we may see them some day prosperous; and we who are now prosperous, In case we are slothful to give, may one day become lacking!

He who is now lacks clothing, is actually in less need than him who lacks humility. When we see our fellow creatures lacking outer things; Let us consider our lack

of greater inner things; Let us see by a keen eye, how we, ourselves are in greater inner need. By this our hearts would not be puffed up over the poor.

Pope Gregory the Great

“If I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing I have influence at the gate...” (Job 31: 21)

Job did not take advantage of his position as governor and judge; his hand shall be increased injustice against orphans.

❖ By that he confirms that he would never abuse his exalted position at the gate to raise his hand against the fatherless. It was the custom at that time for the elders to hold judicial sessions at the gates of the city to solve controversies between the people;

Hence God says by the prophet: *“Establish justice in the gate”* (Amos 5: 15).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Then let my arm fall from my shoulder; Let my arm be torn from the socket” (Job 31: 22)

If the arm refers to work, he who intends to work by himself, disregarding his unity with his brethren, would deserve to have his arm fall from his shoulder; and would not be able to perform what befits him as a living member in the body of Christ. Our holy dealings would never be realized without our union together as a holy church; And, at the same time, through our personal relationship with God.

❖ As the body works are realized by the shoulder and arm, ‘Job’ would have his arm fall from his shoulder, and broken to pieces, if he fails to practice the good things he utters by his mouth.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For the destruction of God is a terror to me; And because of His magnificence I could not endure” (Job 31: 32)

After speaking about his own exalted compassion toward all those deprived, and his appreciation of the socially despised, even the servants; Feeling terror to see that God’s hand has become heavy on him, He raises his eyes in reverence toward God, marveling why would He allow such severe temptations to come over him!

11- ‘JOB’ LEANED ON GOD, AND NOT ON HIS WEALTH:

“If I have made gold my trust, or said to fine gold, ‘You are my confidence’...” (Job 31: 24)

If he leaned upon his wealth and possessions, It would warrant taking everything away from him; But, as he concentrated all his senses, feelings, and intentions upon the Creator rather than upon the creation, why were those blessings taken away?!

❖ It often happens that man puts his hope on the creation rather than on the Creator; like the foolish rich man who said to himself:

“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12: 19); to be rebuked by a voice coming from above, saying: *“You fool, this night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?”* (Luke 12: 20) Why would we forsake God who is forever, and get attached to things which are passing by?!

Pope Gregory the Great

“If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great and because my hand had gained much ...” (Job 31: 25)

St. John Chrysostom believes that the conquest that the righteous ‘Job’ has realized in his temptation, was the fruit of practical spiritual training that he lived through by the divine grace, even before those temptations came upon him, including his despise of all the earthly and temporal riches.

❖ If the righteous ‘Job’ has not trained himself well before entering into those struggles, he would not be shining with such splendor!

He would hasten to utter improper words, on hearing of his children perdition, of the destruction of all his possessions; and unseeing himself overridden by such painful infirmities, and overwhelmed by the positions taken by his wife, his friends, and by the scorn of his own servants.

If you wish to watch how he walks along the spiritual path, listen to how he despised his wealth, saying: “If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great; and because my hand gained much gold; and if I leaned upon what I got of precious stones” (LXX 31; 24, 25). That is why he was not much perplexed when he lost all those things, because he did not covet them in the first place¹.

❖ Although ‘Job’ was rich, yet he did not serve the ‘mammon devil’, But, instead, he reigned, and had authority over his wealth; He was a master, and not a servant; He considered himself like a steward over the possessions of others, that he has no right to spend around; But rather to give it to the needy. That is why, as much as he did not rejoice in his great wealth, he did not grieve when he lost it².

St. John Chrysostom

❖ The saints, in this miserable journey they go through, long for the revelation of their Creator in which, although they cannot meditate now, Yet they count all the riches they may gain in this life as ‘poverty’ Nothing outside God would fulfill their mind, which actually seeks only God.

Such people, because they actually count all those abundant riches as a burden on them while hastening on their journey toward

Their ultimate home, they are keen on sharing what they have with their needy brethren.

The elect would never rejoice in the abundant temporal riches, because, for the sake of the heavenly heritage, they despise, forsake, and give away what they possess in their hands.

Pope Gregory the Great

12- ‘JOB’ DID NOT PRACTICE IDOLATRY:

“If I have observed the sun when it shines or the moon moving in brightness ...” (Job 31: 26)

As he did not lean upon his wealth, but rather upon its Grantor, The sun and the moon, with their beauty and splendor did not occupy a place in his heart, as he was lighted by God the Creator of the sun and the moon, the true eternal Light.

¹ The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 33:7.

² The Gospel of St. Matthew homily 21:2.

In Job's days, the sun and the moon, being referred to heaven, were the subject of worship and honor by many; a practice that was considered as the climax of evil and denial to the divine Creator.

❖ 'Job' tells us that he never observed the sun when it shines, nor the moon moving in its splendor; revealing that he did not seek the present light.

As the soul goes forth to meditate in things outside it, It does even more as it retreats to meditate in things inside it. Those with wise heart, instead of falling into the outer issues through their carnal senses, they are consistent on collecting themselves inside themselves, through a hidden ordinance to guard themselves, and to concentrate on the inner issues.

The prophet Jeremiah, seriously binding himself to the depths of his heart, and fleeing from coveting the outer life, says: *"You know I have not desired the woeful day; You know what came out of my lips"* (Jeremiah 17: 16).

❖ The way the 'gold' of understanding did not cause 'Job' to boast; So also the brightness of the outer works did not make him feel haughty before the eyes of men.

The sunshine is the good works proclaimed outside; As it is written: *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5: 16); And *"Let your waist be girded, and your lamps burning"* (Luke 12: 35). As what came in this phrase about the shining sun means the gospel referred to as the burning lamps. The good works shining among non-believers are like a lamp burning during the night; whereas in the church, they shine like the sun during the day.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Many have gone astray from the worship of the one true God in several ways:

Some who worshipped the sun by day, had to stay without a god during the night¹!

And those who worshipped the moon by night², had to stay without a god during the day³!

Some worshipped fine arts⁴; various kinds of food⁵; their carnal lusts; Others shaping a statue of a naked woman they called 'Aphrodite⁶'; And some were so impressed by the splendor of Gold to deify it⁷; And so on⁸... .

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

"So that my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand"
(Job 31: 27)

¹ أي 26:31، 27. كان التعبد للشمس والقمر منتشرًا في المسكونة تحت أسماء مختلفة.

² الإله Gaea أو Tellus هو الأرض، وزئوس أو جوبيتر هو السماء. كما عبد البعض الأنهار والينابيع.

³ لقد عبدت الموسيقى والطب والصيد والحرب والزراعة والتعدين... فابلو إله الجمال والرجولة والشعر والموسيقى. واسكولاويوس أو عقولاف إله الطب عند الإغريق. وديانا إلهة الصيد وممارس إله الحرب عند الرومان. وفلكان إله النار والمعادن عندهم.

⁴ ذكر هيروديت أن المصريين يتعبدون لطيور معينة وأسماك وبهائم.

⁵ مثل عروس Eros إله الحب عند الإغريق.

⁶ إلهة العشق والجمال عند الإغريق.

⁷ مثل افلوطنس Blutus إله الثروة عند الإغريق

⁸ Catechetical Lectures, 4:6.

Here 'Job' confirms that the idols, gold, precious stones, and the different forms of wealth, have not secretly enticed his heart; Namely, that he, not only refrained from practicing any haughtiness or pride in practically worshipping those different kinds of 'idols'; But they have never secretly infiltrated into his heart.

Putting the hand on the mouth and kissing it, has been and still is, a habit practiced by many whose heart are preoccupied with the love of a certain thing; and express it by putting the hand on the mouth, then pointing it to, and sending kisses to the one or the thing they love. 'Job' was never so preoccupied with anything to send them his kisses.

❖ Putting the hand on the mouth and kissing it, is harmonizing the sound with the practice. By kissing the hand, someone commends what he practices; namely, he testifies to his worthiness of the gifts he was given, unjustly referring them to himself; As well expressed by the great preacher, saying: "*What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not receive it?*" (1 Corinthians 4: 7). Now, the saints confess that they are the seed of a corrupt origin! As since the fall of our first father, concerning the longing and the works, It is the grace that changes us to what is better, and realize that they are granted the strength to strive.

'Job', telling us about the good things he practiced, has never referred them to himself, as his own achievement (by putting his hand on his mouth and kissing it); But on the contrary, he refers them to God, and praises Him for them.

Pope Gregory the Great

"This also would be an iniquity worthy of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above" (Job 31: 28)

If the love of the world, or the worship of idols have ever infiltrated into Job's heart, he would be worthy of what came upon him as a divine punishment; But he has never denied his God through getting attached to His creation, or deifying them.

13- 'JOB' NEVER EXALTED WHEN EVIL OVERTOOK OTHERS:

"If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me, or exalted when evil overtook them" (Job 31: 29)

'Job' was keen not to deny his Creator; to oppress his neighbor or to hate him, even when his neighbor hates him; nor to embrace any thought of gloating over his misfortune. The wise Solomon says: "*Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord sees it, and it displeases Him, And He turn away His wrath from him*" (Proverbs 24: 17, 18).

❖ Ways the wicked who are thinking of injury is death (Proverbs 12:28). "I do not think the damage to your brother" (Leviticus 19: 18 LXX). And also: "If you see a donkey of him that reality (in the mud) does not reflect what it did submit it first" (exodus 23: 5). At this point is required on each one to put into consideration that he may not leave the donkey his enemy in the mud, how the human creature hates the image of God or ignore?

I noticed in the righteous ‘Job’ his true and perfect love with all faithfulness toward his enemies that made him say to the Lord with a pure conscience: **“If I rejoiced in the ruin of those who hated me, or exalted when evil overtook them...”** (29) ¹.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

❖ Having love for one another is the only proof that we are the disciples of the Almighty Lord, who says: **“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13: 35).

This love, if indeed it fills our hearts, is usually proclaimed in two ways: To love our neighbors in God; **And to love our enemies for The sake of God.**

If we rejoice at the calamities of those who hate us, it would be a sign that we do not love him, as we do not want him to be better than us.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on his soul”
(Job 31: 30)

He not only refrained from wishing evil to those who hate him, nor from rejoicing at the calamities that overtook them, But he did not dare to ask God for a curse on their souls, Nor a bad word has ever come out of his mouth against them.

❖ What would they who asks for a curse on the soul of their enemy, wish God to do to him, but what they, themselves, are unable or are ashamed to do! Where they are told: **“love your enemies”**; have not they also been told: **“;Bless those who persecute you; Bless and do not curse; Not returning evil for evil, or reviling for reviling”** (Luke 6: 27; Romans 12: 14; 1 Peter 3: 9).

Pope Gregory the Great

14- JOB’S AMAZING LOVE FOR HIS HOUSEHOLD:

“If those of my tent have not said, ‘who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat?’” (Job 31: 31)

Job’s amazing nature; namely his consistent and generous giving to the needy and the poor; was the subject of marvel to those of his own household, even to the men- and maidservants, who watched his great compassion toward everyone.

This actually refer to the Lord Savior, the men of whose tent; namely His church, long to see everyone enter to enjoy and be spiritually satisfied with His body; whether of the Jews who persecuted Him, or of the Gentiles who receive faith in Him.

Commenting on this phrase, **“We have been satisfied with his meat”** (31), **St. John Chrysostom** says: [This is an expression of the great love that abounded between ‘Job’ and his servants. (As it is commonly said that when someone fervently loves another, he feel like biting him or her with his teeth). The Lord Christ offers His body to eat, as a proclamation of the great love between Him and His believers, drawing them to a greater love²].

❖ **“If I have ever allowed the poor to come out of my house empty-handed”** (31). He does not say “I gave those who asked, But I gave even those who were reluctant to

¹ Sermons, 36: 2.

² Homilies on 1 Corinthians, homily 4:7.

take”. He used to commit those who enter into his house, not to leave without taking something with them....

- ❖ That is what Christ does to reveal his great love for us, and to lead us to an intimate friendship with Him, He grants those who long for Him, not only to behold Him, but also to touch, to embrace, to eat Him, and even to fix their teeth on His flesh! From such a banquet, we emerge like lions breathing fire, to become terror to Satan¹.

St. John Chrysostom

“But no sojourner had to lodge in the street; for I have opened my doors to the traveler” (Job 31: 32)

St. Ambrose presents to us a symbolic interpretation of these words; He believes that the true believer should follow the example of ‘Job’, and let those who are foreign to faith enter into his house; namely into the church of God.

The righteous ‘Job’, being a symbol of the Lord Christ, and his house, being a symbol of the church; The Lord Christ longs to keep the doors of His church open before every sojourner to enter, to get cleansed by His precious blood, to enjoy the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to become all of the household of God. If humanity as a whole represents a caravan in perpetual motion, The mercies of God are open before them, to enjoy the blessings of His work of salvation, during their journey in this world.

- ❖ Taking the ‘good will’ away from men is like taking the sun away from the world; Without it men would care no more for revealing the way to a stranger, to bring back the prodigal, or to show generosity. This virtue is not something of little value; As because of it, ‘Job’ commends himself, saying: ***“No stranger had to lodge in the street, for I have opened my doors to the traveler” (32)*** In all these things, there is the ‘good will’, like a fountain of water that satisfy the thirsty, and like light that shines on others, and would not deny its brightness from those who give it to others².

St. Ambrose

- ❖ He says: “I abundantly gave to everyone in need: To those I found in a public place, I offered my roof, my table, and everything I possess to become a common property, All the possessions I have are the Lord’s, and not my own “;*The Lord gave*” (Job 1: 21); I counted myself as a mere treasurer, and as a fellow partner with all His servants.
- ❖ Poverty and riches are similar weapons, by which we can serve virtue if we so will To know how true this is, Let us recall the situation of ‘Job’, who was rich, then became poor; He used these two weapons in a similar way, And with the two of them he has overcome. When he was rich, he said: ***“I opened my doors to every traveler” (32)***; And when he became poor, he said: ***“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;*** Let Him do what is right in His sight (Job 1: 21 LXX, and the Volgata). When he was rich, he showed generous hospitality; And when he became poor, he showed great perseverance³.
- ❖ It is not only the alms we give, But how we steadfastly endure when what we have is taken away from us; Both present to us a great fruition. And to prove that the later

¹ *Homilies on St. John, homily 46:3.*

² *Duties of the Clergy, 1:32:167.*

³ *Concerning the Status, 15:11.*

thing is truly greater, let me, as a testimony, present what happened to ‘Job’. When he was rich, opened his doors, and offered everything he possessed to the poor; he was not as famous as he became when he heard that his house has fallen, and graciously received the news. When he clothed the naked with the fleece of his sheep, He was not as famous as much as he became when he heard that fire came down and burned all his flocks; and yet he offered thanks to the Lord He was before a lover of men; And now he became a lover of wisdom. He was before compassionate on the poor; and now he offers thanksgiving to the Lord; with the recognition that everything he ordains is for the good¹.

St. John Chrysostom

15- A PUBLIC CONFESSION:

“If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom ...” (Job 31: 33)

A fantastic portrait of humility! Despite all those amazing tributes of ‘Job’, who was living in the midst of an idolatrous world; And yet, was holding fast to His Creator; Not letting the love of possessions infiltrate into his heart; But giving in amazing generosity, And honoring even his man- and maidservants; He does not deny that he has faults and sins, does not hide them in his bosom, and would publicly confess them.

❖ That is the proof of true humility; when man confirms his own evil, with the voice of confession, contrary to what is commonly done by man, who practices sin, while hiding himself from sight. When it becomes revealed, he tends to deny it; And in case he is accused of committing it, he doubles his iniquity by adamantly defending himself. Since the fall of man, we have descended to such a level of evil And because it has reached such a horrible extent in the human race, the righteous ‘Job’ says: ***“If I have covered my transgressions ...”*** then adds the words “as Adam”; Believing that the image of our first parents, has become a model of man.

The blessed ‘Job’ reveals a unique humility; as having lived among adversaries, he did not hesitate to reveal his faults with the voice of confession. Notice that he first started by referring to his virtuous attributes, and then followed by confessing his sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ He was not diverted by the multitude of those submitted to him, who are aware of his natural shortcomings; which was truly wise of him “First confess your iniquities, to be justified” (See Isaiah 43: 26). While seeking no testimony to his good works, **he did not mind for his shortcomings to be known by all. That is the climax of wisdom, and the way of virtue: for man to hide his good works and to let his faults publicly known; although this is against what is commonly practiced.**

St. John Chrysostom

❖ “Be the first to accuse yourself” (See Proverbs 18: 17); And do not wait for others to accuse you; By this you become like a righteous man who starts pleading in his trial by accusing himself; Or you become like ‘Job’ who did not hesitate to proclaim his shortcoming before the multitudes².

¹ Concerning the Statues, 1:26-27.

² On Humility..

16- A BASELESS AGITATION BY THE FAMILIES AGAINST JOB'S PERSON:

“Because I feared the multitude and dreaded the contempt of families, I kept silence, and did not go out of the door” (Job 31: 34)

Although he used to confess his sins publicly and not to hide them; Yet, the situation has dramatically changed, as the families got agitated against him; as though their only preoccupation was to attack his person, for no reason whatsoever. So he kept silence, and did not allow a single word to come out of (the door) of his mouth.

❖ As though he clearly says: [While the others kept on attacking my person on the outside, I myself was not disturbed on the inside].

That (door) may refer to the (mouth), through which we may reveal the secrets of our hearts; or may otherwise keep them safe in our conscience.

While there are some who, for fear of being accused as worthy of contempt, tend to appear wise through defending themselves; The saints, on the other hand, when they are under trial, and seeing that they are not in a position to benefit their listeners, they may refrain completely from boasting their own wisdom or defending themselves; They keep silent, and become subject to contempt....

It is written: *“When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him; He questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing... Then Herod with his men of war treated Him with contempt and mocked Him” (Luke 23: 8-11).*

Knowing that those who listen to us mostly intend to show off on our expense, and not to mend their faults, It is befitting for us to keep silence; Lest, if we go on speaking openly the word of God, these people would not forsake their faults, while we ourselves may fall into fault.

The blessed preacher Paul says: *“For we are not , as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2: 17)* To speak *“as of sincerity”*, is to seek nothing but what is necessary.

He speaks *“as from God”*, who knows for sure that he has nothing to say on his own, but what is given to him by God. And he speaks *“in the sight of God”*, who is not preoccupied with what concerns people, but only with the presence of the Almighty God; Who seeks the glory of his Creator, and not his own.

Pope Gregory the Great

17- ‘JOB’ APPEALS HIS CASE TO GOD:

“O that I had one to hear me! I sign now my defense! Let the Almighty answer me! Let my accuser put his indictment in writing” (Job 31: 35)

Again ‘Job’ repeats his request to have his day in court, and to find someone to hear his defense, that he signed, to show his readiness to be tried, and to receive any punishment he may deserve.

His request is that the Almighty God Himself, who searches the heart and mind, and knows all the secrets, would be the One who tries him; and that the matter would not

stop at baseless accusations presented by his adversaries, not supported by any real evidence.

“Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown” (Job 31: 36)

Asking for a public trial, he is positive that he would be vindicated by God; and that the accusations presented against him would then turn into a crown to adorn his head.

“I would give Him an account of all my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him” (Job 31: 37)

The righteous ‘Job’ proclaims that he would not conceal any of the stages of his whole life; which would surely testify to him as a prince, and not as a criminal.

“If my land has cried out against me; and its furrows have wept together” (Jon 31: 38)

Being sure that he has never oppressed anyone, but has always been a compassionate giver, He asks them to hear the testimony of the land and its furrows that would testify to his love, and would find no cause to cry for something he might have done.

❖ It is not the land in the literal sense, that would testify or cry; But it is an allegoric way to say that even the solid lifeless bodies would be offended by oppression; the way the prophet says: “*O heaven at this would be shocked, be utterly desolate*” (Jeremiah 2: 12). Anyway, the land would surely sighs every time its fruits are oppressively used!

St. John Chrysostom

“If I have eaten its yields without payment, or caused the death of its owners; then let thorns grow instead of wheat, and foul weeds instead of barley” The words of ‘Job’ are ended. (Job 31: 39, 40)

‘Job’ challenges his friends, saying, that if they can prove that he has oppressed anyone by taking from him wheat or barley without payment; he would not be offended if he is provided with thorns and weeds instead! And confirms that he would then be unworthy of eating bread of wheat like the poorest of the poor, nor barley like beasts; but to be worthy of hearing words as prickly as thorns, or as worthless as weeds, which are only fit to be cast in fire!

By that, Job’s talks in his debates with his friends came to an end; during which he had the feeling, that he was talking in the presence of God; whom he often addressed; seeking his favor, and not to be justified by men.

**AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 31
SHINE WITH YOUR LIGHT IN MY DEPTHS, O LORD**

- ❖ Grant me, together with Your pious servant 'Job' to discover my own depths.
I am aware of my sins.
Yet, who would sanctify me but You?
Without You, I would be shocked by the darkness that reigned inside me.
But by you, I would be filled with hope in Your salvation.
O You, who shine on me with Your glory!
O You, who granted splendor to the face of Moses.
Grant my depths a splendor from You.
- ❖ I would never allow my eyes to look at a virgin.
But who, but You, would grant virginity to my heart, mind, and emotions?
You are my eternal portion and heritage;
If I acquire You, the love of lust would never infiltrate into my depths.
- ❖ You are the One who searches the heart and mind;
Who is aware of all my secrets;
Not to judge me, but to sanctify me.
- ❖ You are the Truth; Whoever acquires You, would never have to lie.
Nor would never have to deal with the devil, the liar, and the father of liars.
- ❖ If heaven is not pure in Your sight;
And You refer foolishness to Your angels;
How then could I be justified before You?
Let me be weighed by the balance of Your love, to be supported by Your cross;
Let me be clothed with Your free righteousness, to be worthy of standing before Your divine throne.
- ❖ By You, I acquire purity, compassion, and truth;
Adultery would never approach my body, nor my soul;
I honor everyone, and see You in everyone;
I would never care for riches, nor authority; As You are my riches and my glory;
I would love even my enemies and adversaries;
I would covet the peace of the whole world, and its glory in You;
Let the world stand against me; All I want is to wash His feet;
Finally, Grant me, together with the righteous 'Job', Yourself to be everything to me.

THE FOURTH SECTION

POETIC TALKS BY ELIHU

(Chapters 32 to 37)

ELIHU'S ROLE

There is no one left on the stage; Job's three friends are sitting speechless on the ground; and 'Job' as well, have nothing more to say in his own defense. Now, there is the need for the intervention of an intermediary; And Elihu was him.

ELIHU'S INTERVENTION:

Some scholars, so marveled at such an abrupt intervention by Elihu, with no introduction or previous mention, to assume that these chapters (32 to 37) are written by a divine inspiration to a certain man of God. But we believe that his intervention is only natural. As a young man, and according to the tradition in that time, especially in the Middle East, it was befitting of him not to interrupt the older men, and to wait until they say all what they have got to say. Elihu, as well, preferred to take his time to watch, listen, and examine the thoughts of every one of them, and to see how those debates would end up. He was a good listener; And now he approaches them, and seeks their permission to express his theological point of view in the issue being debated.

Most probably, 'Job' ended his talk every time, with a cry out directed to God; And now, as the three friends stopped talking, It was time for Elihu to intervene, in response to the cries of Job's heart. His role was to come before the face of the Lord, to prepare the way for Him to come "*out of the whirlwind*" (Chapter 38).

Elihu delivered four speeches: (32: 6 – 33; 34: 1 – 37; 35: 1 – 16; 36: 1 – 37: 24).

By starting his talk, we can say that the long night of speeches came to an end; and the dawn of the day of wisdom started to shine, to scatter the darkness. **Elihu was distinguished with his realization and comprehension of the riches of God's grace, with which the older men were not much preoccupied. He actually introduced something new and of benefit.**

THE REASON OF ELIHU'S INTERVENTION:

The main reason that motivated Elihu to talk was his conviction that Job's friends have failed to answer his question concerning God's ordinances toward the righteous and the wicked in this world; Beside his belief that they looked at Job's case in a wrong or an incomplete way.

On another aspect, Elihu had some reservations against 'Job'; who, although a righteous man, Yet he believed that God treated him like an enemy. Elihu listened to Job's cries, seeking an intercessor to intervene between God and him; And he probably thought that he is capable to carry out this role; although he, like 'Job' is a creature made of dust, and in both of them, God has breathed a breath of life [1 - 7].

Elihu wished that 'Job' would forsake his pride to practice repentance, and not to die in his sin [17 -18]. He probably believed that, if 'Job' calmed down his cries, God would probably grant him a vision or dream to explain His intentions!

FEATURES OF ELIHU'S TALKS

1- Beside his deep feeling of reverence to God, Elihu's point of view about sin is deeper than what appeared in the talks of the other older men. One can detect in his character a distinct courtesy and humility, together with a daring and a respect for others, albeit having no tendency to go along with the views of the commons. It so seems that, led by the Holy Spirit, he is as though a messenger sent by the Lord to carry to 'Job' the good news about God's plan concerning temptations, and about His role as a divine Teacher, intending to guide man through ways of more exalted wisdom for life, including edification through suffering. Elihu showed 'Job' that God's chastisements are not like lightening that appears without warning, But are rather dealings of a wise and a loving Father, together with granting the understanding for their significance; having clarified In the New Testament that "*when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world*" (1 Corinthians 11: 32).

2- **Elihu is shown as an intermediary**; Yet with a great difference from the Lord Christ, as an Intercessor of the New Testament; Namely, Elihu, being only a symbol, has not completely solved the riddle.

3- Elihu made it clear that there is another **cause for the suffering**; it is not a punishment for sin, **but rather a way to encourage and purify the children of God**. In this case, suffering does not demonstrate God's wrath, but is merely a way of chastisement of a loving father.

By that, Elihu paved the way for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4- Beside telling that the reason for his initial silence was that those speaking were revered elders, It was befitting of him, being young, not to interfere in their debates. But as they failed to answer the doubts and fears of 'Job'; **And taking into consideration that God's proclamations are revealed to all, both the young and the old**; Any further silence, would only mean, respecting men more than respecting the lord God!

5- Elihu challenges 'Job' to talk, if he has something worth saying; And if has no words of wisdom, let him then listen to him, as he responds to his complaints one by one.

ELIHU'S RESPONSE TO JOB'S COMPLAINTS

1- **According to Elihu, Job's first complaint was that God is cruel and unjust**; and that He does not watch righteousness in His dealings with him. Elihu confirms, that God is just; Man reaps what he sows, whether good or evil; The absolute authority is God's alone, which is far greater than any man can comprehend (Job 33: 12); And God's complete knowledge guarantees His justice, which is for the good of men (30). Then Elihu asks 'Job': Is it right for man to dictate on God the kind of chastisement, he should bring on him? (31-32).

2- **As to Job's second complaint**; that righteousness brings no benefit to man; **and that man would not be better off**, whether he is good or a wicked sinner; Elihu confirms, that even if God may seem not to care for the cries of the afflicted (Job 35: 9, 12); Yet He

is not unaware of evil; And would eventually intervene with justice; And if it so happens that the righteous suffer, cry out, and have no response from God; It would be because they do not know the right way to ask; They are like the dumb animals that just cry out of pain; and lack the confidence and faith in the ordinance of the righteous God. They do not get response, because of their pride; God does not listen to the vain and the proud.

ELIHU'S THEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Having corrected what he saw as wrong in Job's views, Elihu tends to demonstrate to him what he considers as a more reasonable way to understand the dealings of God; which could cover the following three points:

1- **Showing God's greatness, by demonstrating His care in dealing with men;** as saying that the wicked would never hold fast; that God would never disregard the righteous, who if they happen to suffer, it would probably be for their own good, to make them more prepared to receive the divine teaching.

2- **The celestial phenomena demonstrate the greatness of God:** as for example the formation of clouds, rain, snow, ice, thunder, etc. A piece of literature written in a beautiful language (Job 36: 26 – Job 37: 13).

3- **A call to 'Job' to meditate carefully in the amazing words of the Lord** (Job 37: 14 24); to realize that what he may see as injustice on His part, is because of his own lack of understanding, which could be corrected by true piety. Then Elihu proclaims to 'Job' the position he should take; [Call on God, to be received by Him.... Say to Him: 'Although I erred, and did not keep Your commandments; Yet You did not treat me according to my deeds; but redeemed my soul from falling into death, to stay alive seeing the light'].

THE UNITY OF ELIHU'S TALKS

Despite the numerous gaps in Elihu's talks (34: 1; 35: 1; 36: 1); yet they represent one integral unity¹:

¹ *Wycliffe Bible Commentary.*

- 1- An apology for talking in the assembly of elders (Job 32: 6-22).
- 2- A theological comments on Job's complaints (Job 33: 8-11; 34: 5-9; 35: 2-3; 36: 17 etc.).
- 3- A demonstration of the grace of God (Job 33: 12-33).
- 4- A demonstration of the righteousness of God (Job 34: 10-36; 35).
- 5- A reference to the authority and the power of God (Job 36: 26-37; 14).

N.B.

According to Pope Gregory the Great, the young man Elihu, as representing the teachers or preachers; although with true knowledge and upright faith, Yet they are proud. And through this perspective, he interprets the words and behavior of Elihu ; A view that is rejected by some scholars. To avoid distraction of the reader's mind, I preferred not to go into this point of view.

CHAPTER 32

LET THE YOUNG SPEAK AS WELL

Elihu was not mentioned before, probably because he was one of a crowd who surrounded ‘Job’, to listen to the debate between him and his friends. What motivated him to take part in the debate, was his conviction that the wisdom from God comes both on the young and the old (Job 32: 6-10). According to many scholars, Although Elihu contributed no new points worthy of mentioning, Yet he talked with a new spirit, and with a desire to enjoy the truth (21-22).

1- Elihu shows up	1 – 5
2- Elihu was committed to intervene	6 – 10
3- Elihu endured with patience what the elders said	11 -13
4- Elihu’s depths motivate him to intervene	14 – 21

1- ELIHU SHOWS UP:

“So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes” (Job 32: 1).

The three friends ceased to talk; either because they saw God Himself defend ‘Job’, as being righteous; or because ‘Job’ counted himself as one; And in either case, they saw no point in debating with him. The truth is actually, that they failed to confirm their accusations against ‘Job’; And because they embraced in their hearts and minds a questionable intention, their accusations were pointless.

“Because he was righteous in his own eyes” (1); This text, in the Septuagint, the Syrian, the old Arabic, and the Chaldean versions, came as: *“because he was righteous in (their) eyes”*. And in the version by Symmachus, it came as: *“because he proved to be more righteous than them”* Any way, they were convinced that he is righteous, and that their accusations were baseless.

In the previous chapters, we saw that ‘Job’ did not deny his sins; and that, although he confessed them, yet he was hurting,

because what dwelt upon him, distorted his image, and offended his friends in him.

- ❖ Although 'Job' kept silent to give them the chance to respond, yet they did not. And before God's testimony to his blamelessness, they kept their mouths closed.

"Because 'Job' was righteous before them" ... They changed their prior view; as by their claims against 'Job', they found themselves judging God. Notice how, in either case there is a un-proportionality; ... They were judging 'Job' as well as God, and testifying against both. Yet **God, did not defend Himself; but defended 'Job'. Disregarding Himself**, He drew the attention to 'Job' (Job 1: 8); He also said: *"You have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has"* (Job 42: 8). In all that, God endures the highest level of oppression!

St. John Chrysostom

In His love for His believers, God defends them, both on the individual and the collective level. Concerning the individual level, the Psalmist says: *"I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me"* (Psalm 57: 2); and: *"The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hand"* (Psalm 138: 8). And concerning the collective level, it was said: *"For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake"* (Isaiah 37: 35; 38: 6; Zechariah 9: 15).

Amid the accusations of those closest to us, we lift our eyes to our Lord Jesus, being the stronghold in whom we resort; the Refuge of our salvation, and our Advocate.

- ❖ *"For You are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy"* (Psalm 61: 3). As though the Psalmist says: 'My heart is aroused within me; from the farthest corners of the earth, they join forces against me; and I suffer amid the temptations and worries ... **Within the church, the wheat suffers the violence of the chaff.** And in the midst of all these things, and the disturbance of my heart, I cry out from the corners of the earth. As Christ makes Himself a tower in the enemy's face; And the Rock on

which the church is built, Escape from the devil, by fleeing to that Tower, where the arrows of the enemy cannot reach you; there you will find refuge, and abide ... The Tower is before you; So call on Christ in your mind, and head toward that Tower¹!

St. Augustine

“Then Elihu son of Barachel the Bozite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God” (Job 32: 2).

By anger here, he refers to his inner excitement, and to his immense zeal to defend the justice, righteousness and care of God.

❖ ***“He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God” (2).*** Elihu became angry, not because ‘Job’ declared that he is righteous, but because **he did that before the Lord**; counting Him as a Witness; Or because he assumed that ‘Job’ intended to judge God. To Justify himself, according to Elihu, was of no importance, But to do it with the intention of judging God, that is a great sin; As, according to the Scripture: ***“Do not assert your righteousness before the Lord” (Sirach 7: 5).***

Yet, was that actually the case? Elihu understood it that way! Although that was far from Job’s mind; ‘Job’ did not say that he was more righteous than God; but, although he thought that God was responsible for his tribulations, Yet he did not accuse God of injustice or oppression; as Elihu assumed.

St. John Chrysostom

The name **‘Elihu’** means (God is Jehovah). His name, as well as his personality, both proclaims his role as a messenger from God to ‘Job’, to prepare the later to enjoy seeing “God, who will come in the whirlwind”; He bears a shadow of the true Intercessor, our Lord Jesus Christ (Job 33: 23-26).

The name **“Barachel”** means (God bless). Both the names of Elihu and his father come to refer that their family were characterized by piety, and did not practice idol-worship.

¹ On Ps. 61:4.

Being a “**Bozite**” refers to ‘**Buz**’, the second son of ‘Nahor’, brother of ‘Abraham’ {Genesis 22: 21}; after whom that part of the Arabian desert was named. The name of the city of ‘Buz’ came in Jeremiah 25: 23, probably named after that family. **Pope Gregory the Great**, believes that the word ‘Buz’ could be translated as (lowly).

Some of the Rabites, together with **St. Jerome**, believe that Elihu is ‘Balaam son of Peor’; Whereas **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that Elihu, as a representative of the haughty preachers, provides us with an interpretation of his name, his father’s name, and that his tribe, although were not living according the commandments of the Lord, yet they recognized the Lord as their God; And although they enjoyed the blessing of the divine grace in the eloquence of their talk, yet they were haughty in their behavior,

Dr. Hodges, on the other hand, believes that Elihu is one of the apparitions of the second Person of Divinity; And that the goal of the book of ‘Job’ as a whole, is to concentrate on the person of Elihu, and his prominent role in convincing ‘Job’ that his justification is not to be set upon his good works, and holding fast to his self-righteousness, but upon the faith in Him who can justify.

Although none of the fathers of the church have adopted such a view, yet it could be said that Elihu is a symbol of the Lord Christ, who is to come, to realize the intercession and the reconciliation; and to justify the believers who walk in Him by the Spirit and the Truth.

The name “**Ram**” – ‘Aram’ is the nephew of ‘Buz’. ‘Job’ was probably older than Elihu by a whole generation. **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that the word ‘Ram’ means (a high place). The true believers, being high, can say together with the apostle Paul: “*Our citizenship is in heaven*” (Philippians 3: 20).

As far as counting himself more righteous than God; he probably meant: “*he counts himself righteous before God*”. The literal translation came as “*He justifies (his soul) before God*”. He,

not only defends his behavior, but also his thoughts and inner motives.

Elihu differed from Job's three friends, in his inner intentions; He had neither hate nor envy toward 'Job' like them. Beside the fact that he did not accuse him of committing serious evils, nor that he was a hypocrite; what he criticized in him was that, in his talk, he did not justify God. All what preoccupied him was to justify himself before God, as well as before men; Even if he did that for fear that they would be offended in him, as a man of God.

“And against the three friends his wrath was aroused, because they have found no answer, and yet had condemned Job” (Job 32: 3)

Although Job's friends sat in silence, yet they did not change their minds toward him; having failed to answer him, they still condemned him.

They lacked the spirit of compassion toward someone suffering and tempted. They accused him of hypocrisy and wickedness; and although they failed to prove it, they did not intend to retract their judgment; they reached the verdict on him beforehand, even prior to their debate, whose goal was only to destroy him altogether.

One off Elihu's marvelous attributes, is that, though his heart was full of compassion toward 'Job', Yet, being an intercessor between two parties, **he did not take a partial position on Job's side at the expense of his friends, But with decency and reason, he showed the faults of each side**; starting with 'Job', in order to give the chance to the friends to receive his words with seriousness, and to re-evaluate their debate with 'Job'.

“Now, because they were years older than him, Elihu waited before speaking to Job” (Job 32: 4).

Elihu waited until the older men ceased to talk; thus showing the wisdom of the old while still young. He kept silent while they talked, not because they were wiser than him, but because they were older in years; He committed himself to the proper order and the befitting ordinance. But when they ceased to

talk because of failure, together with persisting on what was in their mind, he talked with the spirit of truth, daringly, yet with reason. The Holy Book commands us to honor the elders, yet in the lord:

“Do not disdain one who is old, for some of us are also growing old” (Sirach 8: 7)

“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, the younger men as brothers” (1 Timothy 5: 1)

“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses” (1 Timothy 5: 19)

“When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused” (Job 32: 5).

Elihu was jealous for the Lord; As according to him, ‘Job’ erred by not delivering the matter to God, and by counting it as though an oppression that dwelt upon him. And, considering the silence of the three elders, as a kind of consent on Job’s point of view, Elihu was jealous for the glory and wisdom of God.

2- ELIHU WAS COMMITTED TO INTERVENE:

“So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: ‘I am young in years, and you are old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you’” (Job 32: 6).

In the old days, and particularly in that region of Asia, the young were not allowed to debate with those older than them; They were sometimes even committed, as far as possible, to keep quiet.

Saying: ***“I am young in years”***, although it may refer to a difference of age, or to being of less experience; Yet it does not imply that he is less than them in wisdom.

“I said, ‘Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom’” (Job 32: 7).

We can differentiate between three kinds of wisdom:

Wisdom **earned through life experience**; that grows with years; and treasured by the elders.

Wisdom as **a natural gift, generally granted by God to man**, having given him the understanding by nature (8). It may happen that our children are wiser and more intelligent than we are, although they may not enjoy our vast experience.

And finally wisdom as **the gift of the Spirit of God**, granted to His pious believers.

Although we respect and honor and the first two kinds of wisdom; Yet the exalted wisdom granted by the Spirit of God remains the subject of our perpetual supplication to God: “*Give me the wisdom that sits by Your throne, and do not reject me from among Your servants*” (Wisdom 9: 4).

- ❖ This wisdom and reason are found in Christ; and by Him we get to know God the Father and see Him. All the wisdom of this world, out of, or without Christ, is counted as lowly, void, and of no real value¹.

Father Maruis Victorinus

- ❖ Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, says: “*The wise man’s eyes are in his head*” (2: 14). The apostle Paul as well knew why the eyes are in the head. If Christ is the Head of the believer; and the wise man’s eyes are in the head, Our senses, mind, thoughts, talks and counsels (if we are wise), will all be in Christ².

St. Jerome

“*But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding*” (Job 32: 8).

Which means that man is given the Spirit, the Grantor of wisdom; namely, the **Spirit of inspiration**. Having honored the aged, on account of their wisdom, Elihu now, confirms that **wisdom, as a gift from God**, is enjoyed by both the old and the young. The true wisdom, not disregarding the experience along life, is basically an inspiration from the Almighty, or a breath of Him (nishmat Shaday).

Some believe that the word ‘*Spirit*’ here refers to the “*breath of life*” that was given by God to man (Genesis 2: 7), to give him understanding.

¹ Maruis Victorinus: *Epistle to Ephesians 1:1:8*.

² *Epistle to Ephesians, 3:6:17*.

“It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right” (Job 32: 9).

Together with old age, man can get good experience in his life, or that of others with whom he encounters and with whom he deals; He can also collect many proverbs, full of wisdom, and can even know some of them by heart; Yet, he may not practice wisdom, nor enjoy the spirit of discernment and understanding.

That was the excuse used by Elihu to justify intervening in the debate, talking among old men, giving them some advices and counsels, and even rebuking them.

Some believe that Elihu here refers to the kind of wisdom granted by God, when He breathed in him a breath of rational life, *“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it”* (Ecclesiastes 12: 7); *“Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him”* (Zechariah 12: 1).

“Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion” (Job 32: 10).

Elihu asks the old men not to despise him on account of his young age; but listen to him first, then search his words. This is how we should deal with those younger than we are; according to the words of the wise Solomon: *“Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king”* (Ecclesiastes 4: 13)

3- WITH PATIENCE, ELIHU ENDURED WHAT THE ELDERS SAID:

“Indeed I waited for your words; I listened to your reasoning, while you searched out what to say” (Job 32: 11).

It is as though he says to them: I listened to your talk and to your reasoning, and found out that you are fond of debating; of searching for words from here and from there; and that nothing preoccupies you except to realize what you have within your minds toward ‘Job’; and not to get in touch with the truth, or to give love. He reproaches them on their style of debate that only cares for conquest and for having the upper hand; not for edifying oneself and others, which ended up with failure in their vain controversy.

- ❖ If you encounter someone who loves to debate issues that are obvious facts and known truth; You should cut the talk on the spot, and quit; because his mind has turned into stone! Just as water can destroy a solid rock, foolish debate can corrupt the behavior and nature of good men¹.

St. Anthony the Great

- ❖ Always avoid those who are fond of entering into vain debates.
- ❖ The Spirit of God enters into the soul that keeps away from vain debates and disturbances;; and the barren soul will become productive.

St. Bimen

“I paid close attention to you; And surely not one of you convinced Job, or answered his words” (Job 32: 12).

Although they uttered a great amount of words, they could not change a bit of what ‘Job’ had in mind.

“Lest you say, ‘We have found wisdom, God will vanquish him not man’” (Job 32: 13).

Here Elihu reveals what lie behind their love of debate; they assume within themselves that they can convince ‘Job’ by their own wisdom; Although man needs an inner conviction from God, who alone can submit the mind, something that man cannot have, whatever his eloquence and philosophical abilities are.

God did not allow them to prevail in their debate, so as not to boast their self-proclaimed wisdom.

¹ الفيلوكاليا: 170 نصًا عن حياة القدااسة، 44.

4- ELIHU'S DEPTHS MOTIVATE HIM TO INTERVENE:

“Now he has not directed his words against me; So I will not answer him with your words” (Job 32: 14).

Elihu says: Since I am not a party in this controversy; And ‘Job’ has not uttered a word against me, My talk bear no inner excitement, but will come out of a pure desire for the truth. At the same time, in my talk to him, I shall not use your indecent, stiff and aggressive style. With no partiality, I shall speak to him, and to you.

“They are dismayed; They answer no more; They have not a word to say” (Job 32: 15).

‘Good’ believes that the talk here is not anymore about the friends, as persons, but about their words that became of no activity, come out of their mouths to scatter in the air, carry no meaning, and provide nothing new!

“And I have waited, because they did not speak, because they stood still, and answered no more” (Job 32: 16).

Pope Gregory the Great sees in Job’s friends a symbol of the heretics, who arouse several controversies, in which they accuse and oppose the church; Yet in the end, God would support His church, and mute the heretics.

“I also will answer my part; I too will declare my opinion” (Job 32: 17).

Now it was Elihu’s turn to reveal the knowledge which he kept inside him all along the debate between Job and his friends; counting it as his ‘part’; that came to him as a gift from God.

Some see in his words ***“I too will declare my opinion”***, as it came in the Hebrew version, a touch of gentle humility, which does not show in the other versions; As though he says: Even me, the young and humble, should be allowed to express his opinion, when the old and the great have nothing more to say¹.

“For I am full of words; The spirit within me constraints me” (Job 32: 18).

¹ Cf. Barnes' Notes on Job 32: 17.

The true believer bears a fiery spirit, liking God, the “*consuming, or devouring Fire*” (Deuteronomy 4: 24; Hebrew 12: 29); to become like one of God’s ministers, about whom it is said: “*His ministers are a flame of fire*” (Hebrew 1: 7).

The believer, carrying the word of God – the flaring fire of love – would become like the apostle Paul, “*constrained by the Spirit*” (Acts 18: 5), so full of flaring spiritual jealousy, to say: “*I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11: 2); And would cry out together with the prophet Jeremiah: “*Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent*” Jeremiah 4: 19); “*I said ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name’, But His word was in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones*” (Jeremiah 20: 9).

That is how Elihu felt, as though ‘constrained the Spirit of God’; and the fire of his love is flared toward ‘Job’, as well as toward his friends and all those present; jealously seeking what is for their edification and their eternal glory.

The three friends ceased to talk; with no more words to utter, having emptied the words coming out of their envy toward ‘Job’. But Elihu who was silent for a while, having inside him an inexhaustible source of the words of love, intends to talk; yet not out of a desire to teach, or of love for authority, but out of love and compassion toward everyone; with words **that come from the heart**.

❖ Here Paul uses a word much stronger than mere ‘love’ – ‘*jealousy*’; as a jealous soul flares with zeal toward those she loves; Jealousy implies strong emotion. And lest his listeners may assume that he seeks authority, wealth, or honor, Paul adds, that his jealousy is divine, a “*godly jealousy*”; as it is said in the Scripture, that God is a “*jealous God*”; yet not in a human way; He is jealous to see everyone acknowledge His right of authority over those He loves, and to let everyone know that He does

everything for the sake of those on whom He is jealous; and not to acquire anything, but their salvation.

While **human jealousy** is set upon selfish motives, **the divine jealousy**, on the other hand, is both strong and pure. There is a great difference between a human bride and the church. In the world, a bride loses her virginity once she is married; whereas, in the church, those who were virgins, to a certain extent, before they return to Christ, would continue to enjoy virginity in Him; That is why the church, as a whole, is virgin¹.

- ❖ It is also said that “the Lord is a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4: 24); not to imply partiality in the Divinity, but for everyone to know that what God does is for the sake of mankind, for whom He is “jealous”, not to acquire anything from them, but to save them².

St. John Chrysostom

“Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; It is ready to burst like new wineskin” (Job 32: 19).

Having revealed his excuses for talking in the presence of older men, Elihu, meditating within himself, sees his inside so filled with flaring jealousy, that his soul is about to burst like a new wineskin full of wine.

Elihu’s talks came, as though he does not seek answers to his questions; but as one who casts a general eye view on the issue, in order to prepare the way for a debate between God and ‘Job’.

To interpret Elihu’s words symbolically, the ‘belly’ refers to the depths of the heart; and the ‘new wine’ to the Spirit; according to the words of the Lord Christ, saying that “new wine should be kept in new wineskin” (Matthew 9: 17). Once the disciples got filled with the Holy Spirit that dwelt upon them on the day of the Pentecost; they came to be like new wineskin full of new wine; and their tongues set forth uttering, according to the Spirit. The Jews, being not able to realize the divine Truth, mockingly accused them of being “*full of new wine*” (Acts 2: 13).

¹ In 2 Cor. hom 23:1.

² In 2 Cor. hom 23. PG 61: 595.

“I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer” (Job 32: 20).

That is like what happened with the prophet Jeremiah, with his great compassion toward the people of God; how he wished to keep silent, but the fire of his love, and the flames of the word of God in his depths, committed him to speak.

I do not think that we should blame Elihu for his position; but we should rather learn from him, when to keep silent, and when to speak; (See also Ecclesiastes 3: 7).

- ❖ The prudent man seeks to please God by keeping more silent, and if he speaks, he utters what is just enough, and what pleases God¹.
- ❖ In the silence you see your mind; while when using your mind, you are speaking inside yourself; During silence, the mind gives birth to the word; And the word of thanks given by man to God is his salvation².
- ❖ Who foolishly speaks is brainless, as he speaks without prior thinking over all issues. Therefore, examine all what is for your benefit, to do it for your own salvation³.

St. Anthony the Great

“Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me flatter any man” (Job 32: 21).

These words were not addressed to those present, nor a prayer raised to God; but reveal his intention and the persistence of his heart to talk with the spirit of truth, with no partiality toward some, nor flattering to others, whatever their position or possibilities are. He desires to utter the truth, not fearing nor complimenting anyone, or seeking any benefit for himself.

“These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment” (Proverbs 24: 23).

¹ 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 33 (الفيلوكاليا).

² 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 107 (الفيلوكاليا).

³ 170 نصًا عن حياة القداسة، 108 (الفيلوكاليا).

“To show partiality is not good; Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress” (Proverbs 28: 21)

*“And you, masters, do the same thing to them (to your servants), giving up threatening, knowing that your own Mater also is in heaven; **and there is no partiality in Him**”* (Ephesians 6: 9).

*“He who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong he has done, **and there is no partiality**”* (Colossians 3: 25).

*“I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, **doing nothing with partiality**”* (1 Timothy 5: 21).

*“My children do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, **with partiality**”* (James 2: 1).

*“And if you call on the Father, **who without partiality** judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear”* (1 Peter 1: 17).

*“**For there is no partiality in God**”* (Romans 2: 11).

*“**For there is no iniquity with the Lord, our God, no partiality, nor taking bribes**”* (2 Chronicles 19: 7).

Seeing how God sent His only-begotten Son for the sake of His love for the whole world, with no partiality; and how He delivered Him for the sake of us all; We realize how God is impartial. And being members in the body of Christ, Lover of mankind, it is befitting for us to be likewise. About the impartiality of God, it is said:

❖ **God has no partiality concerning persons;** He judges them only by their works¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ In case one has any doubt concerning this, it would be enough for him to read what the apostle Peter said, when he visited the Gentile Cornelius: *“**In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him**”* (Acts 10: 34, 35). We go

¹ *Homilies on Romans 2:11.*

further and quote what our Lord Himself says in the gospel: “*He who does not believe in Him is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John 3: 18)¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ We are all born equal, emperors and commons; and die equal; because our **humanity is equal**².

St. Jerome

The wise Solomon, presenting himself as a living example of impartiality, and seeing how he, a great king, of limitless riches and honor, is not at all different from any needy man, he says: “*I also am mortal, like everyone else, a descendent of the first-formed child of earth; and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh within the period of (nine) months, compacted with blood, from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage*” (Wisdom 7: 1, 2).

“For I do not know how to flatter, Else my Maker would soon take me away” (Job 32: 22).

His defense of Job does not come from partiality or flattering, nor seeking benefit for himself; As job has neither authority nor possibilities to flatter him; He actually defends someone lying on a heap of trash. Yet, in his defense, he refers to Job’s fault; who, despite his righteousness, when he was accused, he got completely preoccupied with defending himself, even at the expense of confirming God care for him, and His compassion on him.

Elihu so enjoyed the feeling of the divine presence, to fear no man, something that many fall in its snares; according to the words of the wise Solomon: “*The fear of others lays a snare, but who trusts in the Lord is secure*” (Proverbs 29: 25). All what preoccupied Elihu’s heart was his feeling that the Lord will soon come, and that he will be taken away from this world to stand before the Maker, who is aware of man’s secrets, and nothing is hidden from Him; to give an account of his deeds, and of all what

¹ *Commentary on Romans 2:11.*

² *Homilies on the Psalms,14.*

goes on in his heart and mind, That is what has motivated him to keep silent, to listen and think carefully; and what motivates him now to speak the truth, simply and with no adornment.

He calls Him “*my Maker*”; being the Creator who cares for him personally, and who knows his depths. He is God of the truth, who is Love, Who presents the truth to His believers, Who reveals it to them more and more, and Who supports them to utter the truth, and to walk in it.

Elihu ends his long talk by confirming that he flatters no one, nor shows partiality toward those of authority; but simply presents the truth of the sake of his Maker before whom he will stand on the great day of the Lord.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 32

LET MY HEART BE FLARED BY THE FIRE OF YOUR WORD TO UTTER YOUR TRUTH

- ❖ O my God, who granted me a mind and a tongue!
Sanctify my depths, words, and actions.
Let me know how to hold my tongue.
That my heart would talk love to you and to all mankind.
Let my soul moan together with the moans of every heart.
Let my depths cry out together with every one oppressed.
Hear the cries of my soul ascending to Your throne.
- ❖ Let me talk in the right time.
To utter the words You give me.
With no fear of anyone.
Nor flattering a rich man or one with authority.
Grant me the wisdom sitting before Your throne.
To utter Your word, kept by Your wisdom
- ❖ You granted me a breath of life
To receive your wisdom, and to walk by Your Holy Spirit.
To be jealous for the salvation of every soul.
And to desire to see You glorified in every man.
Yet, in my jealousy. Keep me from leaning merely on my
experience.
Nor from being preoccupied with the knowledge, whether the
years of my life, are long or short.
But to bear You in me.
You talk by me; and work by Your Spirit in me and in my
brethren.
Who can renew my life but you?
Who can reform the thoughts of my brethren but Your Spirit?
- ❖ My depths moan for the sake of every lost soul.
My heart hurt.
My heart dissolves like wax for the sake of all mankind.
Let me talk; ... No, You talk in and by me!

Let me utter Your word, that my soul finds comfort by You.
Let me talk, anticipating my setting forth to You,
To enter into the divine bosoms,
And to rejoice for the sake of every soul enjoying Your glories.
Yes, Come O Lord Jesus!
Come, to carry every believer to Your glories!
Our hearts will never stop longing for Your coming!

CHAPTER 33

THE ONE AND ONLY INTERMEDIARY

This chapter is considered as one of the most magnificent of what is written in the Old Testament; deeply revealing the view of men of the Old, in the era of the early fathers, concerning the need for the divine Intermediary; the Intercessor, who would reconcile God the Father with men, and who would bring the sinner into the new holy and righteous life, instead of going down to the eternal Hades. It is a marvelous presentation of the way of salvation, as proclaimed to the early fathers and the prophets.

Elihu was in a delicate situation; Being the youngest among them, yet his heart was burning inside him to see the righteous old man in such a great anguish on every side, even from his friends. At the same time he could not endure hearing 'Job' admonish God in such a harsh tone. Elihu wished to utter the truth, even if it happens to wound the feelings of the two parties: 'Job' and his friends.

Now Elihu approaches 'Job' and addresses his speech to him, with the goal of uttering what is for the edification of a man he strongly loves, and is convinced of his righteousness. He desired to see him amid his tribulation, in the same splendid image, he used to see before his temptation.

On another aspect, talking on God's tongue, he admonishes 'Job' for the word he uttered during his hot debate with his friends, by which he accused God of cruelty.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- In the name of God, Elihu calls 'Job' to debate with him | 1 – 7 |
| 2- Elihu admonishes 'Job' for using such harsh words | 8 – 11 |
| 3- Elihu attempts to convince 'Job' of God's care | 12 – 24 |
| 4- The sweetness of enjoying the salvation of the Lord | 25 – 30 |

1- IN THE NAME OF GOD, ELIHU CALLS 'JOB' TO DEBATE WITH HIM:

“Please Job, hear my speech, and listen to all my words”
(Job 33: 1).

When the older men did not once address 'Job' by his name; this young man dared to say: *“Please Job, hear my speech, and listen to my words”* (1). Although there is a difference in age, yet, as both of them are creature of God, It is befitting for each to listen to the other.

If it is befitting for the young to obey the old, and all of them are committed to listen to one another, It is no wonder to hear the young man Elihu start his talk to the pious old man 'Job', by saying: *“Please Job, hear my speech, and listen to my words”* (1), and say daringly, yet decently: *“In this you are not right”* (Job 33: 12); Then repeat: *“Pay heed Job, listen to me; Be silent, and I will speak, for I desire to justify you”* (3i, 32).

A marvelous portrait on both sides: The pious old neither man of God listening to the young man with no haughtiness nor despise, because of his young age; and the young man, although speaking frankly, with courage, and a spacious heart, yet he was also polite and decent. Intending to justify a man as old as his father, he asks him to listen to him, as a friend who speaks with love, and not to criticize him.

Quoting certain phrases said by 'Job', Elihu's reproach is based on Job's own words said during the previous debates. He told him that God is greater than man, and it is not man's right to seek from God an explanation of His actions. It is befitting for 'Job' to understand that God desires the salvation of man, and not his perdition.

Elihu starts by directing his talk to 'Job'; then in the next chapter, he directs it to Job's friends. The present chapter is considered an introduction to prepare their hearts to listen to him.

He asks 'Job' to listen to him, as he utters the divine truth for the benefit of all. He asks him to be longsuffering with him, and

to hear his speech to its end, taking into consideration that what he says is not meant as a criticism or a reproach, but is rather for his benefit.

“Now I open my mouth; my tongue speaks in my mouth”
(Job 33: 2).

Although Elihu kept silent during the entire debate between ‘Job’ and his friends; yet he reacted within himself to all what he heard. He did not hasten to criticize, or rush to ask for answers; but with wisdom and prudence, he first examined carefully his own thoughts, before uttering what is befitting.

In a marvelous talk, **St. Jacob El-Serougi** instructs us how to train ourselves on both the holy silence and the holy talking. Whenever we are preoccupied with the divine word, we should be guided by the Holy Spirit toward both the constructive silence, and the constructive talking.

❖ You are the Word, who gives word to those who talk.

By You, and for your sake, all of them would talk.

Looking at You, a ray, and a great light, shines in me;

Looking at you, my soul is enlightened, and acquires goodness;

Getting away from You, my soul is filled with darkness;

Whereas looking at You, she would be clothed with light, to utter words, telling about You.

O Lord, Control my life according to Your will.

If I keep silent, for feeling inadequate to talk; It would be out of awe, and not of vain pride.

And if I talk, my words would be according to Your glory, and for your glory.

When my soul is filled with silence in awe toward You, this silence would be a talk to You, full of benefit.

And in case my soul moves to glorify you in love; ... With love I move, and I move to glorify You.

In awe I would keep silent, and in silence I would keep glorifying You.

O Lord, grant me the awe, by silence as well as by talk, to get rich by both.

Grant me Your awe every day, whether I keep silent or move to talk.

St. Jacob El-Serougi

“My words come from an upright heart; My lips sincerely speak what I know” (Job 33: 3).

Elihu says that God, who granted him His Spirit, will let him speak with a pure heart, and present true and upright knowledge. He, as though, is demanding from ‘Job’ to consider, not his mere words, but his upright goal in talking to him, and what is in his heart of pure love for him. He demands from him to consider, that his words are coming out of pure love with no hypocrisy; that he does not utter empty words; but the truth of what lie in his heart.

He wished from him not to look at him as he does to his other three friends; for even if their words sound similar, yet their intentions are completely different.

❖ He wishes to say: If the other friends are saying the same things he does, yet they are not talking, nor are defending God with the same spirit. Judas, together with the eleven disciples might have said the same thing, concerning the bottle of fragrant oil (John 12: 5, 6); yet with different spirit. It is befitting of us, therefore, not to search the words, but the intention behind them; as, while the intention of some was to destroy ‘Job’, that of others was to edify him.

St. John Chrysostom

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33: 4).

Many of the fathers of the church used this phrase to confirm the divinity of the Holy Spirit, being the Creator, and the Grantor of life; and that the three divine Persons partake of every divine work. Here, Elihu speaks to ‘Job’ with the spirit of true brotherhood, and clarifies to him that he (Elihu), being the creation of the Spirit of God, who granted him life, he is a tool in the hand

of God, the same God who created 'Job' and granted him life. ...; As they are both indebted to the Spirit of God for their existence and life; both are His creation, and both have the same nature, and the same weaknesses that infiltrated into the human nature, ... Therefore 'Job' should not fear debating with his fellow in creation and life

- ❖ The book of 'Job', Saying: "***The Spirit of God has made me***", demonstrates clearly that the Holy Spirit is divine and a Creator. He is surely not a creature; as the words of the apostle, saying: "*They worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator*" (Romans 1: 25)¹, discerns between the Creator and the creature.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ The Holy Spirit has partaken with the two other divine Persons of the work – the creation and the resurrection; as is shown in the Holy Book, saying: "*By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*" (Psalm 33: 6); and also: "*The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life*" (Job 33: 4)².

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

- ❖ Here, Elihu fittingly says that he was created by the Spirit; and received life by the breath of God.

According to the Scripture, about the creation of Adam, It is stated that "*God breathed the breath of life in his face, by which man became a living soul*".

St. Gregory the Great

***"If you can answer me; Set your words in order before me; Take your stand"* (Job 33: 5).**

Elihu confirms to 'Job', that he enters into a debate with him with no intention to reproach, to teach, or to have an upper hand or authority over him, but with the spirit of brotherhood, as an equal person, made by the Spirit of God. It is as though he says to

¹ *Of the Holy Spirit, book 2, 5:44.*

² *Oration 41 on Pentecost, 14.*

him: Being human just like you, I wish for you what I wish for myself; Therefore, Please receive my words with the spirit of love!

“Truly (as is said by your own mouth) I am as your spokesman before God; (Yet), I also have been formed out of clay” (Job 22: 6).

As translated by ‘Umbreit’, “Like you, I am from God”; ... by ‘Noyes’, “Like you, I am a creature of God”; ... by ‘Wemyss’, “I am equal to you in the eyes of God”; ... by ‘Coverdale’, “See, Before God, I am just like you, formed from clay”; ... According to the version of the ‘Vulgata’: “See, God has created me the way He created you, from the same clay”; ... And to the Septuagint version, it came as the above¹.

Some believe that the meaning of this phrase in Hebrew is: [According to the words of your mouth, I am a man of God, talking in His name, as His representative, or as His ambassador].

If ‘Job’ is praying to God to call him for trial, to give him a chance to defend himself; Here comes Elihu, as a representative of God, to ask him to speak frankly, as though in a trial before God.

Again, Elihu, to put Job’s heart at ease, reconfirms to him that, although he speaks in the name of God, Yet he is just like him created of clay; And that, although God speaks through him, Yet, within himself, there is nothing that may cause ‘Job’ to fear or to make him terrified.

- ❖ Provoking somebody to practice a certain virtue; We should not describe those, whom we introduce as role models for that virtue, as a kind of super-humans, having a nature different than ours. It was said about the great Elijah: “*He was a man with a nature like ours*” (James 5: 17). And it is also said: “*I also am mortal as everyone else*” (Wisdom 7: 1)².
- ❖ The nature or soul of the apostle Paul was not different from ours; nor lived in a different world; ... Yet, although he lived in the same world, and was submitted to the same statutes and

¹ Barnes' Notes.

² Concerning the Statues, 1:21.

customs; in virtue, he surpassed all humans in the past as well as in the present.

Now, where are those who say that virtue is difficult to seek, or that sin is impossible to avoid?!

They would be condemned by the words of that same man who says: ***“This slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measures”*** (2 Corinthians 4: 17).

Now, if Paul’s afflictions were slight and endurable, how much more would be ours; which, compared to his afflictions, would be naught, or even pleasures¹?

St. John Chrysostim

“Surely no fear of me will not terrify you, nor will my hand be heavy on you” (Job 33: 7).

‘Job’, eagerly longed to bring his case directly before the eyes of God; Yet, feeling great awe before the Almighty, and so terrified to speak freely to Him, he says: *“Withdraw your hand far from me, And let not the dread of You make me afraid”* (Job 13: 21); And, *“Let Him take His rod away from me, And do not let dread of Him terrify me”* (Job 9: 34).

Now, Elihu says: ‘As we are both equals, therefore there is no cause for fear nor terror to come over you that would make you unable to defend yourself before me. My hand would not be heavy on you, because I am weak just like you, and have no authority over you’.

His use of the word ‘**heavy hand**’ here, might be why **Pope Gregory the Great**, believed that Elihu, although admitting that he carries the same nature of ‘Job’, and is equal to him; Yet he crossed the line of decency in addressing ‘Job’.

2- ELIHU ADMONISHES JOB FOR USING SUCH HARSH WORDS:

“Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words, saying ...” (Job 33: 8).

¹ In Praise of St. Paul, Homily 2.

It is obvious that Elihu was present through all the debates, and his ears attentively heard every word said. Now he intends to comment on the following three points said in the debates, in which he believed 'Job' erred in his attempt to justify himself:

“I am pure, without transgression, I am innocent” (Job 33: 9).

Although 'Job' said similar words; Yet, at the same time, he has previously confessed that he is a sinner, and would never be justified before God (Job 7: 21; 9: 29, 30; 13: 23, 26).

Elihu did not quote the exact words said by 'Job'; and Job's words did not bear justification of himself; but he was trying to confront the accusations of his three friends of being a hypocrite and evil.

“Yet He (God) finds accusations against me; He counts me as his enemy” (Job 33: 10).

Elihu accuses 'Job' of saying, that God, as though his enemy, is searching for his faults, and looking for any chance to use against him. He probably got this idea from Job's words to God: *“Surely then, you will count my steps, but not keep track of my sin; My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; You will cover over my sin”* (Job 14: 16, 17); And, *“Why do you hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy”* (Job 13: 24); And, *“He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me as one of His enemies”* (Job 19: 11).

“He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches all my paths” (Job 33: 11).

That, he also probably quotes of Job's words to God: *“You put my feet in the stocks, and watch closely all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet”* (Job 13: 27).

So 'Job' portrays God as being preoccupied with counting his sins; sealing them up in a bag, to be used against him; dealing with him as an enemy; bearing wrath against him; and putting his feet in the stocks, to keep him from escaping from the coming judgment, and the divine verdict against him.

3- ELIHU ATTEMPTS TO CONVINCe JOB OF GOD'S CARE:

A- God has authority over man:

“Look, in this you are not right, I will answer you, For God is greater than man” (Job 33: 12).

Who does not know that God is greater than man: It goes without saying! But Elihu said it to a man who was going through successive serious tribulations, not knowing what lie behind them. What he means is that ‘Job’, as a weak man, is committed to submit to the divine ordinances, even though he does not realize God’s intentions behind them. It is only befitting of him to know, that God is just, there is no oppression in Him, and what dwelt upon him are the fruit of his own sins.

St. John Chrysostom believes that Elihu, commenting on Job’s claim that God does not listen to him, says to ‘Job’: ‘Tell me, What proof do you have that the Lord, whom you reproach, is not listening to your supplications? If He chastises and punishes; That is His law to correct the path of men – His creation.

❖ The prophet David was committed – under the burden of strikes– to utter certain unbecoming words; But meditating in his origin, and in the rank in which he was created, he realized the justification of the strike that came upon him, and got back to say; *“I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for it is You who has done it”* (Psalm 39: 9).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ With no adversaries, there would be no battle, no reward for the conquerors; we would not be offered the kingdom of heaven; and no one of us would have hope for the great glory in the coming life, as a reward for perseverance in the endurable afflictions. *“This slight affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory, beyond all measures”* (2 Corinthians 4: 17)¹.

¹ In Num. Hom. 14:2.

- ❖ It is not easy for anyone to endure that momentary grief, unless they have the perfect love for God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, poured in their hearts¹.

The scholar Origen

“Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words” (Job 33: 13).

Elihu admonishes ‘Job’ for contending with God; for asking Him, and expecting swift answers!

God loves man, being His creature, made according to His image; and doing what pleases Him, even though he may not comprehend His divine plan. As everything God does is for the edification of man, even if he often does not realize what lie behind the divine ordinances, It would be befitting of man to receive everything from God’s hand with joy and confidence; the way a little kid receives from the hands of his parents, until the day comes for him to appreciate what they do to him.

Instead of contending with God, we should have complete confidence that He would never do wrong, that He is beneficent, and that the day will come when we spiritually mature, and recognize and acknowledge His plan toward us. As *“Woe to him who strives with his Maker; Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making? Or Your work has no handles?’”* (Isaiah 45: 9).

B- Through dreams and visions:

“For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it” (Job 33: 14).

Elihu probably means that God has already spoken to ‘Job’ when he was in abundant prosperity; and having not heard, God spoke to him with the language of successive afflictions. Yet ‘Job’ in both cases, did not perceive the purposes of God, nor understood His words. So God sometimes speaks to us with the language of suffering and affliction in order to purify us, to hear His voice, and to see Him transfigured in our life.

¹ *Comm. On the Song of Songs.*

“Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruits” (John 15: 2).

“God has spoken once, Twice I have heard this; That power belongs to God” (Psalm 62: 11).

God uses every way to speak to us; sometimes through the abundant goods that He grants us; sometimes through His holy Book; and sometimes through dreams and visions; And in case we still do not hear Him, He would speak to us through afflictions and sufferings, like sickness, troubles in work, material losses, etc.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that it is only natural for the suffering heart, seeing things going contrary to what he would desire, to long to hear from God an explanation for what he is going through. To this, Elihu answers him, that God does not answer man in a personal individual talk to his heart; but He presents His answer, once and twice, through the holy Scriptures; Namely, that there is no need for God to provide us with a direct answer, repeating what He has already proclaimed through His Holy Book; which man has not perceived. It is befitting for us to perceive God’s answer through His dealings with those who preceded us, as examples for those who will come after us; We should not expect Him to repeat His answer again and again (Job 33: 14).

As an example of this; Whenever we go through afflictions, let us find comfort in the experience of the apostle Paul, when he suffered *“a thorn in the flesh: ... and he pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from him”*, Then he heard the divine voice saying to him: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (@ Corinthians 12: 7, 9). That was said to St. Paul when he suffered pain; so as not to be said to each one of us individually.

God the Father talked once when the divine Word was eternally born; And there is no other Word to be born to partake of His divine essence, and be equal to His same essence.

“In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds” (Job 33: 15).

By *“slumbering”*, he means the light sleep, when man is in a condition between sleeping and awakening.

“Job’ once said: “*You scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions*” (Job 7: 14); He should have perceived that God intended, through those dreams and visions, to give him a certain message; And as it came in the Syrian version, “It is not by lips that God teaches, but through dreams and visions of the night”.

When man is “*slumbering on his bed*”, quietly relaxing, far from the disturbances of life and daily preoccupations, when his thoughts and inner emotions are kind of peaceful, he can then listen to the divine voice talking to him.

❖ What does he mean by saying that the Word of God could be proclaimed to us in a dream or in a vision of the night, But that we would never learn God’s secret things, as long as we are awake and preoccupied by worldly lusts. In a dream, our outer senses would be taking rest, to give us the chance to distinguish the inner things. In order to meditate in these inner things, Let us relieve ourselves of the outer preoccupations, for then, we can hear the voice of God as though in a dream. When our minds are at rest, we can deeply meditate in God’s commandments.

Whenever the saints are committed to get preoccupied with worldly issues; Once they get them done, they hasten to return with longing to study the secrets of their hearts; by which they can ascend to the heights of the secret thoughts on the top of the mountain; where they can put aside the disturbances of temporal worries, and meditate in the ordinances of the divine will. Moses, himself, often retreated to the tabernacle of meeting, to ask God in secret, about certain doubtful issues, to learn His decisions to which he would be committed. ... In the Song of Songs, we hear the bride hearing the voice of the Groom, say: “*I sleep, but my heart is awake*” (5: 2).

Like all the saints – as long as they are in this life – we are able to see the secrets of the divine nature, only through analogies (having not yet acquired a more clear view of them); That is why, after saying that God speaks to us in a dream, he hastened to add: “*in a vision of the night*” ; The night is the present life; and as long

as we are in it; As far as the secret things are concerned, we are covered by a light mist of uncertain imaginations; Concerning the saints, “*slumbering in their beds*” is to find comfort in the secret place of their minds; according to words: “*Let the faithful exult in glory, let them sing for joy on their beds*” (Psalm 149: 5).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ God commands that man should forsake his perplexed life and attach himself to the One; He should come close to the grace of Him who offers the eternal life¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Martha cared for feeding the Lord; whereas Mary cared for getting fed by the Lord. By Martha, the banquet was set for the Lord, in which Mary rejoiced².
- ❖ I say that in those two women, two kinds of life were represented: the present life and the one to come; ...the life of strife and that of comfort; ... the life of grief and that of blessing; ... the temporal life and the eternal one.

What does the present life bear? I am not speaking about an evil kind of life, a bad life of denial; but about a life of strife, full of sufferings and fear, a life that temptations deprive of its peace ...I say that both kinds of life are not harmful, but worthy to be commended; Yet one of them is full of labor, and the other is an easy life. In Martha we find a portrait of the present life; Whereas in Mary we find the things to come. What Martha does, we are all now doing; while what Mary does, we are hoping for. Let us then do the first kind of work well, to deserve the second kind in its perfection³.

St. Augustine

- ❖ The greater good does not lie in the works themselves, whatever they may be, but rather in the meditation in the Lord, who is truly “*the One Thing*” ... While adding: “*which will not be*

¹ *Who is the rich man..... 10*

² *Ser. on N.T. 54:1.*

³ *Ser. on N.T. 54:4.*

taken away from her” (Luke 38-41); reveals that the portion of the other could be taken away from her; as the material things would not last with man forever; Whereas Mary’s longing will have no end¹.

Father Moses

C- Through hidden inspirations:

“He may speak in the ears of men, and seals their instructions” (Job 33: 16).

Amid the tranquility of the soul, away from the perplexity of life, God would open the ears of man to hear, together with the infant prophet Samuel, the divine voice that the priest Eli could not hear. In the tranquility of the night, Samuel could lift up his heart and say: *“Speak Lord, for Your servant hears”* (1 Samuel 3: 9).

God opens the ears of man to hear what those around him cannot; to him He would proclaim some of His divine secrets, reveals the truth, and declare to him His divine will. *“He seals their instructions”* (16); namely, He would put a seal on his warnings and chastisements to them. Being precious in God’s eyes, because of their benefit, He would treasure them for the sake of His children, and would seal them to hold them fast.

As contracts in the old, were sealed to keep them safe from any attempt of changing them; God counts His chastisement like a covenant of love between Him and His children, and like a will to let them enjoy an inheritance or a portion from Him; to be sealed by His heavenly seal. God seals their chastisement; namely promises them to have beyond them irreversible blessings; and that beyond the afflictions there will be unchangeable sealed divine promises.

❖ There are four ways by which man is influenced, and could lead him to strong remorse:

When **he remembers his sins**, and considers where he is.

When **he fears the ordinances of God’s judgment**; and searches him to know where he will be.

¹ *Cassian : Conf. 1:8.*

When **he elaborately examines the evils** of the present life; and regrets what is going on.

Or when he meditates in the **blessings of his heavenly home** that he has not yet enjoyed; and regrets that he has not yet reached.

Remembering his sins, and grieving for his past, Paul says: “*I, who am not worthy to be called an apostle*” (1 Corinthians 15: 9).

Again, **fearing that the divine ordinance concerning** that past would not be in his favor, he said: “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Corinthians 9: 27).

And, **meditating in the evils of this present life**, he says: “*As long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5: 6); And, “*But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Romans 8: 23, 24).

On the other hand, **Meditating in the blessings of his heavenly home**, he says: “*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then, face to face. Now I know only in part, but then, I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known*” (1 Corinthians 13: 12). “*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made of hands, eternal in the heavens*” (2 Corinthians 5: 1); And looking forward to the blessings of that house, he says to the Ephesians: “*That you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*” (Ephesians 1: 18, 19).

Pope Gregory the Great

“In order to turn man from his deeds, and conceal pride from man” (Job 33: 17).

Man's nature being corrupted, becoming preoccupied with sin, and submitting to pride, God allows for his chastisement, and seals them, in order to draw the believer from his sin to enjoy the righteousness of God; And conceals pride from him, to keep it from creeping into his mind and heart, and to make him live with the spirit of humility.

Because pride is a very dangerous pit, in which even the religious, like the Pharisees, fall, God covers that pit and fills it up, to keep His believers from falling in it.

- ❖ What are the 'deeds' of man, but sin? Therefore, by turning from his deeds, he will be liberated from pride. To disobey the commandments of God by sin is as though feeling haughty toward Him; and ridding oneself of the yoke of His authority. On another aspect, if man desires to turn from his deeds, he would recall to his mind how God has created him in the first place, and would humbly withdraw from his shameful deeds, and get back to his original status.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He keeps back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword” (Job 33: 18).

Giving all effort to realize their evil goals, and to fulfill their pride, the souls of the wicked fall in the pit of pride, to perish in this present world, as well as in the coming age. But God intervenes by every means, through allowing chastisements to save His believers from this eternal perdition.

The word '**soul**' refers to man as a whole; as death falls on the body, as well as on the soul.

And the word '**pit**'¹ (shaachat), probably means a trap set by hunters to catch wild animals (Psalm 7: 15; 9: 15); a ditch full of mud (Job 9: 31); a prison (Isaiah 51: 14); or a grave in the shape of a big cave (Job 17: 13; Psalm 30: 9). Here, it is obvious that by the 'pit' he means the grave, by which man's life on this earth would come to an end.

¹ Barnes' Notes on Job 33: 18.

❖ *“Sparing himself from corruption, and his life from perishing by the sword” (18)*; As every sinner, because of his corruption here by sin, is committed to cross over to the sword of punishment; to be justly condemned in **that** world through the same sins which he enjoyed in **this** world.

Pope Gregory the Great

D- Through grief:

“Man is also chastened with pain on his bed and with strong pain in many of his bones” (Job 33: 19).

When God allows for pains to dwell upon some of His believers to make them stay in bed, He does not seek their pain in itself, but to rein their desire for sin; as in the time of affliction, man usually would re-consider his life, and would have the chance to think about his eternal destiny.

Here, Elihu makes it clear, that affliction is an act of chastisement for edification, used by God with the spirit of compassionate fatherhood for the sake of the repentance of His children, their return to Him, and their enjoyment of the fellowship of glories.

The bed, mat, or couch, refer, either to carnal pleasures, to comfort through practicing the good works, or to temporary rest. When the Lord Christ healed the paralytic, he commanded him to take his bed and go to his house (Matthew 9: 6); namely, to surrender no more to the pleasures of his body; but, by the word of God, to carry the bed of his infirmity and get rid of his sins.

Here, he proclaims that God chasten man, fallen in carnal pleasures, on his bed; namely, that the pleasures themselves would turn into a source of his pains and chastisement; what he assumes to be the secret of his joy, would become for him the cause of his grief.

As to the bones sticking out, In the Holy Book, they refer to virtues; as it is written: *“He guards all his bones, not one of them is broken”* (Psalm 34: 20). Here, he does not refer to bones of the body, but to the mental powers; As many of the bones of martyrs, according to carnal concept, were broken; like, for example the legs

of the robber who was crucified together with the Lord Jesus, to whom He said: *“Today you will be with Me in paradise”* (John 19: 32; Luke 23: 43). By chastening us through our carnal lusts, our pride in our virtues is taken away, and we confess our weakness. Through chastisement, we realize our weakness; and without it, we count ourselves, as strong in the life of virtue, through our own.

“So that his life abhors bread and his soul succulent food” (Job 33: 20).

Of the kinds of chastisements allowed by God, is the infirmity that makes man lose his appetite, even to abhor bread; a kind of benefit to those who suffer, as they no more find pleasure in sinful habits, and their souls become disgusted by the same luxurious kinds of food, they used to crave; according to the words of the Psalmist: ***“Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death”*** (Psalm 107: 18). The wise Solomon describing the condition of a dying person says: ***“Desire fails, for man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets”*** (Ecclesiastes 12: 5).

After speaking about the strength of the divine chastisement, that would lift man up above the bed of carnal pleasures, and would scatter his pride in achieving a life of virtue, as though it is the work of his own hands; ... Here he says that he makes his bread abhorrent to his lips, and his soul abhors the delicious succulent food. Bread and delicious food refer to the pleasures in which he used to enjoy, so much that he could not live without! When through chastisement, his bread turns abhorrent to his lips, and the sweetness of the delicious food turns in his mouth to unendurable bitterness; he would then realize the vanity of carnal pleasures.

“His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones stick out, which once were not seen” (Job 33: 21).

His beautiful and strong body, that was once the subject of his pride would waste away from sight; and his bones, that were once concealed, being covered by flesh, would stick out because of sickness, as though they become bare and naked.

Pope Gregory the great commenting on this phrase says that **the flesh here refers to carnal lusts, and the bones to virtues of the soul**. Through the rod of divine chastisement, the carnal lusts would fade away, and lose their authority on us; and the virtues once concealed, would stick out and become visible.

- ❖ Man does not realize the extent of his progress, except amid affliction; as in the time of prosperity, it would be difficult to distinguish between the carnal lusts and the spiritual power. When the apostles were beaten, and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus, they departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, saying with confidence: *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* (See Acts 5: 29). There you can see how the power of faith shines more brilliantly amid the affliction; how the integrity of the flesh is wasted away, and how the bones of virtues stick out. About them, Wisdom says: *“God tested them and found them worthy of Himself”* (Wisdom 3: 5); Tested through persecution of the adversaries, they are found worthy of having their bones stick out; ... As the strength of man is known in the time of affliction.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His soul draws near to the pit and his life to the messengers of death” (Job 33: 22).

Namely, that man, fallen into affliction, becomes as though suffering severe pains, that almost bring his life to an end, and draw him nearer to the messengers of death; namely, to the angels assigned by God to take away people’s spirits.

- ❖ The nearer he is drawn through affliction, to realize that he is approaching death; the more he would strive to find a solution, to discover the true basis of life, by flying toward the protection from the trust in God.

Pope Gregory the Great

E- He would send the righteousness:

“If there is a messenger (an angel) on his side, as a mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell man what is right for him” (Job 33: 23).

There is much controversy in interpreting this phrase:

According to Septuagint version: Even if there are a thousand messengers of death, not a single one of them can inflict him in a deadly way; in case he decide in his heart to return to the Lord. If man realizes his own foolishness, He will help him not to fall into death; will renew his body, will fill his bones with marrow, and will make his flesh as smooth as a baby.

According to the Volgata version: If an angel is found to speak on his behalf, one out of a thousand, to declare man’s righteousness, he would graciously say: *“Spare him from going down to the pit; have found a ransom for him”*.

And according to the Chaldean version: ‘If he is found worthy, an angel comforter, one out of a thousand, would be assigned, to declare man’s uprightness; as a ransom is found’.

The first view: is that that angel is a man. ‘Munster’ and ‘Isidorus’ believe him to be a prominent teacher sent to the sick to instruct them about the will of God. ‘Junius’ and ‘Termillius’ believe him to be a prophet. ‘Codurcus’ believes it to refer here to the condition of Amimelech who was inflicted with an illness because of Sarah the wife of Abraham; And that the angel is a prophet sent to declare to him that God is righteous (Genesis 20). ‘Umbreit’ believes that this angel is Elihu himself, sent by God to proclaim to ‘Job’ the truth concerning the divine ordinance, and the secret behind allowing for grieves to dwell on men. While others believe that the talk here concerns a faithful minister of God who visits the sick and those who suffer, to proclaim to them the plan of God; without referring to a specific name.

The second view: That the talk refers to God sending His angels to declare His ordinance to men, the suffering among them in particular and to confirm to them that God intends to proclaim His mercy to them, if they return to Him by repentance. St. Jerome, for instance, believes that the talk here refers to an angel who

stands before God, assigned to instruct men and to mend their ways.

The third view: is that the talk here is a prophecy about the Person of the Lord Christ. Among those who adopt this view is **St. Augustine**¹.

- ❖ Who would be this messenger (angel), but Him, whom the prophet calls “*The Mighty Angel of counsel*”?
- ❖ Our Physician is from above; ... Having found us under the burden of such infirmities, He came to us as a Man; Yet being the Righteous, he conforms to us in His Manhood, and differs from us concerning the power of His righteousness.

A sinner could not be reformed except by God; Yet it was necessary for the One who comes to heal him, and to reform his past evil life, to be seen; namely, to be realized by the senses, through setting a role example for him to follow. And as God could not be seen by man, He became a man to be seen. The holy unseen God became a seen Man like us; so that being like us, He would instruct us by His holiness, and put an end to our infirmity by His might.

Having no sin, He did not have to submit to any punishment, but submitted our disobedience by conquering it. And submitted Himself to our punishment for the sake of His compassion on us; As according to Him: “*I have power to lay my life down, and I have power to take it again*” (John 10: 18). Again, He was not raised like anybody else; as our own resurrection will be realized at the end of time; Whereas He celebrated His resurrection on the third day; ... Our resurrection is to be realized through Him; Whereas He rises by His own power.

Pope Gregory the Great

F- Through redemption:

“*Spare him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for him*” (Job 33: 24).

¹ Cf. Barnes' Notes on Job 33: 23; Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary, on Job33: 23.

Referring to the Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, Elihu speaks about his role in the salvation of man, and his enjoyment of redemption; saving him from going down to the pit of the kingdom of darkness, and granting him the eternal life instead of the everlasting perdition.

- ❖ The Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who took the form of Man; in His compassion, says to His Father to the account of man to be saved: “***Spare him from going down to the pit of corruption***”.

We would be liberated by the Mighty Savior, who Himself says: “*If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed*” (John 8: 36). It is well said to the account of that saved man: “*His soul draws near to the pit of corruption*” (22); And now He declares that he is **not** going down to the pit of corruption; As though he says: [Being aware through his weakness, that he is not far away from corruption; he would truly go down to it, if he assumes that by his own strength, he has distanced himself from it. But approaching with humility, he would be treated with mercy; Confessing his natural weakness, he would be given strength over the sins against which he wrestles. Whoever boasts in himself above what he truly is, would go down under the burden of his pride, and plunge to a lower depth.

Having taken weakness on Himself, and endured our punishment by His death, the Lord abolished our corruption by His resurrection.

Pope Gregory the Great

“***Spare him***”; a translation of the Hebrew word meaning “Deliver him”; when someone is delivered through paying a ransom for his release; as used in (Matthew 20: 28): “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*”

The talk here is an obvious prophecy about the eternal redemption, for which the lord Christ has paid by His precious blood; according to the words said by the apostle Paul: “*Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered*

the most holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrew 9: 12).

“I have found a ransom for him” (24). Using this expression, Our Lord Jesus Christ refers to His flaring jealousy for the salvation of the world; to His faithfulness and joy, in seeking the salvation of man. He works as though He searches until He finds, to rejoice.

*“He goes after the one who is lost until he **finds it**; and when he has **found** it, he lays it on His shoulder rejoicing” (Luke 15: 4, 5).*

“Rejoice with Me, for I have found my sheep which was lost” (Luke 15: 6).

*“What woman, having ten silver coins, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she **finds it**” (Luke 15: 8).*

“Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I have lost” Luke 15: 9)

“I have found my servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him” (Psalm 89: 20).

❖ The Mediator between God and man, the Man Jesus Christ, shows compassion on man, having taken the form of man. And through His compassion He says to His Father: *“Spare him from going down to the pit of corruption” (24).*

Pope Gregory the Great

4- THE SWEETNESS OF ENJOYING THE SALVATION OF THE LORD:

“His flesh shall be young like a child’s; He shall return to the days of his youth” (Job 33: 25).

Speaking about the Redeemer Christ, Elihu lifts our sight up from the afflictions, the grieves, and the infirmity, to what we enjoy through that amazing redemption. Instead of speaking about infirmity, Elihu marvels when, by the spirit of prophecy, he sees man, who was going down to the everlasting perdition, not only enjoying good health, but his flesh becoming more young than that

of a child; he sees him turn from a condition of helpless old age to strong youth full of vigor.

Through redemption the believer enjoys a new birth, and becomes a new creation according to the image of his Creator; ... becomes a son of God in the water of baptism, through his union with the only-begotten Son; ... becomes a new Naaman, about whom it is said: *“He went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (of leprosy)”* (2 Kings 5: 14)... In him, the saying of the Lord Christ to Nicodemus will be realized: *“Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3: 5, 6).

❖ ***“His body is consumed by punishments; to return to the days of his youth” (35).*** When the first man fell from God’s favor, we were expelled out of the gladness of paradise, and got united to the tragedies of this mortal life; And through the pain of our punishment, we feel the seriousness of our transgression that we committed through the seduction of the serpent. Falling down to this status, we, outside God, would only find grief, that we feel daily in our bodies, together with suffering and death. Yet God, by His amazing ordinance, changes what dwelt upon us through committing sin, by the means of punishment.

“His body is consumed by punishment, to return to the days of his youth”. As though He says: [Let him return to the days of his youth namely, let him be renewed to the perfection of his past life, and not stay in the condition where he has fallen; But by his salvation, he would return to the gladness of the status on which he was created in the first place. We have been brought up to this strength of the new life; not by our own strength, but through the Savior. I wish the Messenger (the Lord Christ), in His mediation for the sake of this man under punishment, say: “Let him return to the days of his youth”.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him. He shall see his face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness” (Job 33: 26).

By this new birth, man enters into a relationship with God as a son who has a daring toward his father; he prays, confesses, praises, gives thanks; offers good incense that God smells a fragrance of pleasure and favor in the sacrifice of Christ. He would look at God in joy of heart, and sees His face with rejoice; he would no more fear to encounter Him; as He now realizes the truth of the reconciliation that took place on the cross.

God pours on His believers, of the fruits of the Spirit, so abundantly, to make them carry the icon and righteousness of Christ.

So Elihu moves us over from crying out because of grieves, to rejoicing as children of the heavenly Father, carrying the new nature, crowned with glory, enjoying the sight of God’s face, partaking of the praise and rejoice of the heavenly creatures, and getting covered by the righteousness of Christ, that we put on as a splendid heavenly garment.

❖ ***“He shall pray to God, and He will delight in him” (28).*** He says that the ‘Messenger’ (the Atoning Intercessor) will mediate first, to be followed by man. As, if the Lord has not started by mediating with His Father through His incarnation, and praying for the sake of our lives, We would not be able by our own stiffness to seek the eternities... But, because the Light of Truth explodes by the secret joy in our hearts, mostly following the great grieves of temptations, It is added, and truly so, that that man, tempted, and supplicating to God, *“He shall see His face with joy” (26)*. It was previously said how God works by proclaiming Himself to us; But here, it is shown how He brings us joy, through making Himself known to us.

Jacob, after wrestling with the angel, said: *“I have seen God face to face”* (Genesis 32: 30); as though saying, ‘I know God, who, Himself condescended to know me’. Paul, on the other hand proclaims that this knowledge will ultimately happen with absolute

perfection, saying: “*Then I shall know just as I also am known*” (1 Corinthians 13: 12). After so much strife in labor and going through so many waves of temptations, the soul will mostly become captivated with joy, when she meditate in the knowledge of the divine presence (that although she feels it, yet cannot fully enjoy its perfection); Hence it is well said that man, after so many temptations, “*will see His face with joy*” (26). The more man meditates in the Divinity, the more he would exchange his earthly works for the grace of meditation; hence it was befitting to add righteousness to his works, “***He restores to man His righteousness***” (26).

He is called “***Our righteousness***”, not that it is our own, but became ours through the divine grace; In the Lord’s Prayer. We say: “Our daily bread give us today”. See how we call it “our bread”, although we pray to have it; it will be ours when we receive it, Yet It is God’s, as He is the One to give it.

Pope Gregory the Great

“And he sings among men and says: ‘I have sinned, and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me’” (Job 33: 27).

It came in Hebrew as “*sings among men*”. There is much controversy in translating the Hebrew word “Shiyr”, meaning (to sing). Man turns from crying out because of the severe temptations and sufferings that dwelt upon him, to rejoicing and praising the Mediator who redeemed him, renewed his nature by His Holy Spirit, and granted him the eternal life. Although he sinned and perverted what is upright, Yet the grace covered him, was forgiven, and was not punished for his past.

Some believe that the Hebrew word is rather derived from “Shuwr”, meaning (to look around), (to care for), or (to notice); hence it came in English as “***He looks at men***” (according to King James Version); As though this phrase refers to the divine Mediator, the Savior of the world, ‘looking at humanity’ that became corrupted. If someone happens to confess, that he has sinned and perverted what was right, of the talents, possibilities, mercies, and blessings, granted to him by God, and it did not profit him; The Savior will work in him. Namely, in case, under the

pressure of temptations, or under the enjoyment of seeing the divine Mediator, man confesses his sins, and the perversion of his ways, he would enjoy the divine mercies¹.

By that, Elihu presents to us the temptations as being chastisements from the Lord, with the goal of making man return to himself, reveal his sins, and feel his need for the Savior, in order to enjoy the divine mercies.

By saying, “*I perverted what was right*”, he means I misjudged God’s plan toward me; ... For the sake of making my life upright, He allows temptations to dwell upon me; and yet, looking at them as oppression and injustice, through the corruption of my heart, “*I did not profit from them*”. It is not the fault of the temptations dwelling upon me, but that of not profiting from them, because of my protesting against the Lord; and my belief that I do not deserve having all those cruel temptations.

❖ “*He looks at men, and say: ‘I have sinned’ (27)*”. He would not realize that he is a sinner, unless righteousness has been his. No one can discover his faults, unless he starts to become upright. He, who is completely distorted, cannot realize the truth of his status, but by feeling that he is a sinner, he has actually started, to a certain extent, to become upright. ... And becoming upright, although not yet righteous, he starts to rebuke himself. ... And by crossing over to truly accusing himself, he starts to get attached to God by condemning himself for what he feels, would not bring pleasure to God.

But if the sinner looks into himself, without being taught the feature of the righteous, he could not, in any way, realize that he is a sinner.

Pope Gregory the Great

Pope Gregory the Great believes that, looking at the saints, the believer can read in their life, as though in an open book, to realize that he is a sinner, and would then present a repentance, to live in the righteousness of Christ. Commenting on this phrase he says: [Because the life of the saints is a living study, the

¹ Cf. Adam Clarke's Commentary on Job 33: 27.

righteous, in the language of the Holy Book, become worthy of being called “books”: “*Books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the book*” (Revelation 20: 12).

To acquire the knowledge of the heavenlies, we should study the examples of the saints who came before us, about whom it was written that “*they feed among the lilies*” (Songs 4: 5). By the lilies is meant, the behavior of those who truly say: “*We are to God the fragrance of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2: 15)... As long as we are still going through this mortal life, until we reach the dawn of the eternal day, we are in need of being fulfilled by the examples of the saints].

❖ “***He looks at men, and say: ‘I have sinned, and perverted what was right, (and did not get what I deserve)’ (27).*** Even those who do not believe that they are sinners confess in a general way that they are. It is that way with men; they may publicly confess that they are sinners; Yet, once they hear someone truly refers to their sins, they hasten to daringly defend themselves, to reveal that they are innocent. Who has this feature, proclaiming that he is a sinner does not come from the depth of his heart; he is just uttering empty words. Knowing that it is written: “The righteous accuses himself from the beginning” (See Proverbs 18: 17); he pretends to confess his sin, to have a good reputation of being humble, when he actually is not. The righteous, on the other hand, through the examples of the saint, and being aware of the depth of his heart, he honestly accuses himself, believing in the truth of what he confesses; Then regretfully adds that “he did not get what he actually deserves”.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He has redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and my life shall see the light” (Job 33: 28).

This is the song of “*the ones who come out of the great tribulation*” (Revelation 7: 14), praising God for His exalted mercies, for bringing them up from the pit of Hades, to the High

Jerusalem; and from the kingdom of darkness, to settle down eternally in His bosom, in the divine light; according to what is written about the High Jerusalem: *“The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminates it; and the Lamb is its light”* (Revelation 21: 23).

❖ ***“He has redeemed my soul from crossing over to desolation”*** (28). Being preceded by the divine grace in the good works, Our free will should follow; And submitting ourselves to God who saves us, it is said that we redeem ourselves! The apostle Paul says: *“I labored more abundantly than they all”* (1 Corinthians 15: 10); and for fear of referring his labors to himself, he instantly added: *“Yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me”*. Having followed up, by his free will, the preceding grace of God, he truly adds, *“which was in me”*, so as not to appear denying the divine grace.

“And my life shall see the light” (28); namely, the light of the truth, that he could not see, when he was dead in his heart; or he means what the Lord says: *“I am the Light of the world”* (John 8: 12).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man” (Job 33: 29).

“Twice” and “three times”, are interpreted by some as (several times); namely, God never ceases to work, in every way, to draw the wicked to salvation, to enjoy sonhood to him, his righteousness, His holiness, and His heavens. Some scholars believe that Elihu mention “three times”, as a reference to that God uses three ways to deal with the sinners:

He starts by pouring on them an abundance of gifts, hoping that man would get in touch with the love of the Giver. In case he does not return to God, He uses dreams, visions, and divine inspirations. Then, if he still does not return, he uses the sorrows and afflictions, so that man would re-evaluate his life, and realize his true situation.

❖ **“Behold, God works all these things three times with every man” (29).** If we think carefully, we shall find out that there are three successive stages of sorrow, as well as of joy; in his return to God, in his temptation, and in even in his death.

It starts as man’s sorrow becomes great when he takes into consideration the enormity of his sins; and strongly intends to break the chains of worldly interests, and to walk along the way of God. All along the road of his return to God, he intends to take away the burden of the heavy temporal disturbances, to carry the light yoke of the Lord, in a servitude that embraces freedom; But then, comes the pain and disturbance of the heart; when the spirit call him on one side, and the body calls him on the other side It is well said about this man: *“his life abhors bread; ... his soul draws nearer to the pit and his life to the messengers of death”*. But the divine grace does not allow for us to become subject to those troubles for a long time. It loosens the chains of our sins, and would soon lead us to the comforts of the freedom of our new life. The joy to follow, would take away the prior sorrow; and the mind of him who returns, would rejoice more than he would ever covet.

But, lest man may assume that he has become a saint; once he returns to God, he will, through God’s permission, suffer the attacks of temptations. By his return, although he is as though has crossed over the Red Sea, Yet the enemies would continue to oppose him in the wilderness of his present life. Although we have forsaken our past sins behind us, having left the Egyptians dead on the beach; but destructive iniquities are still charging us as new enemies, to create obstacles on the way of our progress, to enter into the promised land ... Our enemy is now more zealous to overcome us, as long as we are still in this life, once he realizes that we are rebelling against him. He may not care to strike those he is sure of being already in his possession; but he becomes more furious against us, once he knows that he is cast away from our hearts, which he considers as his secure dwelling place.

Actually there are three stages for those returning to God to pass through: The start, the middle, and the end. At the start, they experience the magic sweetness; in the middle, the opposition of

temptations; And by the end, the abundance of perfection. After passing through the first two stages (of joy, followed by sorrow), he would be confronted with the third stage, with its pleasures that he ultimately gains ... David says: *“Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight, no one living is righteous”* (Psalm 143: 2); The apostle Paul says: *“I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this”* (1 Corinthians 4: 4); The apostle James says: *“For we all stumble in many things”* (James 3: 2); And John the Evangelist says: *“If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 8).

Pope Gregory the Great

“To bring back his soul from the pit; that he may be enlightened with the light of life” (Job 33: 30).

Here, Elihu confirms what he has previously referred to, as a song said by man who enjoys the salvation of God (Job 33: 28); a gift presented to every man with no partiality; As God *“is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 5: 9); And every believer would sing: *“For You have delivered my soul from death, Have You not delivered my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living”* (Psalm 56: 13).

❖ The mind of every elect would suffer each of these three stages; Namely from the pain of the return; the temptations of the test; and the horror of dissolution; He would be purified and liberated by the same pain; as it is said *“To bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life”* (30).

What we see with our physical eyes is the light of death; Whereas those who are enlightened with the life of the living, would despise the light of the world, and would go back to the exaltation of the inner splendor; to live in that place where they see the true light, and feel it; where there is no difference between life and light; As wherever there is light, there is also life.

Pope Gregory the Great

5- ELIHU PLEADS WITH ‘JOB’ TO LISTEN TO HIM:

“Give ear Job, listen to me; Hold your peace, and I will speak” (Job 33: 31).

Elihu pleads with ‘Job’ to examine carefully what he said to him, and to listen attentively to what he is going to say; As he has much to say, that would touch his life, and are worthy of longsuffering and patience.

“If you have anything to say, answer me. Speak, for I desire to justify you” (Jon 33: 32).

Before proceeding to his talk in the following chapter, Elihu intends to wait politely for ‘Job’ to answer him, or to comment on what he has just said to him.

Here, Elihu’s reasonable nature is apparent. Although he has gone too far in his accusation of ‘Job’, Yet here he is waiting, with good spirit, to hear his comments; As his goal is not to rebuke or to accumulate accusations, as much as to open the door of salvation and righteousness, for ‘Job’ to be justified before God. It is befitting for us as well, in our preaching, to realize the truth of our mission; that it is not to criticize or rebuke, but rather to support and to give compassion; with frankness, yet with no flattering. Elihu has previously said to ‘Job’ that he has been created of the same clay; and like him, he is in need of the helping Savior. According to the words of the apostle Peter: *“I myself am also a man”* (Acts 10: 26).

Man does not need someone to terrify him; but to have compassion on him; to let him feel that he is his fellow in human weakness; and is in need for divine help.

In humility, love, and compassion, Elihu asks ‘Job’ to tell him, if he has any objection, comment, or anything to be clarified; He lovingly wants him to tell all what he has in mind, for the sake of his justification.

Together with asking ‘Job’ to listen with longsuffering and patience, to what he is going to say to him, Elihu proclaims that he is also ready to listen to him the same way.

Saying “*I desire to justify you*”, is because Elihu fears, lest he might have misunderstood what ‘Job’ said, or referred to him certain things, that he did not mean; he is asking him to talk frankly.

“If not, listen to me, Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom” (Job 33: 33).

As ‘Job’ kept quiet, and the three friends did not interfere, Elihu intended to proceed on his talking.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 33

LET MY SOUL PRAISE YOU FOR BRINGING ME OVER FROM HADES TO HEAVENS

- ❖ My depths, cries out to you with the spirit of rejoice:
You have created me of dust; Yet You granted me a breath of Yours.
I know the weakness of my nature, and I realize the strength of Your work in me.
Let me not criticize my brethren, or accuse them bitterly.
As I am their fellow in weakness
I seek their salvation, that they would enjoy, together with me, the riches of Your grace
My soul moans for their falls;
And my heart burns for their offenses
- ❖ Speak, O Lord, to them;
Speak to them with the language of the abundance of gifts;
Speak to them through Your mighty word.
And in case they do not appreciate Your grace, speak to them with the language of sufferings
In every way, You seek the salvation of all.
In their sufferings, being a compassionate Father, You moan together with them.
As for me, partaking of their sorrows, I moan together with them
Work in them and in me, the way You chose, O the Savior of all.
- ❖ Who will carry me and them to the divine bosoms,
But You, O the amazing Intercessor?
By Your blood, we are purified; and by Your Spirit, we are sanctified.
You bring us forth from the darkness of sin, to the light of Your righteousness.
You bring us over from the pit of Hades to the Higher Jerusalem.
You turn our bitter cry outs into rejoice

You turn our lamentations to songs and praise.
You nurture our souls by Your blood.
You introduce us to God Your Father, as His children
Glory is to You, O good Savior, the Philanthropist.

CHAPTER 34

THE SECOND TALK OF ELIHU

Some scholars believe that ‘Job’ did not respond to what Elihu said, out of disrespect, because of his young age, having already responded to the questions of the three older friends; Or he probably decided against answering him for fear that more questions would pour upon him from all those present. Seeing that ‘Job’ did not answer him, Elihu turned his face toward the audience, and among them the three elder friends; And probably in some kind of mockery, or in an attempt to gain them on his side, he called them men of wisdom, learning, and understanding (2-4; 34-37).

What did Christ promise you? He promised to grant you the eternal happiness, when He is risen from the dead; Whereas in this life, He promised to grant you His portion; And His portion is the way along which He walked. Would you, a servant and a disciple, despise the way along which Your Lord walked? Do not Elihu dealt with the issue of Job, justifying himself before God, by telling him that he is not speaking to a king or a prince, but to God who knows everything, and who does not misjudge.... He suggested to Job to practice repentance in humility and remorse (31-32),

Intending to respond to Job’s wrong conviction, that God has unjustly allowed for sufferings to dwell upon him; he confirmed to him that: It is unthinkable that God would do wrong (10-12, 17, 19, 23); He has full authority (13-15); He is Almighty in power (20, 24); He knows everything (21, 22, 25); He is firm with the disobedient sinners for the sake of their repentance (26-28); and His divine care is exalted (29-30).

He finally ended this chapter by demonstrating to ‘Job’ how to talk to God (31-32); leaving the matter to his conscience.

1- A call to all those present to listen	1 – 4
2- Responding to Job’s self-justification	5 – 12
3- God’s might, and His ordinances	13 – 30

1- A CALL TO ALL THOSE PRESENT TO LISTEN:

“Then Elihu (answered) and said ...” (Job 34: 1).

“... answered”: That does not mean that he was responding to a question asked by someone in particular; As the authors of the Holy Book used to begin their talk by the word “... answered”, even if he was the first to talk, and no one preceded him; as it came in (Job 3: 2; Isaiah 14: 10; Zechariah 1: 10; 3: 14; 4: 11-12). This word is sometimes used in response to a question that might have come to the mind of someone, who did not say it publicly¹.

“Hear my words, you wise men, Listen to me, you men of learning” (Job 34: 2).

In the last chapter, Elihu addressed his talk to ‘Job’, responding to his questions concerning the sorrows and afflictions; and clarifying to him that they are all allowed by God for the benefit of the believer, to give him the chance to retreat within himself, discover his faults, and seek the one divine Mediator. When ‘Job’ did not respond to him, nor comment on his words, he now directs his talk, in particular to the three friends, and calls them wise and men of knowledge; to prepare them to listen to him with interest, and without prejudice. Or he probably considered them truly wise and capable of following his talk, and his explanation of certain serious issues.

“For the ear tests words, as the tongue tests food” (Job 34: 3).

Here, Elihu calls on us to have the spirit of discernment. As the mouth tastes food, discerning between the good and the bad, so it is befitting of us to discern between the good and the evil words we hear. Here he is talking to the audience in general, and to the three elderly friends in particular; not only concerning the inner ears, but also about the outer sensory ones; the believers should not

¹ Barnes' Notes on Job 43: 1.

leave the doors of their ears wide open to receive all the words they hear with no discernment.

The same way we are judged on every vain word we utter, as a waste of our precious time with the Lord; We are committed to keep watch on every word we hear; and to avoid, as much as we can, listening, not only to what is evil, but also to what is vain and with no benefit.

Many fathers believe that listening carelessly to heretics, may corrupt the purity of the soul, and the uprightness of the faith.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves, Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13: 5).

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4: 1).

“(For one is given) the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12: 10).

“But solid foods belong to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrew 5: 14). Between good and evil means: *“For the ear test words, as the tongue tests food”* (Job 34: 3)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Discernment is better than all other virtues².

The saintly spiritual elder

❖ Some wonder about the result of having a virtue!... And some say that every virtue has a goal or cause; while others rejects this interpretation ... For instance, the goal of wisdom or its cause is to discern between good and evil ... By this discernment we can choose and to reject; ... ; By justice we realize what we should give and what we should not ... ; By courage we realize what we

¹ *Homilies on Hebrews, homily 8:7.*

² من تعاليم الشيخ الروحاني للمبتدئين.

should fear, and what we should not...; As to the two virtues: beauty and strength, they seem to have no cause, but their value comes from other virtues that have a cause ...; The wise realize the beauty through the harmony and conformity existing within themselves ...; and comprehend the strength through the practical execution of the theoretical virtue¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ My son, Do not talk with anger, but with wisdom and knowledge; So should also be your silence. That was the way of the talk and silence of our wise fathers.

St. (Anba) Anthony the Great

“Let us discern for ourselves what is right; Let us learn together what is good” (Job 34: 4).

Let us examine things by ourselves; disregarding the compliments of others. We should only be preoccupied with reaching the truth, recognizing the facts, and seeking to find what is good. It is befitting for the believer to discover what is true , what is just, and what is edifying, amid the controversy of views and concepts; in order to examine everything seriously and faithfully, without partiality to his own views or to those of others.

St. John Chrysostom believes that it is befitting for us to examine ourselves, and to listen to the voice of the Lord Christ in us; as well as to His voice in the holy church through our clerical teachers.

- ❖ If you look within yourselves, you will find Christ in you; And if He is in you, How much more would He be in your teacher²!

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If we do not know how to test one another, we will not be able to know whether Christ is in us or not. Failure to practice this test is an ignorance of the faith which is inherited in the

¹ عظات عن المزامير .

² Homilies on Cor, Homily 29:4.

proclamation of our faith. Whoever has the sense of faith in his heart, would know that Jesus Christ is in him¹.

Father Ambrose

- ❖ In the old Israel, as there were prophets who uttered the word of God, and others who did not, The same way in the church; Once the apostle appeared, and began uttering in Christ, and having the Holy Spirit that was sent on them by the Lord; The devil, on his part, sent many false messengers who forfeited the teachings of the gospel. It is vital for you to have the gift of the Holy Spirit, namely, the *'Discernment of the spirits'*, to be able to **examine the spirits**, and decide for yourselves what you should believe, and what you should reject².

St. Dedymus the blind

- ❖ We should be particular, as far as that tri-sided aspect is concerned. Let us examine, with wisdom and insight the multitude of views that confront us, in order to realize the origin and causes (goals) of each of them from the beginning. By that we can consider whether we submit to it or not. We should be like the expert money-changers, as the Lord teaches us, who, by their experience, can discern between the pure gold that was properly purified by fire, and the pieces of copper covered by a thin layer of gold, and look deceptively valuable.

We should examine carefully every thought that enters into our heart, and every teaching we hear, to see whether it was purified by the fire of the divine Holy Spirit; or it belongs to the vanity of the heretics, or it is the fruit of the pride of human philosophy, that only has the deceiving appearances of religion. We can do this if we follow the advice of the apostle, saying: *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4: 1). **There are some who become deceived by the beautiful appearance of the philosophical teachings, with some**

¹ *Commentary on Paul's Epistles (2 Cor.13: 5).*

² *Catena.*

superficial pious views that appear conforming with religion, as the shining of a thin golden layer may deceive the un-experienced. Those who are deceived by the outer appearances would soon realize that they will soon come out empty-handed, and fall into despair¹.

Father Moses

2- RESPONDING TO JOB'S SELF-JUSTIFICATION:

“Job says, ‘I am innocent, but God denies me justice’”
(Job 34: 5).

These words came in Job 13: 18; 27: 2. But he said them, not to justify himself; but because his friends stabbed him in his person, he intended to confirm his innocence from their vain charges, with no intention to justify himself before God; or to claim that he is without sin. He never hinted that he was always pure in heart, or that he never erred against the law of his Creator. Yes, he indeed said that God denied him justice; Yet, he never meant to accuse God of injustice; What he meant was that God deals with him in a secret vague way, not that he was used to, in his past relationship with God, as far as God's exalted divine care is concerned.

What were vague for him were not the temptations that have dwelt upon him, but rather how God allowed his friends to get offended by him. Although 'Job' confessed his sins; Yet he bears a relative righteousness, if compared to his human brethren, and not if compared to God; As it is said: *“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins”* (Ecclesiastes 7: 20).

❖ I know no man who is perfect in everything, while still a man ... except Him who alone for our sake clothed Himself with our manhood².

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ **God alone is all good;** and it is befitting for you, being created according to His image, to be good as well. As, He is generous

¹ *Cassian: Conferences, 1:20.*

² *Strom. 4:130.*

to all, You, should also be generous, you should avoid greed, and should not keep from your neighbor any mortal material thing, because that would be the most serious and ignorant thing to do.

Father John of Kronstadt

- ❖ You should, first of all, rid yourself of everything foreign to yourself; then present yourself again to Him who has created you. He is the source of our happiness and whole goodness¹.

St. Augustine

“Although I am right, I am counted a liar; My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression” (Job 34: 6).

‘Job’ probably wonders, whether he should go along with his friends, and accuses himself of evil; to become a liar against the proclamation of his innocence of what they accused him. He cries out, as his wound became incurable for no iniquity on his part. They accused him of being the most evil of criminals; and dealt with him in the most horrible way; although God Himself testified to his blamelessness; and that Satan has incited Him against him for no cause (Job 2: 3).

By his wound he means the tribulations that dwelt upon him, which seemed incurable; and his situation that looked irreversible. ‘Job’ here is portrayed like a wild animal that was struck with a fatal arrow, for no transgression on its part. Job’s complaint is not that he is without sin, but because the tribulations that dwelt upon him have utterly distorted his image, especially in the minds of his own friends.

“What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water?” (Job 34: 7).

Some believe that this analogy fits the desert environment in the old days, where a camel is made to drink a huge amount of water that would keep it from feeling thirst for an extended period during its journey in the barren wilderness. ‘Job’, in the same way,

¹ Robert Llewelyn, *The Joy of the Saints, Spiritual Readings throughout the Year*, Springfield, Illinois, 1989, p. 54.

drank a considerable amount of tribulations, whose effect would last him all along his journey in the wilderness of this world¹.

Eliphaz mentioned a like phrase during his accusation against 'Job' (Job 15: 16).

“He keeps company with evildoers; he associates with wicked men” (Job 34: 8).

According to Elihu, 'Job' must have kept company with evildoers, having adopted their thoughts during his admonition of God (Job 9: 22-32; 30; 21: 7-15); at least in saying that the wicked are not punished. He looks as though he denies the justice of God, because of his ignorance of what lie behind the afflictions that dwell upon him, and not upon the wicked. He is thus counted by Elihu as associated in his thoughts with the wicked.

“For he says, ‘It profits man nothing when he tries to please God’” (Job 34: 9).

Having adopted this line of thought amid the bitterness of his soul, that there is no benefit in ministering to God, or in walking in righteousness; as God does not defend the righteous against their opponents.

“So listen to me, you men of understanding, Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong” (Job 34: 10).

Elihu calls on those present to listen to his answer on what he assumed to be wrong concepts on the part of 'Job'; and who, according to him, used unbecoming words in his admonition to God, concerning His ordinances. Elihu intends to say that we are committed not to weigh God's ordinances by human measures; to accuse Him of injustice; But it is befitting for us to trust that all God's ways are true and just, being the Holy One, and not because we see them as such.

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!” (Romans 9: 14).

“Far be it from You to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked

¹ Cf. Adam Clarke's Commentary.

alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all earth do right?"
(Genesis 18: 25).

"He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just, A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He"
(Deuteronomy 32: 4).

"You are righteous, O Lord, and all Your deeds are just; All Your ways are mercy and truth" (Tobit 3: 2).

"God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses His wrath every day" (Psalm 7: 11).

"For the Lord is righteous, He loves justice; Upright men will see His face" (Psalm 11: 7).

"The fear of God is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure, and altogether righteous" (Psalm 19: 9)

"Your statutes are forever right; Give me understanding, that I may live" (Psalm 119: 144).

"You are righteous and You rule all things righteously, deeming it alien to Your power to condemn anyone who does not deserve to be punished" (Wisdom 12: 15).

"And the Lord has kept the calamities ready, and the Lord has brought them upon us, for the Lord is just in all the works that He has commanded us to do" (Baruch 2: 9)

"The Lord within her is righteous; He does no wrong. Morning by morning He dispenses His justice, and every new day He does not fail, yet the unrighteous know no shame" (Zephaniah 3: 5)

"Nehemiah prayed, saying: O Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things, You are awe-inspiring and strong and just and merciful, You alone are King and are kind, You alone are bountiful, You alone are Just and Almighty and eternal. You rescue Israel from every evil; You chose the ancestors and consecrated them" (2 Meccabees 1: 24, 25)

"Then I heard the angel in charge of the water say: 'You are just in these judgments, You who are, and who were, the Holy One'" (Revelation 16: 5)

"And I heard the altar respond: 'Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are Your judgments'" (Revelation 15: 7)

“For true and just are His judgments; He has condemned the great prostitute, who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of His servants” (Revel. 19: 2)

- ❖ If He whom we call ‘Father’ is our Judge, who has no partiality; Let us therefore hasten and work hard through our journey here on earth, with all fear and holiness ... knowing **that it is He Himself who grants us the promises, and who may keep us unpunished¹.**

St. Dedymus, the blind

- ❖ God is a just Judge, powerful, and longsuffering. Can’t you see why He does not punish, although He is capable and ready? He says: You should know that He is longsuffering, and does not bring forth His wrath every day. So that the foolish may not assume that God does not take action sometimes, out of weakness; He shows that the reason for postponing his judgment is His very spacious longsuffering, with the goal of leading you to repentance. And in case you do not benefit from this treatment, he will take another position. Be sure that we are every day worthy of punishment ... Is there a single day, we do not pray slothfully, without serious distraction of mind²?

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Those who forsake God, despise His commandments, and bring shame on their Creator because of their works and their thoughts that blaspheme Him, who sustains them; are gathering a just judgment against themselves³.

St. Erinaos

“He repays man for what he has done, He brings upon him what his conduct deserves” (Jog 34: 11).

God always works with justice; He would never forget the righteous; and would never allow the wicked to prosper at the end. He deals with everyone according to what he deserves. By that he

¹ *Commentary on 1 Peter 1:17.*

² *On Ps.7.*

³ *Adv. Haer.4.33:15.*

does not mean to say that ‘Job’ is evil on account of what has dwelt upon him, the way his three friends accused him; But he intends to correct a vague or faulty concept that ‘Job’ has expressed in the bitterness of his soul.

Let us wait. We shall definitely see that God, at His proper time, will reward the righteous, and punish the wicked, in case they persist on their wickedness. God said concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: *“They shall not lament for him, saying, ‘Alas my brother,... or Alas master! Or Alas, his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey. Dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem’”* (Jeremiah 22: 18, 19). And it is said: *“But in accordance of your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who **will render to each one according to his deeds**”* (Romans 2: 5, 6); and: *“And if you call on the Father, who **without partiality judges according to each one’s work**, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay in fear”* (1 Peter 1: 17)); And, *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward with Me, to give to every one according to his work”* (Revelation 22: 12).

- ❖ Why doesn’t God punish all men in a way that would not allow any of them to challenge Him; a question asked because of the extent of evil to which many have reached; or because of the ordinances of God, that are sometimes vague, yet are never unjust¹.

Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl

It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice” (Job 34: 12).

Again Elihu repeats this principle to confirm that God, with no exception, not even for a single moment, would never do wrong. He took it against ‘Job’, that although embracing this same principle, yet under the pressure of the intense sufferings, he assumed that God may pervert justice (Job 34: 5; 8: 3). The Lord

¹ *Sermons, 101:5.*

said to Satan: “*You incited Me against my servant Job to ruin him without any reason*” (Job 2: 3).

Commenting on this **Pope Gregory the Great** says: God may allow grieves without (apparent) reasons, that man deserves them; Yet, would never condemn man without reason!

God may allow for sorrow on His righteous believers for the sake of purifying or justifying them; but He would never allow it for them on the Day of Judgment.

- ❖ You will have a world of light for the bitterness you endure for one day. Enduring hunger for a little while for the sake of His love will make your longing to see His face flare up. If your countenance turns dark because of your strife for His sake, He will let His glory beautify you forever. If you get bared of your possessions for His sake, He will clothe you with His light. If you forsake what is yours, you will acquire Him eternally¹.

The spiritual elder John Deliaty

- ❖ All the evil that dwell upon you will pass on; And He whom you patiently anticipate will come. He will wipe out the sweat of labor; will dry up every tear; and there will be weeping no more. Here on earth, we are committed to moan amid temptations; about which ‘Job’ wonders, Saying: “*Does not man have hard service on earth?*” (Job 7: 1)².

St. Augustine

3- GOD’S MIGHT AND HIS ORDINANCES:

“*Who appointed Him over the earth? Who put Him in charge of the whole world?*” (Job 34: 13).

He is the Creator of heavens and earth, and the Controller of the whole world; He has not got His authority from another; and He does not submit to anyone; Heavens and earth are the subject of His care and His pleasure. If the earth is not the work of His hand, but given to Him by someone greater than Him, He may probably then, does wrong and injustice; But as it is His, its Creator, and care-

¹رسالة 15:19.

²On Ps. 29, Discourse, 2: 8.

Giver; ordaining everything on earth with His divine justice, and His exalted care; “*God is exalted in His power, Who is a Teacher like Him? Who has prescribed His ways for Him, or said to Him, ‘You have done wrong?’*” (Job 36: 22, 23).

- ❖ Notice how Elihu proves the justice of God. He has **created the earth**, the heaven, and all creatures. Are we, His works, foreign to Him, to be oppressive against us? He is just, not only because all these are the works of His own hands, but because He is their Lord and Master. If the wicked, would not stand still, in case they see any harm done against those submitted to them; How would be the case, concerning the divine Creator and Lord; ... How could He not practice justice in all His ordinances on His creation on which He has poured such splendor? ... You could not claim that He does not practice oppression out of weakness on His part; As he can easily destroy everything if, and when, He so chooses.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ He truly controls the world which He has created by Himself; He needs no help from anyone to control it, as he had no help to create it.... He controls well what He created well ... He would never be cruel over what He created with His mercy ... Those for whom He cared even before He created them, He would never forsake after creating them.

Pope Gregory the Great

“If it was His intention and He withdrew His Spirit and His breath, all mankind would perish together, and man would return to the dust” (Job 34: 14).

Some believe that this phrase means that if God puts His heart on someone, whom He dearly loves, He would gather his Spirit to Himself, and would allow for his body to return to the dust. Because God treasures the breath which He gave, He gathers it to Himself. What intercedes for us all is the love of God who created us and granted us a breath from His own mouth; And as said by the wise Solomon: “*And the dust returns to the ground it came from*” (Ecclesiastes 12: 7). God in His love for man, put His

heart on Him, and concentrated His divine plan on His salvation. Yes, It is in God's authority to destroy all mankind, as "*They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one*" (Romans 3: 12). Man no longer has the right to live, and does not have the daring to seek any good from God, because he disobeyed Him. Whatever may dwell upon man, even death, he cannot complain or accuse of oppression; As according to the Psalmist: "*Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before You*" (Psalm 143: 2). However, God in His love, allowed for the body to die and return to the dust from which it came; and by His love He gathers the spirit of man; granting him the first resurrection together with Him, that in the second resurrection, the body would rise, as well, together with the spirit, and man would return to the divine bosoms.

So Elihu answers 'Job', saying: Why do you seek to be tried before God? Do not you know that if God examines someone's life, he would find him a criminal, worthy of being cut off altogether from life? It is as though Elihu says to 'Job': I know that if you are compared to any man, you would be counted as perfectly righteous. But how dare you seek to be tried before God; You would, like any other man, be found worthy of death.

- ❖ Seeking the lowly things, the heart becomes devious; whereas rising up to the high things, it becomes upright. If man directs his heart to the Lord, The Lord would draw his spirit and breathe to Him. Here, the term 'spirit' refers to the inner thoughts; whereas the term 'breath' that comes out of the body refers to the outer works. Thus God draws the spirit and the breath to Him; to change both what is inside and outside of man; namely, directs his longing wholly to the one who created him.

Pope Gregory the Great

***"All mankind would perish together, and man would return to the dust"* (Job 34: 15).**

If God chooses, it would be His right to wipe out all mankind from the face of the earth; so why should man complain of

the loss of health, riches, or loved ones; and assume that God is unjust¹?

❖ **“All mankind would perish together, and man would return to the dust” (15).** The body would fall down, when man is no more a slave to his emotions ... The more man lives for high things, the more he dies for the lowly things ... Paul’s body, for instance, perished altogether, when he said: *“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”* (Galatians 2: 20).

Elihu was right when he added: **“man would return to dust”**; as whoever is preoccupied with the sin, would become as though has forgotten his mortal status; started to become puffed up with pride; and forgot that he was created out of dust. But once he is touched by the grace of the spirit of humility, he would again recall in his mind the fact that he is dust.

David returned to dust when he said: *“Remember, O lord, that we are dust”* (Psalm 103: 14). So did Abraham when he said: *“I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes”* (Genesis 18: 27). Although death has not still dissolved their living body to dust, Yet, according to them, they are undoubtedly that way already.

Pope Gregory the Great

“If you have understanding, hear this, listen to what I say” (Job 34: 16).

At the beginning of this chapter, Elihu addressed the men of wisdom and understanding; Now he addresses it to ‘Job’, saying to him that, *“if you have understanding ...”*, intending to rebuke him on the unbecoming words he uttered concerning God and His ordinances.

“Can he who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the Just and mighty One?” (Job 34: 17).

Elihu marvels about the position of man toward God that he, who submits to the law, dares to condemn God, the whole just and righteous; the one who sets the law to mankind! How amazing, the one who is in need of a law to control him, puts himself in the

¹ Cf. Barnes' Notes on Job 34: 15.

position of the Judge, and even to condemn the One who sets the law! Or he who hates justice, and tries his best to get rid of it, dares to judge the One who established the law!

- ❖ He hates evil, and loves mankind. He is not like us, who may forsake evil, not for the sake of our hate of iniquity, but for fear of punishment.

St. John Chrysostom

“Is He not the One who says to the kings, ‘you are worthless’, and to nobles, ‘you are wicked’?” (Job 34: 18).

God set the rulers to be honored in the Lord and for the sake of the Lord, but not to take the place of the Lord. In case the heart of the ruler or the one of authority gets proud, he falls into apostasy, as it happened with Satan. The apostle Paul, fearing that he might fall into pride says: *We are not looking for praise from men, not from you or any one else. As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children*”(1 Thessalonian 2: 6-7). The glory of a leader is to bear the Spirit of the Lord who embraces all who submit to Him by love, and deals with them as His children. If man does not dare to condemn the temporal king of being mean or cruel, how dare he refer oppression and wickedness to the King of kings, and the Lord of lords! It is befitting for man to give honor to the one of honor; and if it is difficult for man to judge his superiors; as he is not aware of what lie behind their actions of hidden causes, and secret factors; How can he judge the limitless and exalted plans of God!

Now, as far as the phrases that come in the gospel, are concerned, that may seem somehow vague or contradictory; It would be better for everyone of us to reproach himself of being far from reaching the understanding of the *“depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God”* (Romans 11: 33); And he would rather remember truly that it is difficult for him to realize the ordinances of God, than to dare to rudely condemn them of being vague or contradictory¹!

¹ *Concerning Baptism, Book 2, Q. 4.*

St. Basil the Great

“Who shows no partiality to princes, and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the works of His hands” (Job 34: 19).

If it is not befitting of us to condemn the kings and nobles, who, being human, often show partiality; How could we condemn God who deals with the rich and the poor on the same level, with no partiality (See Galatians 2: 6; Acts 10: 34; 2 Chronicles 19: 7; Proverbs 22: 2; Romans 2: 11; Ephesians 6: 9; Colossians 3: 25); As all are His creation, and in need of His divine care and mercies to enjoy salvation; Man’s possibilities or position, have nothing to do with God’s dealings with him.

- ❖ The ‘prince’ and the ‘rich’ here, refer to every arrogant person; whereas the ‘poor’ refers to the humble. Therefore God shows no partiality to the rich who oppresses the poor; having proclaimed in the gospel that on the day of judgment, he will not ‘know’ the haughty who oppress the poor, saying: *‘I do not know you or where you come from’* (Luke 13: 25). If He chooses He can destroy them; that is why he adds: ***“For they are all the work of His hands”***.

Pope Gregory the Great

“They die in an instant, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and they pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand” (Job 34: 20).

Here Elihu talks about three categories, to demonstrate how God is impartial:

1- **The first category includes the kings and the rich** who depend on their authority and riches, and thus feel more secure than others. Towards those, God is not only impartial, but sometimes allow for them to die in an instant; something that may not happen to the common people.

2- **The second category is the wicked common people**, who depend on their great multitude. Those may be taken into captivity in the middle of the night; like what happened to

firstborns of the Egyptians, while they were feeling secure and mocking the people of God (See Exodus 12).

3- **The third category are those with fighting capabilities, proud of their military might;** who sometimes are taken away or fall captives, “*removed without human hand*” -- the same way the righteous are saved: ‘*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit*’, says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4: 6); As it is also said: “*No king is saved by the size of his army; No warrior escapes by his great strength*” (Psalm 33: 16, 17).

❖ Let the Lord be your hope, your strength, and your ability to endure; Let Him be your atonement, your praise, your goal, your place of comfort, and the help in your strife. The mighty arrogant who raises himself haughtily before God; as though he is something important on his own. Such man is not saved by his own strength. He may have an elegant, strong, sound, and swift horse; by which, in case of an attack, he can escape; but let him hear the words saying: “To be saved by a horse is vanity”

We can take the ‘horse’ as a symbol of any possession in this world, or of any kind of honor on which man may depend; falsely assuming that the higher he reaches up, the more secure he gets! Can’t he realize that the higher you get, the heavier would be your fall? Security would not be realized by strength, authority, nor by honor, or glory; ... would they not be realized by the ‘horse’!

St. Augustine

“His eyes are on the ways of men; He sees their every step” (Job 34: 21).

God needs no one to submit to Him a report about anyone, as assumed by ‘Job’ who says: ‘*Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?*’ (Job 7: 12); But about Him, the prophet Jeremiah says: “*Your eyes are open on all the ways of men*” (Jeremiah 32: 19; and, “*For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth*” 2 Chronicles 16: 9). Everything is exposed before His eyes; being present everywhere, caring for all, practicing righteousness and justice; no one can escape from His sight (Psalm 139: 2-3).

St. John Chrysostom believes that Elihu, while confirming God's justice, does not intend to harm 'Job' by vain accusations, as the other three friends did, by saying, for instance, that 'Job' "*sent the widows away empty-handed, and broke the strength of the fatherless*" (Job 22: 9).

"From heaven, the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from His dwelling place He watches all who live on earth – He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do" (Psalms 33: 13-15).

"Can anyone hide in a secret place so that I cannot see him?," declares the Lord, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?'" (Jeremiah 23: 24).

❖ **God may seem, as though He is not aware of the works of the wicked**, when He postpones their judgment; Or as though, He disregards them when He shows longsuffering toward them. Every time the wicked is not punished on his sin as he deserves, he would think that God does not see him, or that his behavior is not detested by God ... But when punishment suddenly falls on him, with an eternal stroke, and with unpredictable death, as punishment for his iniquity, he will then know that God watches every thing.

Pope Gregory the Great

"There is no dark place, no deep shadow (of death), where evildoers can hide" (Job 34: 22).

The sinner usually wishes to disappear from sight. Elihu says that there is no dark cave or deep shadow, where the wicked can disappear from the eyes of God. Man can hide from the sight of another man, but before that of God, everything is revealed, in this world, as well as on the great day of the Lord. There is a hidden eye that see the wicked, and a strong hand that draws them to punishment.

"The shadow of the death" refers to the dense darkness (Amos 9: 2-3; psalm 139: 12).

❖ What does the 'darkness' mean, but the ignorance; and the 'shadow of death', but the forgetfulness. About the ignorance of

some, it is said: *“They are darkened in their understanding”* (Ephesians 4: 18); and about the forgetfulness that will dwell on us by death, it is said: *“On that very day, their plans come to nothing”* (Psalm 146: 4). Everything man thinks about during his life will be forgotten by death. As the shadow of death puts an end to the works of life, forgetfulness does the same to what lie in the memory. As no one can hide from the judgment of God, It would be impossible for God not to see what we do, or to forget what He sees... It is a unique feature of the divine nature, not to suffer from the *shadows of ignorance or of change.... The shining of the eternal light, which is God himself, would never change; nothing is hidden from His piercing eye; and, being unchangeable, He would never forget what He sees.* When we assume that we are not seen, It is like when we close our eyes before the light of the sun; and pretend that the sun is not there! ... Namely, we may keep ourselves from seeing Him; but we cannot keep Him from seeing us.

Pope Gregory the Great

God has no need to examine men further, that they should come before him for judgment” (Job 34: 23).

Some believe that this means that God does not need to call man twice for trial; His ordinances are just, and need no appeal. While others believe it to mean that time is not in man’ hand, nor his portion is realized by his wisdom and Strength; When God sees that the time is right, He tries him.

“Without inquiry He shatters the mighty, and sets up others in their places” (Job 34: 24).

He shatters those who think of themselves as mighty; He does not care for their great wealth, nor for their position in the society, or their number.

“Without inquiry”; namely, as God’s knowledge is perfect, it does not take long for Him to examine things, and to make sure of them; He decides directly and on the spot; shatters the mighty, and set up others in their place. ... He often brings down the haughty, who are sure of themselves, and lifts up the humble and the meek.

❖ ***“He shatters the mighty, and sets up others in their place”.***

This is a common daily event; Yet because the end of the two categories (the righteous and the wicked) are not yet decided; The wicked would not recognize their faults, until they fall under the judgment ... By searching the hearts of men individually, putting them under justice or mercy; He lifts the minds of some up to the heavenly places, and brings the pride of others down to the lowly places of pleasure. While driving one firmly out, By His mercy, He draws another. About the wicked, it is well said by the prophet: *“The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down”* (Psalm 146: 8); having lost the heavenlies, they only thirst to what is earthly; seeking what is of less value. About them Jeremiah also says: *“Those who turn away from You, will be written in the dust”* (Jeremiah 17: 13); Whereas to the elect, It is said: *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10: 20).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Because He takes note of their deeds, He overthrows them in the night, and they are crushed” (Job 34: 25).

God knows their deeds and what they plan, with no need for inquiry; He gives them many chances to give up their evil; and when they do not, He crushes them in one single night. An example of this in the Old Testament, when all the Egyptian firstborn died in one night; and what happened to ‘Belshazzar king of the Babylonians (Daniel 15: 30).

“He overthrows them in the night”. The literal translation is “He overthrows the night over them”; and lets an unpredictable serious calamity overtake them. The word ‘night’ often refers to an unpredictable calamity that is difficult to confront.

- ❖ The wicked would be crushed in the night by one of two ways: Either by being stricken by the torture of the punishment from outside; or when he eternally loses the light of life by the ultimate judgment; As it is written: *“Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the (outer) darkness”* (Matthew 22: 13)..

He would be overthrown into the outer darkness, having, by his own choice, become blinded by the inner darkness.

Every sin that is not wiped out soon by remorse is either a sin and a cause for a sin, or it is a sin and a punishment on a sin. The sin, not soon washed out by remorse, would lead by its weight to another sin. It is not just a sin, but is also a cause for another sin. It would be a sin that provokes other sins; as the blind mind is led to suffer servitude from one sin to another.

A sin that results from another sin; would be a sin, and added to it the punishment of another sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He punishes them for their wickedness, where everyone can see them” (Job 34: 26).

The wicked mostly wish to hide from sight as though in the darkness, as their works are darkness that cannot stand before the light; That is why God chastens them publicly, to let them realize their inability to escape from the divine justice; and in order to make them a practical example to others. In this, Elihu probably had in mind what dwelt upon ‘Job’ of publicly known calamities. **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that “everyone” here, refer to the pious who will stand as witnesses against the wicked on the Day of Judgment.

❖ ***“Being wicked, He punishes them where everyone can see them”.***

The Holy Book calls the non-believers as ‘wicked’; as distinguished from ‘sinners’; Every wicked is a sinner; but not every sinner is wicked, Even a pious man in faith, could be a sinner; according to John the Evangelist: *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1: 6). But it could be truly said about someone, that he is wicked, if he is foreign to the holiness of religion ...The peace of the church can be a cover over many under the name ‘Christians’; who once they are stricken by a touch of persecution, they would be wiped away like straw in a threshing field.

Some people wish to bear the sign of the Christian call; as the name of Christ is raised high; they wish to appear as such, being ashamed to appear as non-believers.

Yet they fail to rise up to the level of what they claim to be! Some would keep faith inside their hearts, but do not care to walk in life with faithfulness; ... And, disregarding the proper life, they fall into disbelief, even without being persecuted. Those, although they may be hidden from the eyes of men, yet they are revealed before the eyes of God.

Many die as non-believers, even though they are in faith; It is about those is said: ***“He punishes them for their wickedness where everyone can see them”*** (26); they may appear before others in the church as pious; but being unable to escape from the divine ordinances, they will be stricken as wicked.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Because they turned from following Him, and had no regard for any of His ways” (Job 34: 27).

As a cause for chastening them publicly, he says that they have, secretly within their hearts, their minds, as well as in their hidden behavior; have turned from the Holy God, and disregarded the way of the Lord; namely, did not keep His commandments, and had no regard for Him in their life.

- ❖ The secret of what will dwell upon the wicked on the Day of Judgment is because they turned from following God, and disregarded His divine ways.
- ❖ ***“Those who turned from Him, as though intentionally”***. It is befitting for us to understand that sin is committed by three ways: either out of ignorance, of weakness, or intentionally.

Sin could be more serious if it is committed **out of weakness**, and not **out of ignorance**; but it could be worse if it is done intentionally. Paul sinned out of ignorance when he said: ***“Even though I was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief”*** (1 Timothy 1: 13).

And Peter sinned **out of weakness**, when the word of the maidservant shook the strength of his faith, about which he boasted to the Lord; and when, by his own voice, denied the Lord, whom he held fast in his heart (Matthew 26; 69). But others have sinned intentionally, about whom the Lord said: *“If I have not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin”* (John 15: 22).

You sin **intentionally means that you** do not love goodness and do not do it. Sometimes, transgression could be heavier, to love sin, than to practice it. And the sin could be greater, to hate righteousness, more than not to do it. In the church you may find those who are far from goodness, and who even persecute it; and those who hate to see others practicing what they themselves slothfully do.

❖ *“And have no (understanding) for any of His ways”*. Their lack of understanding is not out of weakness, but because they do not wish to *understand*. They, most probably despise knowing the things that they boast doing ... counting that their ignorance protect them concerning their sins. To understand the ways of God, is to endure with humility, the mortal things (of affliction), and hold fast in anticipation of the lasting things (the eternal).

Pope Gregory the Great

“They caused the cry of the poor to come before Him, so that He heard the cry of the needy” (Job 34: 28).

By turning away from the way of God, and disregarding His commandments, they opened the way to the cries of the poor whom they oppressed, to come before God; and to the cries of the needy (the grieved) to reach His hearing. In other words, when the wicked rejects the way of the Lord, and shuts his ears against the divine commandments in his practical life, he causes loss and bitterness to his brethren; that their cries rise up to heaven, and reach the hearing of God. There is nothing more horrible in the heavenly court, than man’s cruelty on his fellow man, because of his disregard of the commandment of the divine love. Even if he prays to God, He will shut up His ears, until that man opens his own ears to those whom

he caused grief; as the tears of those who suffer and their moans would precede and go complaining the oppressive wicked.

- ❖ While those wicked boast, those on whom they oppress, cry out to God; Or, most assuredly, they cause their cries to reach the hearing of God ... This also refers to the leaderships of the church who get preoccupied with worldly interests at the expense of their work of preaching; by which they commit the flock under them to justly complain to God against the behavior of their false shepherd; wondering: ‘Why would those who do not practice the work of preaching, occupy the place of the true teacher?’

Pope Gregory the great

“But if He remains silent, who can condemn Him? If He hides His face, who can see him?” (Job 34: 29).

Hearing the moaning of the people, and the sighs of the suffering men, God offers comfort or prosperity to the suffering and oppressed poor. Who can then dare to cause them any further trouble? By this, Elihu intends to confirm that everything is under God’s authority; When He hears the voice of the suffering and acts, the wicked with all their possibilities and authority cannot touch them.

“And if He hides His face” This is a Scripture expression that refers to a calamity that is about to dwell; It proclaims that if God hides His face from someone, no one can see him, cares for him, lifts the calamity that has dwelt upon him, or give him peace and comfort.

It is as though, Elihu says to ‘Job’, that in case he returns to God, He will grant him a divine comfort and an inner peace; and no temptations or afflictions of men, can cause him any harm. Whereas if he does not return to God, He will hide His face from him and all the faces of people would not see or give him peace. This principle; namely, that the secret of man’s comfort is in God’s hand, and not in those of men, applies to the people as a whole, as well as to every single individual. In case God justifies us by His love, No one can condemn us; While if he gets offended by us, no

one can give us peace. Let us then enjoy the perfect peace, through concentrating our depths on God, the source of peace; and who brings gladness to the hearts (Proverbs 16: 17; Isaiah 26: 3).

❖ ***“When He gives peace, who can condemn Him; And if He hides His face, Who can see him?” (29)*** ... Here we recall the parable mentioned by the Lord about the owner of the vineyard who hired workers to work in his vineyard. And when he started to pay them their wages, he said to those who objected to his way of doing it: *“Didn’t you agree to work for a dinarius? I want to give to the man who was hired last, the same as I gave you. Do not I have the right to do what I want with my own money?”* (See Mathew 20: 13-15).

Pope Gregory the great

“Yet He is over man and nation alike” (Job 34: 30)

The divine ordinances are applied in the same way on a single individual, a city, a nation, and on the entire human race. God cares for specific persons in the same way he cares for the whole world. He directs His interest toward all, at the same time as though He does not care for individuals. When He cares for a single issue, He, at the same time is present in everything. While he controls the whole world, He is there present with every individual. Actually, He works everything by the power of his nature without moving. It is amazing that while He works on some issue, He is not limited by it.

Pope Gregory the Great

“To keep a godless man from ruling, from laying snares for the people” (Job 34: 30).

All human affairs are in God’s hand, and under His exalted care, in order to keep the wicked from ruling, and from assuming that he has indisputable authority over his brethren; and to keep the godless from laying snares in which people may fall, when they feel that God is no more caring for the oppression dwelling upon them. It is befitting for the leaderships on all levels to realize that, even if they have authority, yet God, the Almighty, is above everyone; according to the words of the Psalmist, saying: *“The scepter of the*

wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then, the righteous might use their hands to do evil” (Psalm 125: 3).

❖ **“Who makes the godless reign because of the people’s sins”** (30). When Israel did not wish for the true King to reign over them, they got a godless man to rein them instead, as befitting to their worthiness. As said by the Truth Himself in the gospel: *“I have come in My Father’s name, and you did not accept Me, But if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him”* (John 5: 43). And Paul says: *“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, so that they will believe the lie, and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth, but have delighted in wickedness”* (2 Thessalonians 2: 10, 11).

By saying: **“Who makes the godless reign because of the people’s sins”**, he probably refers to the **anti-Christ**, the foremost among the godless; as that deceiver by pretence of holiness can draw people to evil.

The anti-Christ reigns on the wicked, not because of the injustice of the Judge, but because of the sin of those committed to bear the punishment. Although most of them do not recognize his authoritative power, yet they submit to him, because of the condition they have reached by their sins. They undoubtedly honor him by their evil life, those who do not recognize his oppression over them. Are they not his members, who seek through showing off holiness, what they actually are not...? According to the words of the Lord, saying: *“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin”* (John 8: 34); as the more they commit sins, they actually covet, through their own will, they bow to serve the anti-Christ, and become in his service.

I wish those who suffer under the reign of such a ruler, do not put the blame on the wicked ruler ... but they should blame their own evil deeds; according to the Scripture: *“In My anger I gave you a king”* (Hosea 13: 10).

Therefore, why should we ridicule those who rule over us; who were given the authority in God's anger? If we get rulers according to our worthiness, we can know from their behavior, what our condition has actually reached.... The features (or the behavior) of the rulers are signified according to the worthiness of those submitted to them. Even those who may start looking good would later on change under the pressure of the circumstances. The Holy Book tells us that King Saul's heart changed with the increase of honor that came with his job; as the prophet Samuel said to him: "*Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel?*" (1 Samuel 15: 17).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The wicked are bitterly sifted like light tares, whereas the righteous will be saved as heavy wheat. Notice what the Lord said to Peter: "*Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail*" (Luke 22: 31). Those who are sifted as tares would perish; whereas those seeds that fall on good soil, will come up and yield a crop, a hundred times more than was sown (Luke 6: 6) ... Evil is like chaff that would soon be consumed and turn into ashes¹.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Here is the medication for your ailment: 'Do not ever be jealous of someone who prospers in his way'. Yes, he prospers, but in his own way.

While you may labor, but in the way of God. On his journey he travels slothfully; But where is heading?

If Christ has promised to give you the goods of this world, you may be right to get offended to see the non-believer enjoy an abundance of goods. You know that a servant could not be better than his master? He has suffered, although He does not deserve it; what do you deserve, sinner²?!

¹ *The Prayer of Job and David, 2: 5: 18.*

² *On Ps. 36: 9.*

❖ *“The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous; for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil”* (Psalm 125: 3). At present, the righteous may suffer to a certain extent; and the wicked may prevail over them. Sometimes the wicked get temporal honors; and become kings and judges, that would be allowed by God to chasten His flock, His people. ... But it also happens that there would be good men of authority who fear God. Jolianus has been an evil and idol-worshipper emperor, who had Christian soldiers in his army ... When that heathen emperor happened to call those Christians to worship his idols, and to burn incense before them, they used to refuse obeying his orders, pointing their fingers toward the true God; But when he ordered them to fight his wars, against this nation or that, , they at once obeyed his orders. They distinguished between their eternal Master and their temporal one. And for the sake of their eternal master, they used to submit to the temporal one. Even if the rod of the wicked remains for some time over the portion of the righteous, Yet this will not last forever. The time will come when the Lord Christ will come in His glory, and gather the nations before Him¹

St. Augustine

4- HOW TO TALK TO GOD:

“Suppose a man says to God, ‘I am guilty, but will offend no more’” (Job 34: 31).

Elihu asks ‘Job’ to return to God, and in the spirit of repentance says to Him: I endured the chastisement, and will sin no more!

Although the end of Elihu’s talk came more violent than those of the three friends; yet it seems that his intention, and his true zeal distinguished him from them; having not borne their envy!

Some translates it as: *‘surely, it is befitting to say to God: I am already disciplined, and will offend no more’*. Elihu is asking ‘Job’ to behave with a spirit of humility before God. It is befitting

¹ On Ps.125.

of man to cross over the boundary of his suffering, to encounter God with the spirit of humility and understanding, and with no murmuring or complaining; realizing that behind the suffering there is a divine plan for his edification, which he should try to recognize.

“I endured”: Some believe that the Hebrew word here means (I repent and will offend no more). By that, suffering would become a way to reconsider one’s ways, and to seek reform by returning to God. Actually ‘Job’ said that to God: (Job 40: 3-5; Micah 7: 9; Leviticus 26: 41).

“Teach me what I cannot see; If I have done wrong, I will not do so again” (Job 34: 32).

Here Elihu presents to us a magnificent portrait of repentance; besides revealing what lies inside his heart toward ‘Job’. He says to him: I know that you are not a hypocrite, as your three friends described you, who covers his sins with deceiving formalities, and hides his deeply hidden evils with the appearances of giving; But, In your life, as it is in that of every believer, there are sins hidden from your eyes, that you involuntarily practice, and yet cannot see or realize; Seek from God to reveal them to you.

God instructs His people (Job 10: 2), presents to them the inner knowledge, even concerning the sins they are not aware of, if they come to him in remorse (Psalm 32: 8; 19: 12; 139: 23-24).

It is befitting of the believer to put in his heart that, if God reveals to him his sins, he would not return to them (Proverbs 28: 13; Ephesians 4: 22).

“Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know” (Job 34: 33).

Because this text came somewhat vague, there is much controversy in its interpretation. Some believe it to mean that God will reward the work of man, whether he likes it or not; He does not act according to man’s point of view, but according to what He sees to be true and of benefit. Man therefore should not expect God to ask for his counsel, or to act according to his views and feelings. It is as though man says to God: ‘Act, O Lord, according to what is

right in Your eyes; It is You who decide, and not me. On my part, I trust Your decisions, and submit to Your plan.

“Men of understanding declare; Wise men who hear me, say to me” (Job 34: 34).

Elihu desires to enter into debate with men of wisdom and understanding; and to find men who listen to him, weigh his words, and evaluate them.

“Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight” (Job 34: 35).

Seeing how ‘Job’ kept silent, Elihu assumed that he, being so solid in his mind, and with such self-esteem, there would be no use of more talking to him; he counted him as a man of no knowledge nor wisdom.

“Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost! For answering like a wicked man” (Job 34: 36).

Elihu wishes for ‘Job’ to get the chance for a just trial; to have his sayings and concepts tested; and to correct what he said In his answers to those of iniquity (his three friends).

“To his sin he added rebellion; Scornfully he claps his hands among us; and multiplies his words against God” (Job 34: 37).

Beside his prior sins, he added a more serious one, during his debate, that of complaining and murmuring against God. If God has allowed for him to be chastised for his sins, he was committed not to protest, even if his friends happened to provoke him with their vain accusations.

“Clapping with the hands”: at that time, was either a sign of admiration, conquest, annoyance, distress, or mockery (Job 27: 23). Here, ‘Job’ is probably doing it in mockery and ridicule of his friends’ concepts. It is as though -- instead of looking at things in a subjective way, a quiet spirit, and a wish to recognize the truth and benefit in them; all what preoccupied him was to ridicule his friends who vainly accused him.

“And multiplies his words against God”: Instead of resorting to God to support him, he went so far, as to refer injustice to God, and kept on doing that.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 34

GRANT ME THE SPIRIT OF DISCERNMENT

- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment, O Wisdom of God.
So as by Your Spirit, I would examine every thought, every word, and every behavior.
To examine every word, that no vain one would come out of my mouth.
To examine what I listen to, that my time would not be vainly corrupted.
To hear Your voice in everything, in Your holy Book, as well as in the beautiful nature.
To hear it in the past, as well as in the present events.
- ❖ By You, I experience the virtue, and enjoy it; By you, I do not stand evil, or debate with it.
The false wisdom of the world, would not deceive me; And the vain winds of philosophy would not move me.
Let me taste Your wisdom and Your care all the day long.
Then my soul would rejoice amid the flames of temptations.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment; so that I would not be deceived by the commendations of men.
Nor be destroyed by their sharp criticism.
Let me, by You, recognize the divine Truth, and let me live it.
Let me hear Your voice in my depths, and in Your church.
Let me enjoy You among Your children.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment, to welcome Your pure word, and hold fast to it.
Let me listen to You through Your ministers, and reject the voice of the deceitful.
Let me by You, become like a clever money-changer; who can distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit money.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment to realize that no one is perfect but You.

By You, I may become blameless and holy.
By You, I desire that the entire world attach to Your
righteousness;
That the entire humanity become perfect and good in You.

- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment, that amid the affliction, and
the bitterness of my soul,
I may not assume that righteousness would no more benefit the
one who has it;
Nor that evil no more harms the one who commits it.
Let me not wonder: Where is Your care for Your believers?
Let me not weigh things by human and temporal measures.
But trust in Your love, care, and justice.
I shall wait; for tomorrow, the secrets of Your wisdom will be
revealed!
- ❖ By Your dwelling in my heart, it would become so spacious to
embrace, by love, every man;
It would become so spacious before tribulations, that all
tribulations would turn to my own good;
I would realize the secret of Your love behind every affliction.
Amid the sufferings, my soul would rejoice by You; and would
always sing the praise of Your righteousness;
My soul would not be disturbed by of the cruelty of the wicked
on me;
And I would not fear that the rod of the wicked would fall on
me.
I will testify to Your righteousness, O You, the Impartial One.
- ❖ I see You have compassion on me, being one of Your children.
You would never forget a cup of cool water, that I may offer in
Your name.
When I see the evil swiftly pass;
My soul rejoices, as I feel Your hands wipe my tears.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment;
To realize Your care for me; Your own creation.

If man cannot endure to see someone submitted to him, gets insulted;

Would You not care for me, Your creation, and the product of Your handiwork?!

If by Your mercy, You created me, O the Almighty, and the amazing Father!

How would You not care for me by Your love?

If by the breath of Your mouth, You gave me life;

How dear would I be to You?

Would You not open Your fatherly bosoms to me?

- ❖ From naught, You created me; I am Your handiwork.
Because You loved me, You created me; and with Your precious blood, you redeemed me for free.
Would You now, let any oppression dwell upon me, O Lover of mankind?!
- ❖ Let my body return to the dust, from which it was created;
But let my Spirit, being a breath of your mouth, return to You?!
When by Your incarnation, You have taken my body for Yourself;
I resumed hope not to perish.
I anticipate the day of my resurrection, when my body will be glorified together with my spirit.
- ❖ If Your Spirit carries me from glory to glory; lifts me up from the trash and ashes; and brings me forth to heaven;
What can the events of the world do to me?!
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment;
To realize how impartial You are;
How You would never take the side of the rich, because of his wealth or authority;
Nor take the side of the multitudes, because of their great number;
Nor take the side of an army, because of its military might;
But You care for every man; as though he is alone on earth.
And You care for all, with no discrimination.

- ❖ Your eyes are on every man, not to destroy him, but to save him.
You are in no need of anybody's testimony;
As everything is revealed before Your eyes.
- ❖ In Your love, You wish that no one would perish;
Yet the wicked persist on forsaking You;
They forsake You, and despise Your commandment;
Evil reigns over their hearts;
Violence became their law;
Their ears became deaf
They no more hear the cries of the oppressed or the poor.
Yet, You still hear the inner sighs of their hearts.
You still lift them up, support them, and glorify them.
- ❖ If no one would dare to insult a prince or king,
Who would dare to condemn Your divine plans?
You, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords!
Your eyes are on the ways of all mankind; You search what are
inside their hearts and minds;
As though nothing preoccupies You but to care for men;
As though Your only desire is for men to be saved, and to come
to Your knowledge.
- ❖ Let the whole world come against me; as long as the Creator
embraces me.
Let the wicked be incited against me with all their energies;
Their spirits will eventually come out, and they will return to
their dusts.
Ridiculing me, they themselves would become a spectacle, an
example, and a ridicule.
Forsaking You with their cruel hearts; they lost their life and
their glory.
- ❖ They ridicule the cries of the poor;
Not knowing that You listen to the sighs of their hearts.
They hide their faces from the oppressed;
Not knowing that You Yourself are watching them.

They look at the poor as though they are no more than burning tares;

Not knowing that You make out of them, gold purified by fire.

- ❖ Grant me the spirit of discernment, to realize the secrets of Your plans.

To learn how to talk to You, and to distinguish between the heavenlies and the earthlies.

And to set forth to You, and enjoy You in me.

- ❖ Finally, Teach me, and Instruct me;

So that, by the spirit of discernment, I can talk to You.

CHAPTER 35

ELIHU'S THIRD TALK THE UN-RECEIVED PRAYER

This is the third talk of Elihu: He addressed his first talk to Job' in particular; the second to his three friends together with him; Then he waited for 'Job' to respond, and when he did not, Elihu talked to deal with the following issues:

1- Elihu thought that 'Job' amid his affliction, had doubts concerning the benefit from walking in righteousness, and abstaining from evil;

As though righteousness does not benefit man, nor does sin cause him harm.

2- Elihu confirms that God is in no need for the goodness of man; and that He would not be harmed in any way by his wickedness.

3- God may allow for some delay of a swift response to our crying out to him in our affliction; in anticipation that our insight would be transferred from the affliction to him personally.

4- We may cry out to God with no response from Him; because, even then, we do not carry the spirit of humility and submission, but that of murmur and protest.

1- Elihu's assumption that 'Job' thinks that he is more righteous than God **1 – 2**

2- Will righteousness bring no profit? And will wickedness cause no harm? **3 – 6**

3- God is in no need for our righteousness **7 – 9**

4- Let us cry out to God at the time of our affliction **10 – 11**

5- Let us cry out to God with humility and with no grumbling **12 - 16**

1- ELIHU'S ASSUMPTION THAT 'JOB' THINKS THAT HE IS MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN GOD:

“Do you think this is right? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s?’” (Job 35: 1).

‘Job’ never, in any way, uttered that blasphemy. Elihu might probably assumed that, from Job’s talk about his faithfulness and his upright life; and that he did not commit any crime that makes him worthy of those calamities (See Job 9: 17, 30-35; 10: 13-15; 16: 12-17; 34: 18-19). He probably interpreted from this, that Job thinks that his righteousness is more than God’s.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Elihu misunderstood what is in Job’s mind, and what lie behind his words. He misunderstood Job’s attempts to justify himself before God, as a claim that he is more righteous than God. The true fact is that Job, failing to realize that his temptations were meant to justify him more and more, to earn greater glories; and are not meant as punishment on his sins; Wonders, saying: What are the sins that warrant such calamities to dwell on me?! They are more wondering than justification for him!

❖ ***“Do you think this is right? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s?’” (2).*** the blessed ‘Job’ did not say that he is more righteous than God; But says: ‘If I am brought to trial, I would certainly be acquitted by my judge’ (See 23: 7).

By a study of Job’s life and the causes of his strikes, we may also come to the conclusion that, because he believed that his scourges were meant to take away his sins, and not to increase his worthiness; he was positive that his trial would end up in acquitting him, on account that there is nothing that would warrant such calamities to dwell upon him. In truth, the Lord Himself said about him to Satan: *“You incited me against him without cause”* (2: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great

What ‘Job’ did, before the law, have been done, and still is, by many, even in the era of grace. Namely, wondering: ‘Why would God allow such afflictions to dwell on His saints?!’ Many fathers of the church have asked such a question. For instance, we may mention the sixth debate of St. John Cassian with Father Theodore, (that we have already published); of which we may quote:

❖ Some wonder: Why would those men of great worthiness and virtues is slaughtered by such robbers?! Why would God allow these crimes to happen against His servants, to fall into the hands of those evil men?!

Amid our grief, we came to St. Theodore, who was prominent in the grace of discernment. This father was dwelling in the region of ‘Calle’, between ‘Netria’ and ‘Escat’ (5 miles from Netria, and 8 miles from Escat, where we were dwelling). Approaching him with our distress, wondering how God, with His great longsuffering, would allow for that to happen to His ministers, who because of their holiness would have kept others from such temptations¹!?

Father Theodore

In an introduction to his essay on: “*No one can harm someone else, unless the later harms himself*”, **St. John Chrysostom** wrote:

[As it is impossible to count the waves of the sea, It would be likewise impossible to count those who fall victims to evil plots, insults, and such sufferings. It would be impossible, whether by amending the laws, by issuing harsher verdicts, or by any other similar ways, to put an end to this current pestilence and disturbance, that increase on a daily scale, to such extent that the sighs, mourning, and wailings of people became a collective familiar practice!

And there are those who hold fast to a new kind of folly, by accusing **the care of God**; when they often see a worthy man, captivated under violence, and cruelly stricken and insulted, by someone insolent, mean, and worthless; everywhere in the city or in the desert; on land, as well as in the sea!.

I have written this essay in an attempt to correct their claims, and to prove that **any man who sins, would only be doing on his own accord, and is not provoked to sin by anybody else]**

¹ *St. John Cassian: Conferences, 6:1.*

2- WILL RIGHTEOUSNESS BRING NO PROFIT; AND WILL EVIL BRING NO HARM?

“For you say: ‘What advantage would it be to me? What profit shall I have, more than if I have sinned?’” (Job 35: 3).

Some believe that ‘Job’ was so talking to himself; While others believe that he was as though saying to God: ‘My righteousness does profit You or me!’

Elihu probably quoted this from (Job 9: 30-31; 10: 15); that also came in (Psalm 73: 13).

Although ‘Job’ did not say that in a direct way, but he meant that, he expected that his upright behavior in life should have saved him of the dwelling of such calamities. Yet that behavior brought him no profit to him! (See Job 19: 28).

St. John Chrysostom made it clear that nothing would harm man but his evil doing; and nothing would bring him profit but his upright life.

❖ What then, is the significance of man’s goodness? It does not lie in riches, that he would fear poverty; Nor in bodily health, that he would fear illness; Nor in how people see you, that he would be keen on pleasing them; Nor even in the life in this world, that he would be terrified of death; ... Man’s goodness rather lie in his abidance to true teachings, and in his uprightness in life; Something that no one, even Satan himself, can take away from him, as long as he properly holds fast to it.

Because that for sure, is known by the meanest and the strongest of devils; Satan deprived ‘Job’ of his material possessions; Took away his children, Tortured his body, and tore his flesh apart, in a way, even the fiercest gladiator cannot do, like the worms that devoured it; Corrupted his reputation, that his closest friends were convinced, that this was what he deserved for the numerous sins they accused him of committing; He finally chased him out of his city, not to another one; and from his house, to have a heap of trash as his dwelling place. ... All that Satan did

to break down Job's goodness of soul; and to commit him to utter a single word of blasphemy against God.

But all that did not harm 'Job'; On the contrary, he was more glorified, at the expense of those plots poured on his head by Satan, who, although has taken much from him, yet he could not take anything away from his goodness; but incited him to grow in it more and more. 'Job' he ended up enjoying more trust from God, as much as he fought against such a fierce enemy.

Now, if such calamities, done, not by the hands of man, but by those of Satan, who is more fierce than all men together; did no harm to the blessed 'Job'; How can you claim that you are harmed or destroyed by some man?!

If Satan with all his might, after pouring out all the evil tricks he has in his bag, and using all his weapons, against someone of such righteousness, and such exalted family status; has not caused him any true harm, but rather brought him profit, ... How can anyone claim that someone could carry in his hands, what would bring harm to someone else, and not to himself¹?!

St. John Chrysostom

"I will answer you and your companions with you" (Job 35: 4).

Elihu says to them: I will reveal to you all, the evil caused by the wrong way of sin; and the blessings caused by righteousness. I shall bring on, what your friends have not, in their debate with you.

"Look to the heavens and see; And behold the clouds which are higher than you" (Job 35: 5).

Here, Elihu starts to reveal to 'Job', that he cannot realize the wisdom of God; as testified by the high heavens. As though he is asking him: 'If you cannot soar up to heaven and reach the clouds; God, the Creator of all, is greater and higher than heaven and the clouds!

Just like Eliphaz, Elihu reveals that God exalts above nature, which, in turn, exalts above the thoughts of man.

¹ لا يستطيع أحد أن يؤذي إنساناً ما لم يؤذِ هذا الإنسان ذاته.

Who cannot look with his eyes to heaven, and realize its secrets; how could he reach with his mind to God's throne, and realize the secrets of His plan?

"Most of God's works are concealed; who is to announce his acts of justice? Or who can await them? For His decree is far off" (Sirach 16: 22).

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Romans 11: 33).

"For as heavens are higher than earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55: 9).

❖ We are always committed to honor the works of our creator without reservation; as they would never be unjust.

Searching for a cause for God's hidden counsel, is counted as an opposition by man against His counsel, in pride.

Being unable to discover the motives for God's works, we should keep silent in humility, submitting to His works; As our carnal senses are not up to a level by which they can get through the secrets of his majesty.

To that, the apostle Paul adds: *"Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'"* (Romans 9: 20).

Pope Gregory the great

Here Elihu talks about the exalted nature of God. Man's righteousness or his evil, neither benefit God nor cause him any harm; although they may have their effect on human life;

"If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?" (Job 35: 6).

He would not be harmed by your practice of sin, even if you multiply it several times (Jeremiah 7: 19; Proverbs 8: 36).

❖ Although should not be addressed to the blessed 'Job' who knows greater facts; Yet they are true. Our sins would not cause God any harm; nor would our good works bring Him any profit.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- GOD IS IN NO NEED FOR OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:

“If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hands?” (Job 35: 7).

You have nothing that God needs you to give Him (Psalm 16: 2; Proverbs 9: 12; Luke 17: 10).

“Your wickedness affects a man such as you, And your righteousness a son of man” (Job 35: 8).

Your wickedness would harm you as human, but would never harm God; as your wickedness isolate you from God, the source of happiness. You, being human, may harm yourself by your evil, and may harm other humans; and you, being a son of man, may benefit yourself and others by your righteousness.

- ❖ Man’s evil would harm him, who would be corrupted by vanity. Again, our righteousness would benefit him, who turns from his evil.
- ❖ By bringing sorrow on the righteous, the wicked liberate them from the lusts of this world ... While gathering fierce deeds over them here, they rather push them further more toward heaven...; That is why the wicked are allowed by God to harm the righteous; for the latter to covet the good things to come, and to endure the present evils, however horrible they are.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ What then?! Will he, who is subjected to defamation, robbery, deprivation of possessions, expulsion from inheritance, and struggle in poverty; be considered as not being harmed?!

No, He would rather be considered as getting benefit, if he is prudent! As, Have these things caused the apostles any harm? Haven’t they strove against hunger, thirst, and nakedness?! Haven’t they, because of them, become glorified, famous, and got for themselves more favor with the Lord?!

❖ I do not say that no one could harm another; But I would say that no one is harmed by another. Now how could this be possible?!

Despite the intention of Joseph's brothers to harm him; Yet Joseph himself was not harmed by them.

Although Cain has cast his net on his brother Abel; Yet Abel did not fall in it.

That is why chastisements and punishments were established.

God would not lift up the punishment from someone who plans to harm another, on account of the probable profit that would come to the one who endures it; But his punishment would be more confirmed on the one guilty of iniquity. Despite the fact that those on whom evil falls, would become more glorified, at the expense of the evil plotted against them; Yet, this was not intended by the one who planned it; but it was because of the courage of their victims. That is why the crown of wisdom is set for the latter, while the punishment is set for the former!

In case your possessions are taken away, remember these words uttered by 'Job': "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there*" (Job 1: 22); and add to them those of the apostle Paul: "*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*" (1 Timothy 6; 7).

In case your reputation is defamed, and you are reviled by limitless and false accusations, you will certainly be comforted to remember these words, said by the Savior Himself: "*Woe to you when all men speak well of you*" (Luke 6: 26); And, "*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you*" (Matthew 5: 11).

In case you are taken into captivity, remember that here, you have no place; But if you are wise, you should look at the present world as a land of sojourn.

In case you are inflicted by serious ailment, quote the words of the apostle: "*We should not lose heart, Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

In case someone confronts a violent death; Let him remember how John the Baptist was beheaded in prison, and his head was given as a reward to a harlot dancer.

Just meditate in the reward you will gain at the expense of these sufferings; Remember that, unjust persecutions of someone over another would cause his sins and iniquity to be taken away. Therefore, great is the benefit of these troubles for those who endure them with courage¹!

St. John Chrysostom

“Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty” (Job 35: 9).

Even if evil does God no harm; Yet it harms men. Those oppressed, cry out loud for help because of the multitude of oppression by those of authority, who press with their mighty arms on them; But there is no one to calm down their souls, because, although they cry out, yet they do not resort to God!

It is difficult to connect between this phrase and the previous talk; But it seems that Elihu is dealing with a public issue that prevailed in the society, to which ‘Job’ himself referred (24: 12); namely, believing that God does not intervene, fast enough, to rescue the helpless poor from the hands of their cruel persecutors. Because ‘Job’ counted this issue as touching him personally, as his friends almost crushed him under their feet; Elihu looked at it as an insult directed to the care and love of the Almighty God; and found himself committed to present an explanation for it.

Elihu proclaims that the secret of God’s sometimes no-response or delayed response to prayers, is that he who prays does not care for enjoying God, but only for getting benefit from Him. His prayer is not a true one, aiming to enjoy the light of the divine presence; but is rather a natural scream out of pain, like that of a beast or a bird fallen into a trap (10-11); Our prayers to be saved from the wicked are empty ones (12-13).

¹ لا يستطيع أحد أن يؤذي إنساناً ما لم يؤذِ هذا الإنسان ذاته.

When man cries out in his affliction, he assumes that God does not listen; Yet He actually does listen, but will not respond **because of the pride or lies of the one who prays.**

❖ We can indeed call the wicked as “*oppressors*”; Not only those who corrupt our outer goods; but also those by whose evil example of corrupt life, our inner treasures are scattered; those who seek to devour us from within.

He, who attacks our virtues by his evil behavior, is a more dangerous oppressor than the one who causes harm to our goods. Although he may take away nothing of our possessions, yet he poses before us a destructive example, and disturbs our peaceful hearts by temptation. Even if he does not commit us to fight against his evil behavior; Yet, through his life, we suffer strong injustice; we suffer inside from things, difficult to overcome.

It is well said: “*Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty*” (9)... As he who wishes to terrify us, to push us to sin, may stir up the mighty arm of a tyrant against us.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- LET US CRY OUT TO GOD AT THE TIME OF OUR AFFLICTION:

“*But no one says: Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?*” (Job 35: 10).

The secret of this problem; namely, the non-intervention of God to rescue the poor from the hands of their oppressors, is that they do not resort to God, but to complain and murmur against God, and to lean upon human arms. Elihu says that no one of those who are under the feet of cruel oppressors, cries out saying: “Where is my God, who created me, to transform the night of tribulations, to a joyful feast, and to a song that fills my heart with joy?”.

God is ready to intervene, yet He would not force Himself, but waits for those oppressed to call Him, to grant them His divine comforts, and to destroy the nets set for them (See Acts (See Acts 16: 25; Psalm 126: 1-2).

The 'night' in the Holy Book sometimes refers to sin, and other times to the afflictions and tribulations, that turn man's life into a fearsome dark night.

The Septuagint version came as: "***Who sets the watchmen of the night***"; namely, who sends His angels during the night of tribulations to rescue those who resort to Him.

Whoever resorts to Him in his joy, as well as in his afflictions, would enjoy the true peace in daytime, as well as at night; and his life would turn into a joyful symphony, and a perpetual praise.

"Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven" (Job 35: 11) .

Elihu is grieved to see the extent of what the rational man has reached, through disregarding His Creator, the Grantor of understanding and wisdom, who can save to perfection. Foolishly rejecting God's teaching and guidance, he became less wise than the beasts of the earth, and the birds of heaven.

God says on the tongue of Isaiah: "*The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider*" (Isaiah 1: 3). The beasts of the earth, the birds, and sometimes even the fish, know, and give thanks to the hand that stretches to feed them; whereas the rational human, who got more from his Creator, does not care to acknowledge the compassionate hands stretched towards him.

The Holy Book calls us to learn even from the ant, which acts sometimes with more wisdom than the rational man with his exalted capabilities.

Our enemy intends to draw us to temporal pleasures and to enslave us to carnal lusts; and in case we do not respond to him, and seek instead, the true knowledge, he strikes our hearts with pride. That is why the Psalmist confirms the need for understanding and the wisdom, together with humility; saying: "*A man who has riches without understanding, is like the beasts that perish*" (Psalm 49: 20); And on another aspect, the apostle says: "*Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish*

hearts were darkened; ... Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” (Romans 1: 21, 24).

- ❖ The beasts of the earth refer to those who seek the lowly things through carnal life; whereas the birds of heaven refer to those who zealously seek the higher things.

Pope Gregory the Great

5- LET US CRY OUT IN HUMILITY AND WITH NO GRUMBLING:

“There they cry out, but He does not answer, because of the pride of evildoers” (Job 35: 12).

Unfortunately, when those inflicted with calamities, cry out, God does not respond to them, because they cry out, not with the spirit of humility, but complain and grumble in evil pride.

Here he presents to us another reason, why God does not respond to them: The first, as we saw, is that they do not cry out to Him; And the second is, if they do, it would be with complaint and grumbling. He will not listen to them until humility dwells in their hearts instead of pride, and until they present the prayers of remorse and repentance (Psalm 10: 14; Jeremiah 13: 17).

- ❖ It sometimes happens that when they fall into temptation, they expect heaven to grant them comfort, even during their lifetime; and wish for salvation, not for their own sake, as much as for that of their opponents. They want God the Almighty, to save them from the dangers surrounding them by some kind of miracle, to proclaim his might even to their oppressors. They covet that God would eternally save their opponents, by the same way He saves His own people in this world; according to the words of the prophet, on the tongue of the martyrs: *“Deliver me because of my enemies”* (Psalm 69: 18). As though he says: ‘It is not for my own sake that I seek to be delivered of the temporal temptation; But I seek deliverance for the sake of my opponents’.

Pope Gregory the great

❖ There are certain conditions for a prayer to be answered; of which are:

That our request would be according to the will of God (Matthew 26: 39); ... should do it with persistence (Luke 11: 8); ... and should take into consideration to mend our behavior before asking (Isaiah 1: 15).

That we have to feel our unworthiness for what we seek (1 Chronicles 17: 4); or the unworthiness of those, for whose sake we pray (Jeremiah 14: 11).

That sometimes no response would be better for us than a response (2 Corinthians 7: 12)... **If all conditions are fulfilled, God, no doubt, will respond to our prayers¹.**

St. Basil the Great

“Surely God will not listen to empty talk, nor will the Almighty regard it” (Job 35: 13).

Surely God will not listen to vain supplications, or to denying unthankful hearts. Where there are no faithfulness, faith, or thanksgiving, prayers will not rise up to God; according to the words of the prophet: *“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil; and cannot look on wickedness”* (Habakkuk 1: 13).

“Although you say that you do not see Him; yet your case is before Him, and you must wait Him” (Job 35: 14).

Here Elihu probably refers to a remark said by ‘Job’ (23: 8), in which he says that he could not approach God, to have a chance to present his case before Him; He went east, West, North, and South, and could not see Him. Here, Elihu clarifies to him that, although God is unseen, yet, that does not mean He does not care for mankind; nor that we should not love and trust in Him. Because God cares for mankind, does justice and righteousness, and everything is revealed before His eyes; it is befitting of us to wait in patience; As He will certainly ordain in His proper time.

“And now, because He has not punished in His anger, nor taken much notice of folly,” (Job 35: 15).

¹ Reg. Brev. 261.

Some believe that the meaning here, is that the calamities that dwell on man, are nothing compared to the punishment that he actually deserve. If God visits us with His anger, through the chastisements allowed by Him, They are actually very light, if compared to the transgressions we commit.

“Nor taken much notice of the multitudes of follies”. Here the talk is about God who does not take into account all the transgressions that we do; as though He compassionately disregard them or take no notice of them; in an attempt not to chastise us with a heavier hand; even if we think those chastisements to be extremely cruel.

- ❖ God, in applying His anger, is longsuffering to a great extent; keeping it to be poured later with no limit. Suffering here is the portion of the chosen, to prepare them for the heavenly reward; receiving the scourges here, would keep the eternal joy for them.

St. Gregory the Great

- ❖ While under the scourges, have a good cheer; because the inheritance is kept for you. ... He does not expel His own; ... He chastens for sometime, but will not condemn forever¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ I would prefer that God would visit my sins, and corrects my transgressions, here in this world; so that Abraham would say to me there, what he said about Lazarus in his talk to the rich man: *“Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented”* (Luke 16: 25). Therefore, when the Lord rebukes and chastens us, we should not be offended or grieved; We should put in mind that it would be in order to give us comfort later on; according to the words of the apostle: *“When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world”* (1 Corinthians 11: 32). That is why ‘Job’, willingly received all his sufferings,

¹ On Ps. 94 (93).

saying: “*Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?*” (Job 2: 10)¹.

The scholar Origen

“So job opens his mouth with empty talk; without knowledge he multiplies words” (Job 35: 16).

Elihu arrived to this conclusion, that ‘Job’ opened his mouth and cried out; but in his murmur, his words and cries were counted empty and with no understanding. According to Elihu, Job’s complaint, having carried vain accusations against the ordinances of God, are nonsense, and with no value, understanding or knowledge.

¹ On Exodus, homily 8.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 35

WHY IS YOUR HAND HEAVY ON ME?

- ❖ In my human weakness, I often wonder:
Why is Your hand heavy on me?
Why would You allow for affliction to dwell on Your believers?
Why would You allow for the wicked to overcome and rejoice?
- ❖ You answered me, O You whole in love, in the language of action and not in that of mere debate:
That in my name, and to my account, You entered into the garden of Gethsemane.
And that there, You, the Almighty, *“began to be troubled and deeply distressed”*.
In my place, You said: *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death”*
You fell on the ground, You, before whom all the heavenly hosts worship.
You said to God Your Father: *“Abba father, all things are possible for You
Take this cup away from me;
Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will”* (Mark 14: 36).
- ❖ Let me abide to You; to utter what You uttered, and to seek what You sought.
Let me carry Your thought in me.
That I, together with You, accept even the reproach of the cross.
Let me accompany You, along the way to Golgotha, so that my soul finds peace.
- ❖ What do you seek from me amid the furnace of affliction?
Do you seek to behold my face, and hear my voice?
I confess to You that I have turned my face to the world!
I hope Your Holy Spirit would bring it back, to look at You.
I have turned by debate to men.
Assuming that they are capable of saving me.

I forgot that their souls would eventually come out, and their bodies return to their dust.

Let me cry out to You; O my Stronghold.

Although the anguish is all around me, Yet it cannot infiltrate into my soul.

On the outside, there is bitterness and distress; but in the inside, there is rejoice in You, O Heavenly One.

- ❖ In humility You cried out, O the only-begotten Son.
Although You are One in essence with Your Father;
And Your will is His will;
You delivered Your will to Him, so that His will would work in you.
Grant me the spirit of humility, that my heart would cry out to You.
Let *“Thine will be on earth, as it is in heaven”*.
- ❖ Welcome to anguish, as long as it is allowed by You.
Let me experience the fellowship of suffering and crucifixion together with You.
Let me taste the turning of my face toward You.
When I see You, I rejoice; and no force can separate me from You.
I cry out to You from my depths.
Seeking that Your will works in me.
Glory is to You, O the amazing in His goodness!
O, the one whole in wisdom in Your plans toward me!

CHAPTER 36

ELIHU'S FOURTH TALK ELIHU GLORIFIES GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS APPEARANCE

In his previous talks, Elihu rebuked 'Job' on his unbecoming way in debating his three friends. Having nothing to answer him, 'Job' kept silent. Now Elihu speaks in a general way to clarify to 'Job' the correct concepts concerning the dealing with God; and that the Almighty will never stop realizing justice to mankind (2-6). He will perpetually work to edify the righteous; and if He sometimes chastens them, he does it with love. In case they submit to His fatherly chastisements, they would enjoy His goodness; whereas if they murmur, rebel, and refuse to submit to Him, they would be humiliated, and would become the object of His wrath (7-16).

As far as 'Job' is concerned, If he accepts God's chastisement, he would return to his past status; Whereas his opposition to them, would turn him into an example for God's justice on His opponents (17-18). So Elihu warns 'Job', lest the Lord would cut him off; and in that case, no riches, nor power, can redeem him (18-26). God, the Almighty, and whole wisdom, no one can oppose Him; nor get away from His hands; ... Before God, the whole pure, the sun would appear very pale, like a humble ray before a great bright star; ... His holiness becomes apparent in His hate of iniquity; and His goodness in His fulfillment of the needs of His creation.

1- An introduction	1 – 4
2- The ways by which God deals with His children	5 - 15

3- A good counsel to ‘Job’	16 – 21
4- God teaches, but commits no one to receive His teachings	22 – 23
5- How great are God’s works!	24 – 26
6- The whirlwind and the rain	27 – 31
7- A song to praise the mighty wisdom of God	23 – 33

1- AN INTRODUCTION:

Elihu’s description of God’s might in the whirlwind directly precede His coming and His talk to ‘Job’.

The whirlwind and the rain are God’s (agents) for judgment and blessing (31)

“Elihu also proceeded and said: ‘Bear with me a little And I will show you, that there are yet words to speak on God’s behalf’” (Job 36: 1, 2).

Here, Elihu asks ‘Job’ to be longsuffering with him, and to listen to him; as he still has other proofs concerning God’s justice and care.

“I will fetch my knowledge from afar. I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker” (Job 36: 3).

Elihu proclaims that he bears his knowledge as enduring inscription; that he fetches from afar; namely from the mighty works of God. While he ascribes righteousness to God; According to him, ‘Job’ ascribed injustice to Him (Job 34: 10-12).

He is as though saying to ‘Job’: What I say to you is not public knowledge; but is the fruit of research and a deep apprehension of the exalted works of God, not known to many. He probably means that he has acquired his knowledge, as a special gift from God.

“Be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you” (Job 36: 4).

He confirms to him that his talk is not vain like that of the other three friends; but he utters the truth; and has perfect knowledge.

God does not despise anyone serious, but glorifies the righteous; and even if they fall under troubles; He would reveal

their sins to them, and would reform their ways if they repent; But would allow for their perdition, if they do not (5-12); God allows for the suffering, in order to teach and instruct (15).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Elihu commends himself, the way the apostle Paul did, in an attempt to confirm that he is providing great facts; which 'Job' would later on realize.

- ❖ Even the righteous, sometimes tend to commend what they say, when they notice that their weak listeners, fail to grasp the significance of their words; Not that they are enjoying their commendation, but they have to do it in order to flare the desire of their listeners to be more attentive.... Hence the words the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, after speaking of many amazing things: *“O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open”* (2 Corinthians 6: 11).

Pope Gregory the Great

2- THE WAYS BY WHICH GOD DEALS WITH HIS CHILDREN:

“Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one. He is mighty in strength of understanding” (Job 36: 5).

God is mighty, as far as His power and wisdom are concerned; Yet, He despises no one, whatever his status is; He seeks all, cares for all, brings justice to all, and would never leave anyone oppressed. Here, Elihu repeats what 'Job', himself has already said (Job 35: 14).

The Almighty Lord Christ, while supporting the weak, providing them with strength, He would never despise the strong, being Himself mighty; Yet, if he casts away those who seek self-glory, it would be to grant them the grace of humility, to gain from the abundance of His strength and might, then praise Him and say: *“For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation”* (Isaiah 12: 2).

The Almighty God desires to see in His children, the spirit of leadership and might; and would never despise those of strong authority. Being aware of that, the humble apostle Paul says to the

Corinthians with confidence: “*Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*” (1 Corinthians 4: 21).

- ❖ The leader (the ruler) intends indeed to follow the lead of the Lord, if he practices his exalted authority for the sake of the benefit of his subjects.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but gives justice to the oppressed” (Job 36: 6).

The wicked assume that they live by taking the rights of others by force, by enjoying pleasures, and by despising the righteous; Yet they are actually deceiving themselves; as the eternal perdition will certainly come to dwell upon them. The humble righteous, on the other hand, even if their life looks bitter in their anguish, Yet they will eventually enjoy the divine justice.

By the ‘oppressed’ here, he means the poor and the weak, who think that they have no one to support or to defend them against the rich and those of authority; Yet God Himself will provide them with justice, and give them back their rights.

- ❖ *“He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but gives justice to the oppressed”* (6). The Holy Book mostly tends to refer to the humble as “the poor”, often with the addition of the words “*in spirit*”; saying: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5: 3). God destroys the proud, and by His justice, He sets the humble free; namely, “*He gives justice to the poor*”, who are oppressed in an evil way now; But will later on come as judges over their oppressors.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; But with kings on the throne He sets them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36: 7).

God’s eyes would never be withdraw from the righteous; whether they are rich or poor, in high or low positions; ... they are like a precious treasure in his eyes. He may allow for them to go through temptations, yet He would never forget them, nor disregard them. Those whom the world look at now as despised and without

honor; Together with granting them authority here in this world, God will count them as kings, and will forever hold them fast in an exalted heavenly peace.

“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous” (1 Peter 3: 12); *“makes them inherit the throne of glory”* (1 Samuel 2: 8; Psalm 113: 7, 8); *“They greatly rejoice, though now for a little while”* (1 Peter 2: 9; 1: 6); Yet, they will enjoy a complete honor in the age to come (Revelation 5: 10).

- ❖ Sometimes it may seem as though God withdraws His eyes from the righteous, when He allows for them to be wounded by the oppression of the wicked; and when He delays in avenging them. Yet, His eyes would never forsake His servants, while they suffer; and seeing how they endure with humility, the injustice of their persecutors, He is considering the reward He would grant them there.

When you notice how how one moans in his humility, and how the other haughtily boasts and prospers in his wickedness; from whom of the two, do you think, God’s eyes will withdraw: From the one applying the oppression, or from him, on whom the oppression dwells?

The saints in the language of the Holy Book, are rightly called ‘kings’; when they soar high above carnal emotions; alleviate and bow down the heat and the haughtiness of the pride of greed; crush the evil suggestions of the body; control the pleasures and quench the fire of lust.

They are kings, when they learn how not to surrender to the erroneous reactions to temptations; by receiving them in good spirit, and even have control over them.

They would forever be granted to sit on the throne of the eternal glory, and would even get the authority to judge others; ... according to the words of the lord to the church of the Laodicians: *“To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”* (Revelation 3: 21).

It is not contradictory to proclaim in another location, that His disciples will sit on twelve thrones (Matthew 19; 28). By the twelve thrones, He refers to the general judgment; while by the throne of the Son, to the special exaltation of the judicial authority.

Pope Gregory the Great

“And if they are bound in fetters, held in the cords of affliction...” (Job 36: 8).

Elihu says that the righteous, even if they are cast in prison; are subjected to trials and cruel afflictions; are bound in fetters; are cast on beds of torture; and are crushed by heavy calamities; God’s eyes shall always stay on them. Here, Elihu corrects the wrong concepts of Job’s friends, that what dwell upon them are to be seen as a proof that they are hypocrites; or that God does not care for them. God’s wise plan concerning the chastisement of mankind would always end up in the happiness of those who accept it, and in their glorification in the proper time.

- ❖ The fetters of servitude refer to being chained in the present journey of this life; concerning which the apostle Paul says: *“I have the desire to depart and be with Christ”* (Philippians 1: 23). Realizing that he was bound by the fetters of poverty, looking forward to the true riches, and seeking them as well for his disciples, he says to them: *“... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* (Ephesians 1: 18)... When we learn through an abundance of love, about the heavenly glory, we would feel more the weight of committing sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Then He tells them their work and their transgressions – that they have acted defiantly” (Job 36: 9).

By sending to them messengers and prophets, or through their quiet meditations, and rethinking of their status (33: 27); or by the work of the Holy Spirit in them, He revealed to them their evil life and works, (Job 33: 23)

The goal of their grieves and afflictions – according to Elihu – is to help them find a chance to reconsider their life, and mend their ways.

He reveals to them as well, how their transgressions have become huge and dangerous. And because they thought of themselves as great and strong, instead of leaning upon the living God; He would not support them in their afflictions.

“He also opens their ear to instruction, and commands that they turn from iniquity” (Job 36: 10).

By saying *“opens their ears”* He means that He gives them understanding, teaches them, or grants them the desire to learn, in order to realize the reason behind their chastisement; And He commands that they turn from those iniquities that made Him visit them with grieves and afflictions.

“If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures” (Job 36: 11).

In case they listen to His voice as is befitting, their afflictions produce repentance on their sins, and they seek the mercies of God and serve Him; they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their life will be filled with pleasure. This clearly shows that the goal of the afflictions is not to destroy them, as much as it is to make them return to God, to enjoy the true happiness of His blessings and mercies.

Here Elihu is demands from ‘Job’ not to concentrate on his friend’s accusations, that almost destroyed his state of mind; And at the same time, he asks him not to think of God as cruel and fierce; and not to justify himself before God; But to seek repentance, in order to enjoy the happiness that he has lost.

❖ By *“prosperity”* he probably means (the upright behavior); And by *“pleasures”* the (heavenly reward of glory). Namely, that those who learn to obey the divine commandments will spend their days in prosperity, and their years in glory.

Pope Gregory the Great

“But if they do not obey, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge” (Job 36: 12).

Whereas if man gets arrogant, and rebels against God, because of the affliction He brought on him, he would be stricken by the sword; and would die, not because of the afflictions, but rather because of his foolishness and lack of knowledge.

Protesting against the afflictions, instead of repenting, would not lift them up from him, but would make them rather heavier, and would probably lead to his destruction. God would not withdraw His hand that seems heavy with the temptations, until man returns to Him, and stops murmuring and complaining.

God usually starts by lighter chastisements, to lift them up if they produce repentance; But if man's heart gets harder, and protests and complains against God, the temptation would become heavier and greater, until he comes to realize his weakness, and wisely returns to God.

There are some who, even sufferings would not make them forsake their nasty habits; about whom the prophet says: "*You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction*" (Jeremiah 5: 3); And, "*I will destroy My people, since they do not return from their ways*" (Jeremiah 15: 7); And, symbolized by Babylon, he says about them: "*We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed*" (Jeremiah 51: 9); Those, when suffering dwells upon them, as they either become more arrogant, or even rush to blasphemy against God, they would end up to a worse condition.

Pope Gregory the Great

"But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; they do not cry for help when He binds them" (Job 36: 13).

Elihu calls those protesting against God, as the godless hypocrites in heart; namely, the wicked, who Instead of lifting up their hearts in repentance, they gather more of God's wrath for themselves. And although God in His love allows for binding them with afflictions, to make them cry out to Him with a spirit of humility; they instead, in their arrogance, do not resort to him, nor humiliate themselves before Him.

Through afflictions, God calls them to receive His friendship, to recognize His secrets, and to enter with Him into a

befitting debate; but those who remain on their haughtiness, would get themselves into animosity with God, and bring perdition upon themselves.

By the '*hypocrites in heart*' here, he means those wicked people who practice evil in a challenge against God, and who, in obvious arrogance, treasure up for themselves the wrath of God (Romans 2: 5).

Some, like 'Umbreit', believe that by 'wrath' here, is not meant the 'wrath of God'; but that the hypocrites gather the wrath against God; and instead of crying out to Him, they rebel publicly against Him.

Speaking here about the hypocrites; by their hypocrisy, they not only deserve to fall under the wrath of God who hates evil; But by their attempt to hide behind a curtain of self-righteousness, and through false pretence that they are righteous; ... And as they are practicing evil through knowledge, and adding deceit to evil, which is a feature of the deceitful devil; They arouse the wrath of God; Such hypocrites fall under chastisements, in the hope that they may return from their wickedness. Yet, as they mostly do not care for the chastisements, however severe they may be; and do not even care for the eternal punishment; They do not cry out to God to return to Him, nor forsake their hypocrisy; They are only preoccupied with making sure that people keep on looking at them as righteous!

We can classify people in general into three categories:

1- The wicked, who persist on their wickedness, and are never ashamed to be as such; whatever are the chastisements that may dwell upon them.

2- The hypocrites, who, being only preoccupied with how other people look at them; they hide their wickedness, and would never confess them, even while under chastisements.

3- The true believers, who readily confess that they are sinners, believe in God, the Forgiver of sins. Chastisement to these people, motivates them to spiritual growth, which is the down payment of eternal glory.

❖ **“The hypocrites and the deceitful provoke the wrath of God” (13).** A hypocrite is always preoccupied with watching two points: To learn how to hide his true nature; and to demonstrate what he is not; ... To suppress his true faults, and to show off his false goodness ... Referring to the hypocrites and the deceitful, he, with great delicacy adds, not that they are just worthy of God’s wrath, but they even provoke it. Because he, who sins in ignorance is worthy of God’s wrath; While he, who intentionally opposes God’s commandments; being aware of, but does not care for what is good, despite his ability to do it; this man provokes God’s wrath!

“They do not cry for help when they are bound” (13). The wicked who, when he is under severe chastisement, does not seek to appear holy; will not feel shame to confess that he is wicked. Whereas that wicked hypocrite, who is preoccupied with the way other people look at him; Even when under the rod of chastisement, he persists on concealing his wickedness, because he is used to appear holy. ...

We, as true believers, when we are **“bound”**, and under the strikes of the rod of chastisement, we cry loudly, confessing our sins. Whereas the hypocrites, on the other hand, the strokes of chastisement, do not provoke them to an honest confession; because they fear to become exposed as sinners in the eyes of other people. Being stricken here to no end, and despite their realization that they are heading to an eternal punishment, they still wish to remain as they are, in the eyes of other people.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ There are people who see the thief **“hypocrisy”** carrying away everything they possess, under their own eyes, and still rejoice! What a new and a strange kind of robbery¹!
- ❖ There are those who offer their elms before people’s eyes, but avoid show it off. And those who may not offer them before the people’s eyes, but yet boast about them in secret. God does not

¹ *In Acts, hom., 5.*

reward for elms according to whether they are given before the people's eyes or not; but according to the true intention of their giver¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ There are those who are used to walk clothed in honorable attire, in order to get great honor and respect because of it; and do the same in many things for the sake of temporal glory.

Father Theophlactius

“They die in youth, and their life ends among the perverted persons” (Job 36: 14).

The literal translation is: ***“They die in the youth of their souls”***; They may live to a long age according to the body; Yet their souls are counted as immature; Having spent most of their days without spiritual growth, nor any benefit for themselves or for their brethren; Their years are counted as one day (Psalm 90: 4), or even as few hours.

“Their life ends among the perverted persons”; among the adulterers, and the filthy godless. The word translated as “perverted” came to mean the male prostitutes of the pagan shrines, whose life were dedicated to perverted physical relationships; And in the Septuagint version, it came as: “Their life is wounded by the angels”.

They are not given mercy or compassion; because instead of testifying to the true righteousness, practicing it and preaching it, they dedicate their life to corruption, and are counted like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah,

- ❖ ***“Their souls die in a whirlwind, and their life ends among the (homosexuals)” (14).*** Although their souls are used to human commendation in a destructive quietness; they die in a sudden whirlwind.... Human commendations usually torture the righteous, and cause them to become purified. Whereas the wicked, rejoicing by the same, are boastful, and become worthy of eternal punishment. Not seeking the glory of their Maker, the

¹ الحب الأخوي، 1964، ص 129.

wicked rejoice in being commended by others; Whereas those who seek the glory of their Maker, become tortured by the commendation of others; for fear that what is said concerning the outside, may not be in the inside; And even if it is actually inside, may appear vain in the eyes of God, because of these honors themselves; and lest the commendation of people may draw their hearts away from firmness, and may bring them down to feeling self-fulfillment.

Otherwise, in case they find out that being commended may lead to the glory of God, they would long for it and would welcome it; according to the Scripture: *“That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5: 16).

The haughty dedicate their perverted hearts to human commendation; being corrupted by the love of the ‘ego’; about which it is said: *“For men will be lovers of themselves”* (2 Timothy 3: 2).

Pope Gregory the Great

“He delivers the poor in their affliction, and opens their ears in oppression” (Job 36; 15).

The word “poor” here, as clarified by Elihu, may also imply to the suffering and the tempted.

Those who repent and return to God, will be saved from their temptations, and restore their life before they dwelt upon them.

“Opens their ears”; means grants them an understanding of His divine ordinances; a principle, preoccupying Elihu’s mind, he repeated it several times.

- ❖ The poor is delivered from his affliction; namely, the humble man is liberated from the worries of this journey. Being under the pressure of successive temptations, and longing to seek the joy of true comfort, he added after this: ***“... and opens his ears in oppression”***. The affliction opens the ears of the heart that were closed by the prosperity of this world.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- A GOOD COUNSEL TO JOB:

“Indeed He would have brought you out of dire distress, into a broad place where there is no constraint, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food” (Job 36: 16).

Amid the dire distress, God would take out His believers, as though from the lion’s mouth; would lift them up to a place of freedom, broader than where they have been before the temptation (Psalm 18; 19; 31: 8; 118: 5); and would promise them a table laden with choice food (Psalm 23: 5; Isaiah 25: 6).

- ❖ He who forgets the way of life, and casts himself into the darkness of sin; would bring himself over into a pit or well; where, being heavily burdened with its habit, he is unable to climb back up. But, returning through repentance from that heavy yoke of evil, to the freedom of good deeds, *“he would be brought out of the dire distress to a broad place”*.

Pope Gregory the great

“But you are obsessed with the case of the wicked; Judgment and justice have taken hold of you” (Job 36: 17).

Some believe that Elihu here rebukes ‘Job’ for following the lead of those who murmur under suffering and chastisement, and warns him that he would fall together with them under the same judgment. By murmuring against God, ‘Job’ would be, according to Elihu, consummating the ways of the wicked, and adopting their spirit and thought; and would accordingly be worthy, together with them, of falling under the divine justice.

“Because there is wrath, beware lest He take you away with one blow; For a large ransom would not help you avoid it’ (Job 36: 18).

Elihu warns ‘Job’ that his murmuring behavior may subject him to get stricken by a blow from God, from which no ransom, however great, would be enough to redeem; taking into consideration that ‘Job’ has already become in no position to pay any ransom.

He who keeps on murmuring and complaining, would treasure for himself the horrible wrath of God; from which no

wealth nor connections would redeem or ransom; As according to the Psalmist: *“Those who trust in their wealth, and boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him”* (Psalm 49: 6, 7). He would be casting himself into Hades.

“Beware then of useless grumbling, and keep your tongue from slander; because no secret word is without result, and a lying mouth destroys the soul” (Wisdom 1: 11).

“Free citizens will serve a wise servant, and an intelligent person will not complain” (Sirach 10: 25).

“Do not murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10: 10).

- ❖ He, in whose heart there is complaint (or grumbling), is away from God’s mercy.

Father Isaiah

- ❖ If you are lacking food; first pray and seek from God, then come out of your cell; don't put your hope on, through whom He will be giving you, but believe that it is God who will fulfill your need. **And in case you go to someone, and he does not give you, don't grumble**, but understands that God did not allow him to gain your blessing.

St. Arsanius

- ❖ Man who recognized his weakness and helplessness has reached the level of humility. **God’s blessings to man, are motivated by thanksgiving, perpetually working in his heart; And the temptations on his soul, are motivated by his continuous grumbling and complaining.** God may endure man’s weakness, but He would never endure his perpetual complaining, without chastening him for it. The mouth perpetually thanking God, would receive His blessings, and his heart would be filled with grace.
- ❖ He, who grumbles before temptations, would have them doubled, and God’s fatherly mercies would get away from him.

Whoever not disciplined and crushed by temptations here,
will be tortured there without mercy.

St (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

- ❖ An elderly said about poor Lazarus, mentioned in the gospel:
'We notice that he has done no virtue, other than that he never grumbled against that rich man who did not help him; Because of this, and because he was always thankful for what God has granted him, He gave him mercy'

The garden of monks

“Will your riches, or all your mighty forces, keep you from distress?” (Job 36: 19).

He probably refers here to the past riches of 'Job'; beside all the sources of his power; namely, his wisdom, reputation, authority, social status, and the awe of his old age; All of which, according to Elihu, could not save him from the wrath of God. According to the words of the wise Solomon: *“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivers from death”* (Proverbs 11; 4).

“Do not long for the night, when people are cut off in their place” (Job 36: 20).

It is obvious here that he means the night of death, for which 'Job' longed to rid him from his sufferings. The Lord Christ spoke of death as being like the night, when no one can work (John 9: 4).

Here Elihu calls 'Job' to reconsider this line of thought; As death would never save the wicked from his sufferings; Only repentance and the return to God can. And as though he rebukes him, saying: Do not covet death; but leave the matter in God's hand; lest He would listen to you, and send you death, while you are in this miserable condition; to be cut off, and your soul would be in terror and trembling.

Some believe that this phrase refer to some wicked who desire the night of death to cross over from this world, so that others would come in their place, and have their portion of sufferings.

“Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, for you have chosen this rather than affliction” (Job 36: 21).

Elihu says to ‘Job’: By this you insult the care of God, who allowed for you to be chastened by sorrows. Desiring death instead of sorrow is an iniquity against God’s care and wisdom.

Man often prefers iniquity to suffering; not caring for the former; and only preoccupied with getting relieved of his sufferings and affliction; by which, in foolishness and ignorance, he adds to his sufferings, more sins and transgressions.

4- GOD TEACHES; BUT COMMITS NO ONE TO RECEIVE HIS TEACHINGS:

“Behold, God is exalted by His power; who teaches like Him?” (Job 36: 22).

Elihu’s goal is to draw Job’s mind to God, to make him meditate in His might, wisdom, and fatherhood; he would then receive Him as a heavenly Teacher, and would stop blaming and accusing Him, or complaining against Him.

In the Septuagint version it came: ***“Who can teach like Him; And who is as mighty?”***; And as said by the prophet: ***“Who is God like you, ardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy” (Micah 7: 18).***

The heavenly Teacher is mighty, He chastens, is capable of giving life, and raising from the dead. So it is not befitting of us to do wrong to His compassion and fatherhood!

God in His fatherhood teaches and instructs: ***“Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law” (Psalm 94: 12).*** And being Almighty and whole wisdom, and because of the inability of the human mind, to realize the divine plan, He does not explain what is behind his teaching and instruction. That is why it is befitting of the believer to receive and accept the teaching of God, and not dare to assume that he can teach Him; ... ***“Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who***

taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the balance. Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing” (Isaiah 40: 13-15). And the apostle says: “For who has known the mind of the Lord, Or who has become His counselor?” (Romans 11: 34); and: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2; 16).

God teaches, but commits no one to receive His teachings (22-23).

❖ According to Democritus, Medicine heals the infirmities of the body; whereas wisdom relieves the soul of its worries ... The good Teacher – the Wisdom – namely, the incarnated Word of the Father, cares for the whole nature of His creation.

He is the Physician of mankind, who covers every thing; who heals the soul and the body together¹.

❖ The heavenly Logos, is called the ‘Savior’, when He calls mankind to salvation....But, being a Physician, He is called a ‘Healer’. The sick soul needs a ‘Healer’ to alleviate her sufferings; then a ‘Teacher’ to give her reasoning.... The ‘Logos’, intending to grant us salvation, step by step, follows a magnificent scheme: He saves, then heals, then teaches².

❖ Who is He? He is the Word of Truth, the Word of non-corruption; who renews man, bringing him back to truth. He is the Spur or goad provoking to salvation. He is the Destroyer of perdition, and the Chaser of death. He is the Builder of God’s temple in men; who sets out of them a dwelling place for God.

The sick need a Savior

The lost need a Guide.

The blind need someone to lead them to light.

The thirsty need a living Fountain; He who drinks from it, would never thirst.

¹ *Paedagogus 1: 4.*

² *Paedagogus 1:1.*

The dead need life.
The sheep need a Shepherd.
The children need a Teacher.
And all humanity needs Jesus¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ A great Teacher came down to earth; the whole world got enlightened by His teaching; lest anyone may covet anymore the vain possessions (the first message).

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

- ❖ Although Moses, Joshua, and all the prophets were all law-makers; Yet no one among them is like that Mediator.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Jesus appears to everyone according to his own need. To those who need joy, He comes to them as the Vineyard; To those who need to be in the presence of the Father, He comes to them as the ‘Door’; To those who pray, they find Him as the Intercessor, and the High Priest; And to the sinners, He is the Lamb, slain for the sake of their souls.

For everyone, He is everything, with no change in His nature; He remains as He is, unchangeable in His fatherhood, yet adapts Himself according to our weakness; as a great Physician, or a compassionate Teacher².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“Who has assigned Him His way, or who has said, ‘You have done wrong?’” (Job 36: 23).

Will God who ordain the world, and who care for the entire creation, take instructions from any man? Will any man commit Him to do anything? God always does what is right; He never does wrong!

‘Job’ dared to tell God what He should have done! (Job 34: 10, 13)

¹ *Paed. 2:9.*

² *Catech. Lect. 10:5.*

- ❖ How could He be reproached, He whose works are unsearchable? As nobody can judge in something he does not know; we should rather keep silent under His ordinances, as long as we do not realize their causes!

Pope Gregory the Great

5- HOW GREAT ARE GOD'S WORKS!

“Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung” (Job 36: 24).

Instead of accusing God, you should praise and glorify Him in His works (Psalm 111: 2-8; Revelation 15; 3); By which you can realize, through His unseen and unrealized works, how He is both wise and good; according to the words of the apostle: *“For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1: 20).

Being called upon to have an eternal fellowship with the heavenly creatures, to be counted as occupying the grade from which the Satan has fallen; We are committed to train ourselves on the inner praise to God, and on glorifying Him perpetually on His dealings with us.

- ❖ The Holy Book sometimes calls the angels “men”; and sometimes, as well, calls the perfect men as such. But calling the angel “man”, is testified by Daniel, who says: *“While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision ...”* (Daniel 9: 21).

Men sing to the Lord, when the high Spirits, namely, the perfect teachers, demonstrate to us the might of God; Yet even those who preach Him, and honor His un-searchable ordinances; Although they know Him, whom they preach; Yet they do not know the cause of His works. Although, by grace they know Him, who has created them, Yet they cannot realize His ordinances, that are beyond their understanding. Testifying that the mighty God is not clearly seen in His works, the Psalmist says: *“He made darkness His secret place”* (Psalm 18: 11 }

Pope Gregory the Great

“Everyone has seen it; man looks on it from afar” (Job 36: 25).

When every man looks at the seen creation, he would see in it the wisdom and might of God. So it is befitting of us to see God’s wisdom and might through His works, to realize what the men of God did, when they said: *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How un-searchable are His judgment and His ways past finding out!”* (Romans 11: 33).

- ❖ Being a rational creature, it would be befitting for man to use reason to deduce that he is created by God, whose authority he can recognize through his mind. But, when he says, *“Everyone has seen it”*; he truly adds, *“Man looks at it from afar”*. Looking at Him from afar, is looking at Him as being present, not by His Person; but to meditate in, and praise His works.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor the number of His years be discovered” (Job 36: 26).

God has full authority, un-searchable, eternal, His existence has no fixed time, and our knowledge of Him is partial (1 Corinthians 13: 12); because He is unlimited (Psalm 90: 2; 102: 24, 27).

He tells us about being eternal and everlasting, in human language, so as to be able to perceive it. *“The number of His years could not be discovered; He does not submit to time, as He is the Creator of time.*

- ❖ God is everywhere; He is present even to those who do not see Him.

He says it well, that He exalts beyond our knowledge, although He said before that *“Everyone sees Him”* (25); namely, that, even though He is seen by the mind, Yet our senses cannot penetrate His greatness. What we know about the splendor of His greatness is just a little; and the more we think that we perceive His power, we get further from knowing it. He may take our mind up high, Yet He exalts by the hugeness of His greatness. We know

Him only partially, when we feel that we are helpless to know Him through our unworthiness.

Pope Gregory the Great

6- THE WHIRLWIND AND THE RAIN:

“For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist” (Job 36: 27).

Here Elihu presents a practical example lived by man; namely, how water evaporates from the sea, then drops as rain used in agriculture. By His wisdom, God draws the vapor to become clouds, moved by wind, than turn into tiny drops of rain that fall for the benefit of man and animals.

- ❖ He, who planned everything with measure and weight; Who, according to ‘Job’ “Counts the number of rain drops” (Job 36: 27 LXX); Who knows to what extent He proceeds with His work; And to what extent He allows the fire to consume (the world)¹.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ **There are two kinds of righteous in this holy church: Those who live uprightly**, but do not know how to teach righteousness to others; Like dry weather; they offer light to others by the example of their life, Yet they do not drop the rain of the word of preaching. And those who live uprightly and rain that uprightness on others by the word of preaching, to change their life through the worthiness of their life. These are called ‘stars of rain’ as were Moses, and Isaiah, who saw the light of truth, held fast to it, and watered on the dryness of the lack of faith, by the proclamation of the word of prophecy.

When God stopped sending prophets, and there was no more preaching of the literal law, as said by Jeremiah: *“There is no more stars of rain, nor later rain”*; He replaced them by apostles, to rain as though from whirlwinds.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ Hexameron, homily 3: 5.

❖ Lately, we were swept by mighty floods, that caused great devastation. Can you count the drops of rain that have fallen on this city? Or can you even count the drops of rain that have fallen on you house, just for one hour? I am sure you cannot!

Therefore, you better acknowledge your weakness, and the might of God who can **count the drops of rain** that fall and have fallen on the whole world, now, but through all times.

The sun is created by God, and with its greatness, it is nothing more than a spot in heaven. Now look carefully at the sun, then meditate in the Creator of the sun. *“Reflect upon what you have been commanded, for what is hidden is not your concern. Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you”* (Sirach 3: 22, 23)¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“Which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man” (Job 36: 28).

In the Septuagint version it came as: “Rain drop and the clouds cover a multitude of people. Animals are given to know where to dwell. When you meditate in these matters, do not you feel that your heart and mind are ready to leap out of your body?!”

The clouds receive the vapor ascending toward the sky, and then give it back as drops of rain that pour down on multitudes of creatures for their benefit. This phenomenon which normally happens in the world, and is realized with no one thinking about it, is one of the laws of nature without number, set by God for the sake of the benefit of man and beasts. He granted the animals of the wilderness to choose their dwelling places where the water abound, by rain or springs, although they are counted as irrational creatures, incapable of thinking or planning.

❖ ***“Which the clouds drop down” (28).*** In the Holy Book, the clouds sometimes refer to **people with unstable mind**, about whom Solomon says: *“He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap”* (Ecclesiastes 11: 4). He also refers to the **unclean spirit as ‘wind’**, and those who

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 6:4.*

submit to him as ‘clouds’, whom he pushes around here and there by the storms of his suggestions.

‘Clouds’ also refer to the prophets; as according to the psalmist, referring to the hidden wisdom in the prophets: “*(God) made darkness His secret place, His canopy around Him dark waters and thick clouds of the sky*” (Psalm 18: 11).

‘Clouds’ also refer to the apostles; as said by Isaiah: “*I will command the clouds that they rain no rain on it*” (Isaiah 5: 6). They are ‘stars’, who shine by the worthiness of their life; And they are ‘clouds’, who water the thirsty land of our hearts by the streams of heavenly knowledge. If they are not clouds, the prophet would not say, when he looks at them: “***Who are those who fly like the clouds?***” (Isaiah 6: 8)

“And cover everything from above” (28). When the clouds are thick, If we raise our eyes to heaven, We, being carnal-minded, do not see heaven but we only the clouds. Seeking to search spiritual things, our reason is not allowed to cross over to divine things, unless they are conformed as examples of prior saints. Although our eyes look up to heaven, yet they see only through the clouds; although they may seek things concerning God, yet all they can only manage is to reach those concerning men.

Look, how we are flared with zeal toward dedication to the Lord and His love; Yet in this dedication, we are conformed by meditating in those clouds.... Who could be dedicated more than Peter? And who could be filled with love like John?

We are also covered by the life of the early fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David); who are clouds that cover and water us, to produce an abundance of fruits. When we look up toward heaven, we first see those clouds; look with marvel to those good examples, before we attempt to go deep into the heavenly issues. Yet the life and virtues of those clouds, namely, of those early fathers, would not be open before our eyes, if not shown by other clouds; namely, through the light of preaching of the apostles.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thundering from His canopy?” (Job 36: 29).

Elihu wonders; who can understand the secret of the spreading of clouds, and the loud noise of thunder (Psalm 18; 11; Isaiah 40: 22; Psalm 105: 39).

At the beginning of history, man couldn't conceive the secrets behind these natural phenomena. But now, with the progress of knowledge, almost everything is clear before his eyes. Yet, together with his immense awe toward the amazing Creator, he is convinced that whatever is the extent of his scientific progress, it will still remain difficult, if not impossible, for him to have complete control over the natural phenomena.

“See, how he scatters His lightning around Him, and covers the roots of the sea” (Job 36: 30).

The Jews have long seen in the clouds, thunder, and lightning -- wonders that testify to the might and care of God: The clouds spreading like a canopy or tent (pavilion) over the earth; and the lightning that form within the clouds, scattering light through them; forming together a very exciting and magnificent portrait of natural phenomena; amazingly described by the psalmist, saying: *“O Lord, You are wrapped in light as with a garment, You stretch out the heavens like a tent, You set the beams of Your chambers on the waters, You make the clouds Your chariot, You ride on the wings of the wind”* (Psalm 104: 3, 4).

While revealing the falling of rain by the lightning through the clouds, He lets the abundant rain pour into the seas to cover their depths. The hand of God stretches high in heaven among the dense clouds; on the earth by the pouring of rain; And on the depths of the seas. He is the Almighty God!

❖ **The Lord spreads His clouds as a tent, when He opens the way of preaching before His ministers, to spread them everywhere in the world.** ... He spread them as a 'tent', which is normally set during a journey, when He sent the saintly preachers to the world to pave a road for the Lord. On this

journey, the hearts of the saints are the tents that create a protective cover along that journey.

These clouds are indeed called ‘tents’, As God, coming to us with His grace, is dwelling in the hearts of His preachers.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For by these He judges the peoples; He gives food in abundance” (Job 36: 31)

While using the clouds, the rain, the dew, the winds, the storms, the hurricanes, the tornadoes, the thunder, the lightning, the draught, and the floods, for chastisement and edification; for the sake of His compassion on man; God uses the same phenomena to present to mankind and animals, an abundance of food and drink.

The Psalmist says: *“You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also covered with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing”* (Psalm 65: 11-13); And the apostle says: *“Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”* (Acts 14: 17).

❖ ***“For by these, He judges the peoples; He gives food in abundance to the mortals” (31).*** By the words of preachers; namely, the words of the clouds, and through the lightning of miracles; God judges the peoples; calling their terrified hearts to repentance. Listening to those heavenly things, and watching those miraculous works, they become grieved in their hearts over their past evils, and will fear the eternal punishment.

Pope Gregory the Great

7- A SONG TO PRAISE THE MIGHTY WISDOM OF GOD:

“He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike” (Job 36: 32).

By the lightning God chastens the wicked, and by the light He shines on the righteous.

With that immensely swift lightning, on which we have no authority, God covers His hands, and directs it wherever He wants. It is a natural tool in His hands that would never move except through His command.

If God denies the haughty His light, Yet His grace allows for them to go through temptations, to let them return to Him in repentance, in order to get the benefit of His light.

❖ ***“He denies the mighty His light” (32).*** The mighty are actually those who boast haughty thoughts, against whom Isaiah says: *“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight”* (Isaiah 5: 21); and whom the apostle Paul warns, saying: *“Do not be wise in your own opinion”* (Romans 12: 16). He hides His light; namely, the knowledge of truth from those boasting haughty, many of whom we find in the church.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His thunder announces the coming storm; even the cattle make known its approach” (Job 36: 33).

Thunder that accompanies the lightning, and testifies to the great authority of God and His compassion on His whole creation, announces the coming storm to the irrational cattle. Through instinct, they flee and find a shelter for themselves. Man, on the other hand, may see evil approaching him, and would not flee from it.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 36

TEACH AND INSTRUCT ME, HOW TO ENJOY YOU

- ❖ Teach me, O the amazing heavenly Teacher;
As although Your hand may seem firm,
Yet Your heart is spacious with Your love for me;
You are the wise and mighty Father.
- ❖ You may allow for Your children to go through affliction;
But You would never allow for the rod of sinners to fall on them.
You carry them in You.
You raise them from the trash heap, to sit together with the elite of Your people.
- ❖ The wicked stretch their hands on me;
They think that You do not see or care;
By Your love, You may allow for oppression, yet for a limited time.
To prepare my depths for exalted glories.
To prepare me to become a king, who enjoys Your eternal kingdom.
- ❖ The wicked think that they have bound me with the chains of oppression.
They cannot realize that I become rather more free.
To set forth with my depths to be with You.
- ❖ Amid the affliction, when I listen to Your voice;
My soul gets filled with joy,
And my heart rejoices.
When I discover my sins, my soul moans;
But, when I see You the Savior of the world,
I attach myself to your cross.
- ❖ Amid the humiliation of the world, You open my ears by Your Holy Spirit;
To enjoy Your divine promises'

And to bring my heart over from narrowness to a wider space,
My soul becomes spacious by love, even for my oppressors.
Entering into the banquet of love,
To enjoy the richness of Your food,
My soul gets fulfilled by You.

- ❖ Instead of complaining of the multitudes of my oppressors,
My soul rejoices in You.
And would never stop offering sacrifices of thanksgiving.
Acquiring You, O the heavenly Treasure,
The gold of the world turns in my eyes into dust.
And the riches of the world into naught.
- ❖ Who is like You, an amazing Teacher?
Teaching me Your commandment;
Instructing me on Your love;
Carrying me in You;
And bringing me up to the throne of Your grace?
- ❖ Who is a Teacher like You, O the heavenly Father?
You let me become one of Your disciples.
To encounter You as a Teacher, who opens before me the
treasures of Your knowledge.
To heal the wounds of my soul, heart, and mind.
To raise me from the death of sin, and grant me eternity.
To take away my reproach, and provide me with the fellowship
of the heavenly glory.
To open up my eyes, so as not to stumble in the valley of this
world.
To water me by Your Holy Spirit, so as not to thirst to the life of
this world.
- ❖ Who can search Your wisdom, O the amazing wisdom of God?
Can the clay debate with the potter?
Can the man made of dust realize the secrets of the heavenly
Creator?
Yet, in Your fatherhood and Your humility, You demand from
me to debate You!

To talk to You, and enjoy conversing with You!

- ❖ Blow like a whirlwind on my soul, to fill it with strength.
Pour the rain of Your Holy Spirit on my wilderness, to turn it
into a paradise.
- Shine with Your light on me, to scatter my darkness.
- Glory is to You, O my loving and good Teacher!

CHAPTER 37

GOD IN THE WHIRLWIND

This chapter came as a turning point in Elihu's talks to 'Job'; as it so seems that there appeared some signs of an approaching storm; as though nature was preparing for the divine appearance to 'Job'. Then, Elihu's heart and mind set forth from the temporal events surrounding them, to an enjoyment of the divine presence; and a state of awe in the divinities and the heavenlies.

Elihu resumes his talk about the great power and wisdom of God, using as an example the weather changes. If, concerning these things, on which we have no power, we submit to the will of God, Why would we not submit to Him as far as His control of our affairs are concerned?

Here, Elihu demonstrates God's hand in nature, and asks 'Job' to meditate in god's works in the lightning, the clouds, the wind, the temperature, the cold, and all the rest of the fluctuating weather changes.

1- Thunder and lightning	1 – 5
2- Heavy rain and snow	6 – 12
3- 'Job' is unqualified to judge God's care	14 – 22
4-God is exalted, great, and awesome	23 – 24

1- THUNDER AND LIGHTNING:

"At this also my heart trembles, and leaps from its place"
(Job 37: 1).

With the first signs of the storm, Elihu, feeling the divine presence, felt an inner storm sweeping his heart. He felt disturbed, not out of worry or loss of peace, but out of awe before the greatness of the Creator; His heart, turning into a temple of the Lord, trembled before the glory of God.

By saying: "*At this*", he means: "At hearing the thunder of the divine greatness"; as probably, the whirlwind, through which God talked to 'Job' has already begun.

Although Elihu spoke in abundance about those natural phenomena – the storms, the thunder, the lightning, etc. as testifying to the greatness, might, and authority of God; Yet, Once the storm began, his inner being trembled. As it often happens that these phenomena terrify not only the wicked, but sometimes even the some of the righteous.

It was said about Emperor Caligula, that he used to run and hide in a corner in His palace, or under a bed, when he heard the thunder or saw the lightning.

- ❖ After meditating in the light of the eternal city, he says: “*At this my heart trembles*”, as though he says: ‘I set forth outside myself in awe; and the mind, inspired by a spirit of new hope, deserted the old ways of thinking’.

And it was well said: “*and leaps from its place*”; The human heart is the place of the pleasures of the present life; Yet once a divine inspiration comes to touch the heart, those pleasures are replaced by a love of eternity; hence the heart leaps from its place, with meditation in the eternities; forsaking the lowly things, and concentrating on thinking about the higher ones.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ I was told by a brother: [When my is mind taken up to that splendid level, I used to see it (my mind) looking at the sea of life, swimming in waves of light, smelling the odor of life, entering into a state of awe and great rejoice, getting covered with light, and boiling by love and joy, in an amazing shine ... And at the time this gift was prevailing on my soul, Even if the whole creation turned into noise and disturbance, it would not be able to make my mind - being preoccupied with awe and marvel, and having lost everything that concern the body - fall from its place, or return to its former self].
- ❖ Once you are in such a condition, you become captivated from your mind, to have Him alone, appear before your mind, in case it is capable of doing it; and if it is not, He would perpetually stay in memory. That way, man’s mind would always become

preoccupied with thinking about God and meditating in Him; a state called by our fathers 'keeping the mind'; surpassed by nothing among the virtues and all works¹.

The spiritual elder

“Listen; listen to the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth” (Job 37: 2).

He says the word “*listen*” twice; and likens His voice and His words to the rumbling of thunder and the brightness of lightning; before which ‘Job’ and all those present, had to keep silent, and listen with their whole being.

The storm stayed on until the Lord Himself spoke from heaven to ‘Job’.

It often happens that God’s talk to His people or His believers is connected to the storm; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*The God of glory thunders ... The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh*” (Psalm 29: 3, 8). “*God is in the whirlwind*”, not only in that of nature, but also in the whirlwind of the inner soul. He is there in our depths proclaiming Him through the whirlwinds that sweep our inner nature. The Word of God came into the soul to stir inside it an inner uprising against evil, to destroy by it the old man, and grant us the new man.

It is certain that Adam and Eve used to anticipate the gentle voice of God walking in paradise. Yet, once they fell into sin, the voice of the Lord God became to them a cause of fear and terror; when they heard it, they hid from the face of the Lord (Genesis 3: 8).

Because of our attachment to the earthly things, we now listen to the voice of God in the whirlwind and through the thunder: “*The Lord thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice*” (2 Samuel 22: 14).

When the prophet Moses was given the law, it is said: “*When the people witnessed the thunder and the lightning, the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, they were afraid*

¹ الرسالة الخمسون: 6 (ترجمة الأب سليم دكاش اليسوعي، سلسلة التراث الروحي، بيروت 1992).

and trembled and stood a distance” (Exodus 20: 18; 19: 16); The Psalmist says: “The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightning lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook” (Psalm 77: 18; and see Psalm 97: 4; 135: 7); And it was said by the prophet: “When He utters His voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth, He makes lightning for the rain, and He brings out the wind from His storehouses” (Jeremiah 10: 13, 16).

- ❖ By saying this (Exodus 29: 18, 19), the Holy Book realized **that creature are not capable of hearing the voice of the Creator;** and hearing it, they almost die with fear. That is why, at the fullness of time, we were granted the grace of incarnation, so that mankind would not die if they hear His voice¹.

St. (Mar Ephram the Syrian

- ❖ **While heavens stand trembling,** and become naught with weakness before Your greatness; The womb received You, and carried Your glory.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy

- ❖ It is befitting of us to notice that, the voice of God, is heard, not with joy, but with trembling. There is no doubt that, for every sinner who thinks only of earthly things, and who carries a heart that only contains lowly thoughts; the voice of God would be heard with trembling. But once he gets in touch with the inspiration of the divine grace, and realizes above anything else, that all his deeds would be punished by the eternal Judge; **the voice of the Lord would turn to sweetness.**

Therefore we can understand by the thunder of His voice the strength of fear; and by the sweetness of His mouth the sweetness of comfort. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, He warns them against their earthly works, then comforts them with the hope for the heavelies; in order to make them rejoice in the certainty of the reward, as much as they were in fear, anticipating

¹ تفسير خروج (20: 18-19).

the punishment alone. This is according to the words of the apostle Paul: “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Romans 8: 15) ... As you can see, the trembling of reform has turned into strength, by which to punish their sins by remorse, and ascend even to the level of practicing judgment; to receive this strength from God, by which they used to be terrified on His hands.

Pope Gregory the Great

The Psalmist says: “*The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, Yes the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon*” (Psalm 29: 5); The Lord’s voice in the thunder may break the cedars; the whirlwind may sometimes uproot even the mighty cedars of Lebanon, break up their high and haughty tops, and bring them down to the ground. These trees refer to the haughty souls with their self-esteem, to whom the voice of the incarnate Word of God came to bring them up to the life of humility through the grief of repentance

“*God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty*” (1 Corinthians 1: 27); so that they may likewise enjoy the Mighty One, who took up for their sake the form of weakness.

❖ “*The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars*”. By repentance, and when they see how He chose the lowly of this world, to manifest in them His divine power; they will stand in shame, those who glorify themselves by the honor of their temporal origin.

St. Augustine

“*He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the end of the earth*” (Job 37: 3).

God’s talk, like lightning is set forth under the whole earth; in the blink of an eye, everyone feels His compassion, and hears His voice.

“*To the end of the earth*”, came in Hebrew as “To the wings of the earth”; likening the whole earth to a bird that, hearing

the voice of the Lord, and enjoying His light, would stretch its wings to fly toward heaven.

Although God's talk is personally directed to the individual believer, Yet as a lover of the His creation, He talks publicly under the whole heaven; for both the heavenly and the earthly creatures in its four corners to hear His voice and realize His secrets. In His talk He cares for the righteous, great in faith, as well as for the sinners, to purify them of all the least of their weaknesses.

- ❖ As though He says: that He who ordains the high things would not forget the tiny little things;. He, who is present everywhere, not limited to one place, nor partially cares for one place, equally cares for everything, and equally ordains everything

He cares even for the least of our weaknesses. His light reaches the farthest corner of the earth under heaven. After watching the exalted works of those who stand before Him, he turns His attention to the ways and works of the sinners, and covers them with the light of His grace. Even though He may not demonstrate amazing signs in the life of His believers, yet he would always work in them, and would never forsake them. The end of the earth will certainly become the end of sinners; many of whom, through binding to carnal lusts, forget God; yet by the grace of God working in them, late in their life, they happen to return to God.

Pope Gregory the Great

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy believes that the thunder that accompanied the divine presence, as Moses was being delivered the law, refers to the voice of the trumpet that precedes the procession of the Groom to the wedding. It is as though the goal of the law or the divine commandment is our joyful union in matrimony with the heavenly Groom.

- ❖ He blew in the mist as though in the trumpet, producing thunder that split the earth with its sound.

That is how awesome the system of that wedding was; The Groom entering into His secret place, preceded by the sound of the trumpet.

All creation trembled at that awesome displays; because their lord came down to Saini in the mist.

On the top of the mountain of Sinai, the thunder cried out: “The King is here!”. The trumpets were blown, calling the earth to gather together because “The Lord is there¹!”

(St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy)

“After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice; and He does not restrain them when His voice is heard” (Job 37: 4).

“After it”; namely, after the thunder and lightning; That is how God, with His exaltation, works toward man; thundering with His voice, and shining with His lightning; to let him enjoy His divine promises, or respond to His chastisements.

“**He does not restrain them when His voice is heard**”. He probably means that He does not restrain His lightning, by which He shines on the heart and mind of man; nor restrain the rain until the earth is fulfilled with the water of His divine grace; and the wilderness turns into a joyful paradise, bearing the fruits of the Spirit.

Some believe that, although man watches the appearance of lightning, and hears the sound of thunder, Yet it would be very difficult for him to predict accurately the consequences of these phenomena, to fix where they happen, or to follow up the way along which they move. In a similar way, although the Word of God, gets in touch with the believer, opens his eyes to see the love of God, and his ears to hear His divine promises; Yet, they remain far more exalted, and beyond the comprehension of the human mind,

“**He does not restrain them when His voice is heard**”. Namely, once man hears the sound of God’s thunder, he cannot hold the lightning or restrain it, to get to know its place or to what extent it reaches, etc.

¹ الميمر 2 على نزول العلي على جبل سيناء وسر الكنيسة (راجع نص الدكتور بهنام سوني).

❖ You, who is stung with the sin of death; It is now up to you! ... Look up at the cross and live! Because if you do not, you will certainly die; ... Fall on it like the dead man on the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13: 21);... **Listen to His voice like Lazarus from his tomb**; ... Do not cut off the hope of your life; as your hope abides in Him; ... A dead man would not shy away from leaning upon the One who would bring him to life; ... It is not to the benefit of the wounded to keep himself from the healer... A sinner should keep on seeking the mercies, even if he does not get the forgiveness; ... A sinner, who, although being sure within himself, that he is not worthy of mercies, and yet he does not stop asking for them, is actually worthy of getting them¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougy

“God thunders marvelously with His voice, He does great things which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37: 5).

In a fabulous description, he says that God is present in the whirlwind, directing it according to His will, and doing great things beyond the comprehension of the human mind, *“Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well”* (Psalm 139: 14).

By that, Elihu was preparing the minds of those present for the appearance of the Lord and His talk through the whirlwind. The Psalmist says: *“The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You, they were afraid; The depths also trembled. The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about. The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook”* (Psalm 77: 16-18).

❖ ***“In a marvelous way, God thunders with His voice; and in a secret way, that could not be expressed, He penetrates our heart” (5).*** While submitting us with fear, In a secret and a silent way, He proclaims to us that He longs for us to follow Him.

“He does great things which we cannot comprehend” (5). He who surrendered himself to earthly things, and became a slave to evil habits; would suddenly become zealous to try new ways, and

¹ الرسالة الثانية والعشرون (راجع نص الدكتور بهنام سوني).

would turn cold toward the old ones; He would deny the outer vain interests, and become fond of the inner meditation! ... Who can express the power of that supreme voice? ... although He utters it through the apostles, Yet He, Himself, is the One who brings the light in the hearts of the listeners; according to the testimony of the apostle Paul: “*I planted, Apollo's watered, but God gave the increase*” (1 Corinthians 3: 6). Although they could not grant hearing the divine voice deep in the mind; yet they are sent to give the words from outside.

Pope Gregory the Great

What are those ‘great things, done by God, that we cannot comprehend, when He thunders with His amazing voice, but the work of His hidden grace in us, that produce marvels in us through His active word and rich grace. The word of God thunders with an amazing power, and works richly in us. And as the Psalmist says: “*He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions*” (Psalm 107: 20).

❖ “*I will tell of all Your marvelous works*” (Psalm 9: 1); those which he sees plainly realized in his body, and feels them in an unseen way realized in his soul. Those marvelous works are actually more exalted. Men as earthly creatures get more impressed by what they see by their own eyes, like by seeing Lazarus’ body raised from the dead; than by hearing that Paul, the persecutor is raised in the Spirit (Acts 9). The seen miracle calls the soul to enjoy the light; whereas the unseen one would let him talk about all the marvels of God¹.

St. Augustine

❖ Don’t underestimate the gift of grace; as it is more marvelous than raising the dead and doing miracles².

St. John Chrysostom

2- HEAVY RAIN AND SNOW:

¹ *On Ps. 9.*

² *Homilies on Philippians, homily 4.*

“For He says to the snow, ‘Be on the earth’; Likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength” (Job 37: 6).

Here, Elihu talks about the snow storms, when the heavy snow falls – and not the hail. Because of the severe cold, rain transform into snow, and falls on the ground to turn it into a glittering white carpet that reflects the light in a marvelous way. This snow refers to the wisdom of God that He grants to His church, for His believers to enjoy and bear the pure righteousness of Christ, and to reflect its splendor.

According to His will, and by His order, the light and heavy rain would fall; And all the natural phenomena would move; As they are all under His authority.

❖ The Psalmist says: *“Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow”* (Psalm 51: 7). The snow refer to the hearts of the saints that become white by the light of righteousness ... Water refer to the minds of preachers that abide to high interpretations of things, when they ascend high up through meditation in the heavenly issues.

The apostle Paul, certainly rained water on the ground, at the time he used to know the law in a carnal way; But once he got up to the higher level of heavenly knowledge, he crossed over from his past feeble knowledge, to the solid true wisdom, and his rain turned into snow falling on the ground. Yet, even after reaching that exalted level of virtue, still aware of his unworthiness, he says: *“I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man”* (1 Timothy 1: 13). Notice how he recalls his weakness, in order to endure the weaknesses of others; how he gets down from the heaven of his virtue, to the earth from which he was taken; And after reaching great mysteries through his meditations , how he always recalls that he was a sinner, to benefit the sinners by his humility.

“The heavy rain of His strength” (6); is preaching His humanity (manhood), to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 1: 25; and also when he says: *“For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God”* (2 Corinthians 13: 4). The saints

have so preached the weakness of His manhood, in order to walk through the hearts of their listeners by the power of His divinity.

I wish we hear through the thunder of His clouds, **the heavy rain of His strength**; as *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1: 1); and I wish we hear as well, **the rain of His weakness**: *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1: 14).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ Because we were renewed in the water of baptism, and through the pouring of the Holy Spirit; and will also be renewed by the resurrection; according to the words of David: *“So that your youth is renewed like eagle’s”* (Psalm 103: 5). To know the way by which we are renewed, listen to the psalm saying: *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow”* (Psalm 51: 7); and, *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”* (Isaiah 1: 18). He who moves from the darkness of sin, to the light of virtue and grace, has already been renewed. And he, who has been defiled by the foolishness, now shines brighter than snow¹.

St. Ambrose

“He seals the hand of every man, that all men may know His work” (Job 37: 7).

In countries where snow fall through snow storms, all people; the farmers in particular, stay at home; as though God, in His love, *“seals their hands”* to have rest during winter months from labor outdoors; Then resume their work with vigor after winter.

Therefore, we are taught by nature created by God to serve us. Through the succession of seasons, men would realize God’s plan toward man; to know that there is time for work, and time for rest. It is befitting of man, every now and then, to enter into the seclusion of meditation in God’s work, and to seek the shining of the Spirit of God on Him; so that, when God’s love, and his own weakness and faults, are revealed before his eyes, he would then

¹ *Prayer of David, Book 4:9:35.*

keep on offering repentance, together with joyful hope, and thanksgiving to God, the Forgiver of sins.

- ❖ Men taking the sins they commit lightly; Once they get to hear about the firmness of God's ordinance, they would realize the actual weight of their bad conduct that bring their life down.

This phrase (Job 37: 7) could be understood in a different way: While the divine Creator is mightier than all his creation; Man, By the law of nature, is committed not to be ignorant of what he is doing, to know whether it is right or wrong. As, how could he be judged on his actions if he is ignorant of that?!... That is why it is well said: "*For wickedness is a cowardly thing, condemned by its own testimony*" (See Wisdom 17: 11); and "*Beloved, If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God*" (1 John 3: 11).

Pope Gregory the Great

St. John Chrysostom believes that God's clear hand in nature, that testifies to his exalted might, would make man discover his own

Weakness, together with his great possibilities through the mighty God; That, while being weak, he is strong by God. "*Let the weak say, 'I am strong'*" (Joel 3: 10); And as said by the apostle Paul: "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Corinthians 12: 10).

- ❖ He says that this is the reason behind all His creative work; the reason for the cold and heat; and for why the wind blows in a way that may look haphazard. He could make them more harmonious?! Yet He did not, to counter any way of arrogant and haughty thought; and to let every man realize his own weakness. Contrary to this, the way the body is created, and how our life is conducted, are organized in such a way that would lead us to humility; to learn how to walk reasonably; and to realize our own weakness; to say together with Abraham: "*I who am just dust and ashes*" (Genesis 18: 27); and with David: "*I am a worm, and no man*"(Psalm 22: 6); and with the apostle: "*Then*

last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me” (1 Corinthians 15: 8).

Man was created weak, but, because he thinks of himself as strong, he became weaker; that God would sometimes manifest His strength, to grant us understanding (and strength) inside us.

St. John Chrysostom

❖ God entices and strengthens us to keep away from the devil, and to follow the living God alone by His Son.

We, who for long, plunged in adultery, now we recognize only purity.

We, who used the different kinds of magic, now we dedicate ourselves to the good living God.

We, who were only preoccupied with accumulating wealth and possessions, now we bring everything we have to become public possession for everyone to take what he needs,.

We, who for long used to hate one another, and to destroy one another, just because we are different; who used to refuse to co-exist with anyone from a different tribe; Today, since the coming of Christ, we live together in harmony; pray for the sake of our enemies; and try to convince those who hate us for no reason, to abide to the good principles of Christ, and to His commandments, hoping to bring them over to partake of the same joyful hope to gain the reward that the Almighty God is giving¹.

Justin the martyr

“The animals enter dens, and remain in their lairs” (Job 37: 8).

Elihu sees that God’s wisdom covers, not only man, but even to the wild fierce animals of the wilderness, that, during the severe cold winter, are committed to stay within the confinement of their dens and lairs, almost motionless, in order to minimize their need for much food to sustain them.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Elihu here speaks of the devil and his hosts who enter into the hearts and minds of the wicked, and settle down in them as being their possessions. As to

¹ *Apology, 1:14.*

the righteous, the devils may attack them, and force themselves into their depths for some time, but would never settle down in them.

- ❖ By the animal, he means our old enemy who violently aimed to deceive the early man, and to distort his life by his evil counsel. Contrary to that, came the promise through the words of the prophet, concerning the reform of the church of the elect to its former status, saying: *“No ravenous beast shall go up on it”* (Isaiah 25: 9)

It should be noticed how it is said about that animal, that it not only enters into its den, but would settle down there. It sometimes enters the minds of the good, suggesting unbecoming thoughts, terrifying them by temptations, seeking to corrupt the uprightness of their spirit by the lusts of their bodies. It would also strive to introduce as much of the pleasure, as the person would receive. Although he may enter the minds of the good, yet he cannot settle down in them; as the heart of the good is not his lair.

Pope Gregory the Great

“From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind and cold from the scattering winds of the north” (Job 37: 9).

In the Holy Book, where almost all its events took place in the region of the Middle East, the southern wind is considered as being hot; whereas the northern wind as being cold. When the northern cold wind blows, the sky becomes covered with clouds, together with thunder, and lightning; whereas when the hot southern wind blows, the clouds are scattered, and the mist disappears.

Pope Gregory the great believes that the hot whirlwind coming from the south, refers to the believers with hot faith, on whom the sun shines as though in mid-day.; whereas the cold wind, coming from the north, refers to the non-believers, deprived of the warmth of the sun, who remain in spiritual cold.

- ❖ Who learns to practice God’s work in this world – the valley of tears and labor – comes to be like a hard-working farmer, who sows the seeds even in the death of winter. Will the cold wind or the severe weather keep him from work? Definitely not! That is

how we should consider the troubles of this life. Vain pleasures are thrown along our way by the devil, to make us deviate from the good works, which we are created to perform. Listen to the words of the Psalmist, saying: “*He who goes forth weeping ...*” (Psalm 126: 6). Indeed, every one of us may find a reason to cry; Yet we are committed to proceed on our way, practicing the good works of God.

How miserable we would be, if we are called to work seriously, yet only to cry, without seeing any fruit of our labor! How miserable we would be, if we find no one to wipe our tears!

But we know that the Holy Spirit works on helping us to keep on sowing amid our tears; promising us through the Psalmist, that we shall “*doubtless come again with rejoicing*” bearing the fruit of our labor, as an offering to Him (Psalm 126: 6)¹.

St. Augustine

❖ “*Awake, O north wind, And come, O south wind*” (Songs 4: 16)... Let us draw our attention to the way by which the (bride of the song) commands the north wind to go away from her, and the south wind to come. She does not command it to calm down, like when the Lord Christ rebuked the wind and the raging water (Luke 8: 23-24); But she commands the south wind to blow; And to keep away any adversary wind to oppose it, she said to the north wind: “*Awake, O north wind*”.

What causes these winds to move? The proverbs say about them: “*Whoever restrains her (the contentious wife), restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand*” (Proverbs 27: 16). ...

Just meditate in the secrets included in these words: The sun rises from the east and moves toward the west; namely, toward the forces of darkness.... The north from where the northern wind blow is on the right hand of man; by which he receives troubles and insults during his journey that ends in the darkness.... That is why the person out of control finds himself as though he is the north wind, walking and doing disgraceful deeds. This evil north wind becomes worse when it stirs up heaps of nasty particles as dust and

¹ *Homilies on Ps. 2.*

sand, going hand in hand with the faults of every man, blowing on his right hand side. And in case this wind is extremely powerful, it may end up changing and overturning things, and taking away the enjoyment of joy; that is why (the bride of the song) calls on the northern wind to go away from her, saying: "*Awake, O north wind*".

The northern wind refers to the adversary forces against God; that is clearly apparent to anyone researching in the nature of the seen truth. Among men, who does not know the line taken by the sun after it rises? It rises from the east and sets in the west. As the experts say, the earth, being a globe, if half of it is lighted by the sun, the opposite half will be dark. And like the north pole of earth that is always cold, and is never lighted nor warmed by the rays of the sun, the forces controlling the darkness would turn the souls into solid ice; which is called by the 'Song' as 'the North'; namely, the effect of the dark winter; which I simply call "the winter", to which the Bible refers, saying: "*Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath*" (Matthew 24: 20). In that winter, the flowering features according to virtue are quenched.

The queen was right to command by her authority the north wind to go away; and to call on the south wind of the warm mid-day, to come; through which a sweeping current of gladness would prevail; saying: "*Come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden; that its spices may flow out*" Song 4: 16). It resembles "*the rushing mighty wind*" that blew on the upper room where the apostles were assembled; "*then appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them*" (Acts 2: 2). As though the apostles are living plants in the garden of God, that this wind help to produce fragrant herbs of prophecies, and to utter the fragrant teachings and commandments of salvation in all languages on the tongues of those 120 present, to flow on all the earth (acts 1: 15).

The bride says now to the wind of the south: "*Come, O south wind, blow upon my garden*" As her Groom made her the mother of all gardens; He wishes this wind to blow upon His garden – the church – full of living trees, and to carry their fragrance to every corner of the earth. The prophet says: "*Stormy*

wind, fulfilling His word” (Psalm 148: 8). The bride adorned herself like a splendid queen, and changed the riverlets that flow with fragrance into something more beautiful; to flow with the power of the Holy Spirit. By this we learn the difference between the two testaments, the Old and the New: The River of prophecy of the Old Testament is full of water; whereas those of the gospel of the New Testament are full of fragrant oil. The river of the apostle Paul flowed with the fragrance of Christ from the garden of the church by the Holy Spirit; beside many other examples of rivers, like John, Luke, Matthew, and Mark, and all the other apostles, all of whom symbolize noble plants in the garden of the bride of Christ; And on whom, when the wind of the south blows in mid-day, it will carry from them the sweet fragrance of the gospels¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

“By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen” (Job 37: 10).

He allows the ice (the frozen water) to fall. Although these phenomena result of natural factors; Yet they do not happen haphazardly, but are controlled by God; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts out His hail like morsels; Who can stand before His cold?*” (Psalm 146: 16-17).

- ❖ Who makes the wind blow with such great abundance ...Not with measures according to human ranks, riches, or ages; or limited by certain boundaries; but in the way He brought down the Manna (Exodus 16: 18), distributing it abundantly, yet equally?; ... Who gives life to living beings; or rather, who keeps the natural life of the body, by which they live and talk? ... Where are the storehouses of the winds? ... And where are the treasures of snow? ... And from which womb did it come? ... Who binds the water drops in a cloud? And who hold their particles fast²?

¹ عظة 10 على نشيد الأناسيد ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار.

² *The Second Theological Oration, Oration 28: 28.*

❖ ***“When God breathes the ice freezes” (10).*** When the Holy Spirit breathes on the hearts of believers, and grants them the great wonders of God, He causes their body to grow; while causing near paralysis to the hearts of non-believers. Those multitudes who do not believe in God would turn more cruel, by the same causes that make the humble congregation, forsake their past arrogance. Breathing on the former, God turns into ice; those who, in their envy, commented on the miracles performed by Jesus: *“Look, the world has gone after Him”* (John 12: 19). Having seen the miracles, performed by Him and by His ministers, and having watched the entire world going to follow the preaching of faith; Yet, the more the Holy Spirit filled the world, the more they held fast to the evil envy that chained their minds.

“And the water flow in abundance”. After enduring the cruelty of the Jews, and after His death, the Lord breathed on their hearts a breath of love to melt the ice of their non-belief, and to make them run and eagerly hasten to obey Him. As said by the prophet David about the congregation assembled toward the Lord: *“He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow”* (Psalm 147: 18).

Wasn't Paul ice, on his way to Damascus, with messages from the high priests, to work against the seeds of God's word sown in the hearts of believers, to deprive them of the chance of sending their roots of good deeds deep in the soil of belief? Yet that ice turned into water, and produced an abundant crop, through the holy preaching of those same people whom he previously persecuted.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

“He loads the clouds with moisture; He scatters His bright clouds” (Job 37: 11).

The Lord will let the thick clouds pour dense rain on earth, to produce abundant vegetation.

“He scatters His bright clouds”. Some scholars believe that God in His love makes the thick clouds like a pregnant woman who labors hard to give birth to her baby; and once they turn into rain,

they scatter and become light and bright again. It is as though they endure labor-like pain for the sake of man, to water his land

“And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth” (Job 37: 12).

The clouds that seems as though swirling around haphazardly, are actually moving according to God’s pleasure and will, from one location to another on the face of the earth. Now, if the movement of the clouds need such divine ordinance, how much more does humanity need it.

The wise Solomon says: *“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Proverbs 11: 14).; And: *“Every purpose is established by counsel; By wise counsel wage war”* (Proverbs 20: 18).

The Psalmist, telling us about how nature with all its phenomena submit to God, he says: *“Fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind fulfill His word”* (Psalm 148: 8).

“He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy” (Job 37: 13).

Movements of natural elements, like that of clouds laden with rain, which may seem haphazard, are all allowed by God; whether for

correction, or as a sign of God’s pleasure, compassion, and mercy on man.

As an example of using such phenomena as storms and flood for correction, is the great flood that covered the earth in the old world (Genesis 7: 11-12).

“For His land” (13). When God sends rain on earth, as a sign of His pleasure on man, He counts it as *“His land”* or ‘His earth’, according to the words of the Psalmist: *“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”* (Psalm 24: 1).

If the storms or the clouds laden with rain, move according to His pleasure, He, as well, ordains for them the location where to blow or where to fall.

By saying: “*For His land*”, God intend to confirm, how He longs for man to live on the land of the Lord; as though setting him as another ‘Adam’ to live in a paradise planted by His hands, and watered by the water of His grace, to provide the pious man with joyful fruits.

3- ‘JOB’ IS UNQUALIFIED TO JUDGE GOD’S CARE:

“Listen to this, O Job; Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God” (Job 37: 14).

Elihu calls on ‘Job’ to turn his eyes aside from the afflictions dwelling upon him, that caused him to grumble; to meditate elaborately in God’s wonders, and His exalted works for the sake of His believers. When his mind and heart get filled with God’s love, and realize His divine care, his soul would find comfort within him; according to the words of the Psalmist: “*Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them*” (Psalm 111: 2).

“Do you know how God lays His command upon them, and causes the lightning of His cloud to shine?” (Job 37: 15).

Elihu wonders: Does man know how God moves the storms, the clouds, and the rain, etc. And how He causes lightning to shine out of dark clouds?

“Do you know the balance of clouds, those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37: 16).

Who can know how the clouds move, while hanging high up in such an amazing balance; how they form out of evaporated water, assemble

together in air, and remain swaying in a certain location, for a certain time, as though held and kept by a hidden hand, before pouring as rain to water the earth. It all reveals a great and perfect wisdom.

With the progress of science and knowledge, although most of these phenomena are now explained, Yet they are far from being under the control of man, who is still unable to comprehend all its secrets.

“You who swelter in your clothes when the land lies hushed under the south wind” (Job 37: 17).

In the book of the Songs we saw how the bride asks the north wind to go, and the south wind to come, to give her inner garden the joyful fruits of the Spirit (Songs 4: 16).

Some believe that Elihu presents this remark in a sort of making fun; As it is something normal for the clothes to become warm with the blowing of the south wind; although man cannot present an elaborate interpretation of this simple phenomenon!

“With Him, spread out the skies, hard as a cast metal mirror?” (Job 37: 18).

He is asking ‘Job’: Did you help God to spread the hard firmament of the sky like a cast mirror?

Here he speaks of the firmament of the sky as a mirror; That which, in the Holy Book is spoken of as a tent or curtain: *“Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in”* (Isaiah 40: 22); And as a scroll: *“And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falls down from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree”* (Isaiah 34: 4); And sometimes like a garment: *“And the heavens are the work of Your hands; They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, all of them will grow old like a garment; like a cloak You shall change them, and they will be changed”* (Psalm 102: 25-26).

“Hard”, so that it can support itself by itself.

“Teach us what we shall say to Him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness” (Job 37: 19).

Humbly, Elihu, feeling a strong awe toward God, proclaims that man’s mind is in complete darkness, helpless to enter into a debate with the great God; for fear of getting destroyed (19-20).

‘Job’ has often sought to be tried before God, and to get in touch with God’s presence, to complain what he is suffering. Elihu advises him not to do so; as once He stands before the majesty of the great God, words would certainly flee from his lips!

As though he says to him: ‘As it so seems that you are very wise, and has a complete knowledge of Him, Help us to be wise like you, in order to be able to approach God, and talk to Him; ...

As we feel as though we are clothed with darkness. On our part we confess our ignorance and helplessness; so tell us, and teach us how to stand before Him and debate with Him!

Or as though he says to him: ‘as men are unable to interpret God’s wonders and to realize their secrets; and accordingly, they cannot enter into a controversy with Him; so we ask you to instruct us how we would do that!’

“Should He be told that I wish to speak? If a man were to speak, surely he would be swallowed up!” (Job 37: 20).

Can I even whisper in the presence of God? How could I dare to stand before Him? I would be swallowed with terror!

If someone happen to say something unbecoming to the greatness of God; namely, if he dares to look as grumbling, he would surely be swallowed up.

“Even now, men cannot look at the light when it is bright in the skies, when the wind has passed and cleared them” (Job 37: 21).

If God’s greatness, now hidden, will surely be, all of a sudden manifested in the fullness of its splendor; scattering the darkness out of Job’s eyes; in a similar way, the sun, whose rays are hidden behind a cloud; its splendor will be manifested, once the wind blows scattering the cloud.

It would be befitting of the believer from whose eyes, the splendor of God’s glory, righteousness, and justice, are hidden by temptations; to wait with perseverance and longsuffering, for the Holy Spirit to blow on him, and take away the cloud of darkness, in order to see what was hidden from his eyes.

Elihu is asking ‘Job’ to wait with perseverance, as the storm has already started, and the time is growing near, for God to transfigure with His splendor, and talk to him; once the wind drives away the cloud of temptations that has darkened his eyes.

Some believe that Elihu here refers to man’s inability to look at the sun, with its splendor, when the wind blows, and clears the sky of the clouds. So how could he seek to see God, face to face, to put his case before Him? He should rather prostrate himself

before Him, with the spirit of humility, instead of grumbling, as though he is accusing Him!

“Out of the north comes golden splendor; around God is awesome majesty” (Job 37: 22).

According to the septuagint version it came as: “The clouds glitter like gold”.

Watching the storm coming from the north, Elihu says that the clouds accompanying it glitter like pure gold, as a symbol of the approaching God.

St. Augustine believes that, Zion being in the south, The ‘north’ refers to the nations of the Gentile, where Satan (Lucifer) had his authority; *“said in his heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north”*(Isaiah 14: 12-13). Now, receiving the faith in Christ, the Gentiles forsake the kingdom of Satan, set themselves free of it, and come down from the north, glittering as gold, namely, became kings; and being lightened by the grace in Christ Jesus, they became like golden clouds¹.

4- GOD IS EXALTED, GREAT, AND AWESOME:

“As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power; In His justice and great righteousness, He does not oppress” (Job 37: 23).

Even though God is approaching ‘Job’, through manifest splendor, surrounded by clouds and storms, and sitting on a throne of pure gold; Yet, according to Elihu, it is impossible for any of us to realize His exalted greatness, His limitless might, His justice, and righteousness. And, according to him, it is befitting of ‘Job’ to know beforehand that God’s appearance to him does not mean that He will answer his questions; As it is not the right of creatures, being unable to comprehend His wisdom, to question Him.

“Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart” (Job 37: 24).

¹ St. Augustine: On Ps, 48 (47).

Therefore, it is befitting of men, when they encounter God, to confess their sin, ignorance, misery, and fear, from Him who is alone the holy and wise One.

God would never show partiality to any who is wise in his own eyes; as what wisdom could be referred to a man, compared to God, whole in wisdom, and knowledge? And what goodness could be referred to him, compared to God who is alone Holy?

With this, Elihu ends his talk, in a way entirely different from that of the three friends; He ends it by demonstrating God's greatness, majesty, wisdom, and might; That is befitting for every man – whatever his abilities and talents – to prostrate himself before God.

He ends his talk saying how he sees the divine greatness approaching to encounter 'Job', as a cloud of splendid pure gold; And how he wishes that 'Job' would prepare himself for this encounter, by stopping grumbling and complaining; and by confessing the great works, justice, and righteousness of God.

Elihu believes that as God approaches, It would be befitting for all human talk or debate to stop, and for everyone to submit in silence, to listen to the divine voice.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 37

LET YOUR VOICE THUNDER IN MY HEART

- ❖ Let the storm of Your love blow in my depths; and your voice thunder in my heart.
Nothing can change what is in my depths, but the voice of your love.
And nothing can grant me Your awesome fear, yet full of sweetness, but Your voice.
The thunder of Your voice shakes my whole being, and destroys all the corruption inside me.
It separates me from all temporal worries.
In a sweet awe, my thoughts exalt to the throne of Your grace; and my mind is absorbed by Your majesty.
I wish I would not separate myself from you, until I depart from this world.
- ❖ The thunder of Your voice destroys the haughty Cedar of Lebanon; and takes away from me every pride.
The clouds of Your love rain on the earth of my heart, to turn it into a joyful heavenly paradise.
That bears the exalted fruits of the spirit.
- ❖ Amid those dense clouds, you shine all of a sudden.
When I see the rays of Your lights just for few moments, my soul gets enlightened, and I recognize Your secrets.
Your light scatters every darkness in me, and turns my darkness into a splendid daylight.
- ❖ The water of rain turn into glittering white snow
My heart, covered with ice, becomes all pure.
My soul praises You; as You scatter my sins and take them away;
And my soul gets filled with the snow of your splendid wisdom.
- ❖ The devil – that fierce beast – strives to force himself on Your paradise in me.

But he would not be able to come near me, as long as You are dwelling inside me.

And if he deceives me and gets in, he will not settle down, as Your grace will soon drive him away.

Yes, keep Your paradise safe from that crafty enemy.

❖ Let Your south wind blow on Your paradise, that my soul would get filled with the warmth of the Spirit.

And my heart would flare with Your holy zeal.

And if You allow for the north wind to blow on me; If You allow for temptations to surround me;

I shall stay confident in the riches of Your love and wisdom.

When you are moving all nature to my account;

How would I not be confident in Your good ordinance of my whole life?

THE FIFTH SECTION

GOD'S DEBATE WITH JOB

(Chapters 38 to 42)

THE VOICE OF GOD

In every controversy between men, everyone would like to have the last word that puts an end to the debate. The Lord left the debate open between 'Job' and his three friends, until it came to an end; Then came Elihu and talked until he, in turn, had nothing more to say. Finally God intervened to proclaim His ultimate divine ordinance that puts an end to every human ordinance¹.

God's intervention, appearance, and public debate, present a magnificent portrait of God's exalted care for the wounded souls, that have no one to care for them, and have compassion on them. He may adopt a firm position, Yet, in His firmness he proclaims His fatherhood and compassion, and shines with His splendor on those who suffer, to make them blessed.

Although God did not give 'Job' direct answers, Yet He gave Him the opportunity to debate with his mighty Creator, and held his hand to get in touch with God's care for the entire humanity, and His exalted works for their sake. When 'Job' kept silent, and felt completely helpless before the secret of God's exalted love; God raised him up to a level that never was in his consideration; and granted him more than he asked for, and above what he sought.

The accusations by his elder friends darkened the way of wisdom, until Elihu talked, and the light of dawn prevailed. Then God Himself intervened, and the way of wisdom got utterly enlightened by the divine voice.

Job's friends said that God would not necessarily talk; And behold, He is there, talking to 'Job', and entering with him into a challenge, as though between two equals! What an exalted love and comfort for His believers! for God to debate, converse with them!

God entered into a challenge with Satan (Job 1 & 2). Now He enters into one with 'Job', through two stages, between which 'Job' showed his submission to God. Job's very concise response

¹ Cf. *Matthew Henry Commentary on Job 38*.

each time (40: 3-5; 42: 1-6), showed his blamelessness, and the corruption of Satan's tricks.

1- The divine challenge (38: 1; 40: 2))

2- Job's submission (40: 3-5); then his silence.

3- A new divine challenge (40: 6; 41: 34)

4- A confession: A restoration of the way of wisdom (42: 1-6).

5- A reform to the situation: a victory for Job's wisdom (42: 7-17).

A POETIC CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE LORD AND 'JOB':

God getting out of His silence, answered 'job' out of the whirlwind; which was befitting to His exalted majesty.

To Job's claim that God is remote; God responded by coming, and demonstrating in a practical way that he is close to man.

To Job's claim that God does not care for mankind; God allowed for him to enter into temptation, Then He came by Himself to confirm that He still loves and cares for him.

To Job's misunderstanding of God's silence, and to his probable misunderstanding of His presence now; God spoke, granting him the same grace He previously granted to Moses. His voice came out of the whirlwind which indicates His presence; Yet, in His talk, He made it clear, that His goal was not to crush, or to ridicule 'Job' through comparing his size, which is naught, to the unlimited might of God; Nor comparing his tiny mind, to the unlimited wisdom of God.

Although God gave no direct answers to Job's questions; He presented to him, instead, several questions of His own, to demonstrate the extent of Job's ignorance; and to proclaim the glories of creation, and man's weakness in comparison. God did not answer any of Job's questions, **to show that what 'Job' thinks concerning God's alleged lack of care for him is of no value, and to lift Job's mind up from the confinement of his own problems, to God's exalted work for his sake and for the sake**

of all mankind; to lift him up from his closed world to a more spacious one.

God commands 'Job' to gird himself up like a man, to answer questions concerning the following points:

1- The wonders of the world non-living creation (38: 4-38): the earth and the sea (4-11).

2- The dawn (12-15), and its effect on the wicked who prefer darkness to light.

3- The hidden things (16-21), like the total area of the earth.

4- The control of the natural phenomena, like snow, hail, wind, rain, lightning, frost, ice; and of the systems of the stars and the heavenly bodies?

5- The wonders of the animal world (39-41):

a- The wild donkey and ox; that 'Job' would not be able to put to use in agriculture work, like the domesticated ones? Only God can!

b- The Ostrich, the hawk, and the eagle; whose life would fill job's heart with awe for God's exalted majesty, As 'Job' kept silent to all that, God talked again out of the whirlwind.

GOD'S SECOND TALK (Job 40: 6 to 41: 34):

In response to Job's wish to make sure of the uprightness of God's policy toward mankind and the world; God, mockingly, suggested to him to assume divine authority and ordain the world! ... ; to be clothed with the majestic robe of God, If he got the mighty arm of God, and His governing voice!

And to put Job's ability to govern to test; two mighty animals: behemoth (known as the river horse or unicorn), and leviathan (the crocodile or alligator), would be brought by God to 'Job'. To see if he can he manage to submit them to his authority? If not, how can he dare to question God's amazing might and authority?

To this 'Job' humbly acknowledged God's might; and confessed that God's dealing with him is based upon an exalted wisdom; God's light shone on him, and he instantly recognized the truth.

CHAPTER 38

THE NON-LIVING CREATION

Once Elihu's talk came to an end, the whirlwind he saw approaching, came and dwelt upon them; and out of it the voice of God was heard talking to "Job". Now, did those present actually hear the voice of God? In John 12: 29 and Acts 22: 9, those present in those situations, heard the voice, yet did not realize its significance.

The whole point behind the divine talk to 'Job' was that, Since 'Job' is not able to interpret God's works in creation; It would therefore be more befitting of him to deliver his life to God's ordinances, even if he cannot realize what is beyond them.

'Job' requested from God to ask him, and he would answer; Or to let him talk, and then answer his questions (Job 13: 22). **'Job' expected to hear God, question him about particular sins he has committed; but did not expect Him to enquire about things concerning the wonders of creation that He has performed for the sake of man.**

As for Elihu, he prepared 'Job' for his encounter with God, and for talking to Him; yet not with the spirit of grumbling or complaining, but with that of submission.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- God challenges 'Job' to answer His questions | 1 – 3 |
| 2- Job's ignorance of the way God created the earth | 4 – 7 |
| 3- Job's ignorance of the way God fixed limits for the sea | 8 – 11 |
| 4- Job's ignorance of how dawn emerges | 12 – 15 |
| 5- Job's ignorance and non-comprehension of the shadow of death and darkness | 16 – 21 |
| 6- Job's ignorance of how the clouds, the hail, the thunder, etc. are formed | 22 – 30 |
| 7- Job's ignorance of the stars of heaven, and how they influence the earth | 31 – 33 |

8- Job cannot recognize God’s might in the atmospheric and natural phenomena 34 – 38

9- God’s care for the irrational animals 39 – 41

1- GOD CHALLENGES ‘JOB’ TO ANSWER HIS QUESTIONS:

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ...” (Job 38: 1).

Some scholars believe that the Hebrew word translated here as ‘whirlwind’, is different from the one that came in the last chapter, in which the word ‘whirlwind’ refers to a state of severe disturbance, and chaos; Here, it most probably refers to a mere mental storm that fills Job’s mind with feelings of awe and reverence toward the greatness of God¹. The way God spoke to Moses on the Mount of Sinai amid the thunder and the lightning (Exodus 19: 16-19), He spoke to ‘Job’, amid signs of greatness of His majesty (Psalm 18: 9-13; Habakkuk 3: 3-6; Psalm 50: 3-4).

Appearing to ‘Job’ to justify him before those present, yet with no partiality, God tended to reveal to him his weakness, and to take away from him his grumbling and complaining. In His compassion toward man, God provides him with limitless blessings, after guiding him to rid himself of his faults and weaknesses.

❖ When ‘Job’ lost all his wealth and his children, everything seemed in his eyes, as working against him. But having so much love for God, all those evil things that dwelt upon him worked to his benefit (Job 42: 9-17). What happened to his body, prepared him for the crown of heaven (Job 7: 5); and before the temptation, God has not spoken to him, the way a friend speaks to his friend (38: 1; 42: 9). Therefore, let the calamities dwell; Let the tribulations fall; as long as Christ will come after them².

St. Jerome

¹ Cf. Adam Clarke’s Commentary.

² Homilies on the Psalms, 5.

- ❖ How about Him, who answered ‘Job’ out of the whirlwind and clouds; the One, slow to chasten, and quick to help; Who does not allow for the rod of the wicked to fall upon the portion of the righteous¹?

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

Someone may probably ask: Why did God speak to ‘Job’ out of the whirlwind?

1- For fear that ‘Job’ may fall in pride, because of commending him publicly before his friends; and commanding them to apologize to him, and even to ask him to pray for them; God intended to keep Job’s life and victories within the spirit of humility.

2- God’s way of talking to ‘Job’, out of the whirlwind, and not through angels, the way He did with other saints, like the prophet Daniel; or through visions, like the prophet Ezekiel; or through dreams, like the righteous Joseph; was intended to rebuke Job’s friends, and to honor that righteous man, to whom the Lord Himself came down to enter into a debate with him; something for which they, themselves, were not qualified.

3- **St. John Chrysostom** believes that God covered ‘Job’ with clouds and whirlwinds; as though He came to talk to him “*from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the covenant from between the two cherubim*” (Numbers 7: 89).

- ❖ I believe that God ordained, at that very moment, for ‘Job’ to be covered with a cloud, in order to lift his thoughts up, and to let him know that the voice he is hearing, is as though, coming “*from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the covenant*” (Numbers 7: 89). As the cloud is a symbol of heaven, God intended for ‘Job’ to be put in heaven itself, and to come to him with His throne. It seems to me that the same thing happened when a dense cloud dwelt upon the Mount of Sinai (Exodus 19: 16); to let the children of Israel know that the voice is coming from high above.

¹ *On the Great Athanasius, 18.*

St. John Chrysostom

Some may probably wonder why did God start his talk by rebuking 'Job', and why did He direct to him such questions, intending to reveal his inability to comprehend God's secrets, wisdom, and His plans? When He has previously commended him before Satan, and defended him before his friends. But that is how God proclaims His exalted love for His believers; Although He sometimes stand firm, even amid their afflictions and temptations, Yet He defends them before others, and prepares for them exalted glories. Although He fears lest they may fall by the sword of pride, Yet His eyes are always on them, keeping, sanctifying, and glorifying them before His angels, before men, and even before Satan himself.

- ❖ After losing his possessions, the death of his children, the infirmities of his body, the words of his wife, attempting to lead him to blasphemy, the language of reviles from those who came to comfort him, and the many arrows of sorrow that he bravely endured; That blessed man 'Job' was worthy of being commended by the divine Judge, when the time to call him back from this world drew near.

But now is rather the time for him to receive two portions of blessings; and to get back his past well being, and to enjoy his restored possessions for an extended time. That is why God intended by rebuking him with firm justice, to protect him, lest, by his conquest itself, he would be slain by the sword of pride!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38: 2).

It was befitting of 'Job' to shed light on the wisdom of God, for others to recognize; but he instead, spoke about the injustice under which he is falling. So God is correcting that position of 'Job', who, although righteous, yet he uttered some words of admonishment, that distorted the image of God's plan before others.

God admonishes ‘Job’, saying to him: ‘Who are you, who intends to talk about God’s deep secrets, justice, and care; when, being unable to comprehend them, you present a darkened interpretation of them?!

The text in the Septuagint version came as: “***Who is he, who hides counsel from me; and who shuts on words in his heart, assuming that he is hiding them from me?***” And in the Jesuit version, it came as: “***Who is he who darkens My righteousness by words without knowledge?***”.

And St. Cyril the Great used this phrase in His interpretation of what came in the gospel according to (Luke 22: 64) “*Having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, ‘Prophecy! Who is it that struck You?’*”

- ❖ How could it be possible for Him, who search the heart and mind, and who grants every prophecy, not know who struck Him?; But it is as the Lord Christ says: “*(Darkness)has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts*” (John 12: 40)¹.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ Referring to the extensive gap that separates us from Him, God says: “Tell me: Who is he who attempts to hide himself from Me, who knows all secrets?”

St. John Chrysostom

“Gird up your loins like a man, I shall question you, and you shall answer me” (Job 38: 3).

While appearing in the whirlwind, where no man can stand in its way, God demands from ‘Job’ to gird up his loins, preparing himself for some very serious task (Exodus 12: 11; 1 Kings 18: 6).

The word ‘man’ here, came in Hebrew as ‘kageber’, meaning (hero); It is as though God says to him: Take away from your mind all fear, and stand before Me as a hero; I shall present to you a series of questions; By answering them, you will be answering yourself, the issues you dealt with about Me with your friends.

¹ *Commentary on Luke, Homily 150.*

As to the expression: “Gird your loins” or “Gird yourself”; That was because garments in the old used to be too large to allow man to run, work, or fight, without girding himself. Up to this day, soldiers and officers gird themselves during battles.

- ❖ Girding oneself is an expression meaning *‘hold yourself up’*. God said it to ‘Job’ (38: 3); and so He did to all prophets, like Moses; God Himself appeared girded up to Ezekiel (9: 11 LXX); And the angels, being soldiers, appear as such (Revelation 15: 6)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ +God commanded ‘Job’ to gird himself up, as a sign of maturity (manhood), and of being prepared for action².

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ +David boasts that he is girded up by the strength of God (Psalm 18: 32); And speaks of God as “*girding Himself with strength*” (Psalm 93: 1) – against the wicked --; and “*covering Himself with light as with garment*” (Psalm 104: 2). Who can stand before His limitless strength, and His light³?!

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

2- JOB’S IGNORANCE OF THE WAY GOD CREATED THE EARTH:

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me if you have understanding!” (Job 38: 4).

The first question God asked ‘Job’, was where he was when He laid the foundation of the earth for his sake? As a matter of fact, on one aspect, neither ‘Job’, nor even ‘Adam’, were created; And on another aspect, God created the earth for him and his brethren, even before their existence.

As ‘Job’ did not exist when God laid the foundation of the earth; And, accordingly, he could not have contributed in the creation process; given a counsel, or even comprehended or

¹ *Homilies on Ephesians, 23.*

² *The Long Rules, Question 23.*

³ *Oration 41 on Easter, 18.*

understood what God was doing for his sake!; How then could he dare to complain against God's plan toward him?! If 'Job' was in no position to understand what lie behind laying the foundation of the earth, how can he realize God's plan and wisdom?

- ❖ It is as though, the Lord says to 'Job': 'What can you say? If it is for your sake, I have laid the foundation of the earth with such care; shall I disregard the one for whose sake I have laid it? ... He says that, as well, to those who demand from Him to give an account and an interpretation of the events, without taking into consideration: his exalted wisdom; ... Who made Him do it; who gave Him counsel; and who was there to help Him?!

St. John Chrysostom

“Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?” (Job 38: 5).

He asks him: Do you know who determined the measurements of the earth? Who was the Architect who planned the dimensions of the equator? And who stretched the line upon it¹?! These divine words demonstrates that the earth on which man lives, did not exist haphazardly; But behind its elaborate planning there is the greatest Architect, with His exalted wisdom and might.

Presenting to us a symbolic interpretation of this phrase, **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that the earth here is the life of man; the foundation on which it is set, is the steadfast faith in the fear of God; and that faith with all its measurements is the work of God in us; we should not refer it to ourselves.

- ❖ The foundation of this earth is faith; which is laid when the hidden places of the heart are characterized by the fear of God, being the first cause of the steadfastness ... It is said to 'Job', 'Do not refer to yourself, the virtues, you have taken from Me ... Lest I destroy in you what I have set, It is befitting of you to keep on meditating in how I established you ... We can keep what we now have, if we do not ever disregard how we have been established.

¹ المطمار هو خيط البناء الذي يضمن به استواء الحائط ووضعه الرأسي.

Who laid the foundation of this earth, but our Creator? He who, through the hidden ordinance of His inner plan, grants one a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge; a perfect faith, the grace of healing; performing miracles; prophecy; the discernment of spirits; an assortment of tongues; and the interpretation of sermons ... That is the way done by our Creator, in order to keep man from boasting the gift given to him, and to let him be humble concerning those gifts he was not given! ... God so ordain things; that everyone is given a specific gift; And all the gifts combined, are considered as given to each individual ... Through the bond of love, everyone possesses in the other what he himself lacks; and with humility, he presents to his brother what he himself is given, as his own. And as said by St. Peter: *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of god”* (1 Peter 4: 10). ... And by Paul: *“Through love, serve one another”* (Galatians 5: 13) ... And: *“As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith”* (Romans 12: 3).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Stretched the line upon it”. **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that those who stretch the line upon the earth to bring about the spirit of faith are the preachers who cannot work except by God Himself. As an example he mentions the apostle Paul, who, when he once disregarded preaching in Macedonia, a man from Macedonia appeared to him in a dream, pleading with him to go there to help them (Acts 16: 9); And another time, when he intended to go to Bithinia, the Spirit did not permit him (Acts 16: 7).

“To what were its foundation fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone?” (**Job 38: 6**).

The talk here is symbolic, about the creation of the earth as a palace set by God for man – the king; laid its foundation, and its cornerstone, to establish an integral, strong, and spacious building.

If the Lord Christ, the incarnated Word of God, or faith in Him, is the foundation on whom the new earth is set – the church of God – Its bases or the pillars set on that foundation, is the life, holy in the Lord, or the virtues we practice, by the righteousness and

grace of Christ, where our hearts, will, and inner energies, are sanctified and dedicated.

Believing that the holy land established by God is faith, what are the pillars of this earth?

❖ Who are the pillars of this earth, but the teachers of the holy church?

These pillars could also refer to the prophets; who, speaking about the incarnation of the Lord, we saw them as pillars set on the Lord Christ the foundation of faith; and carrying the building set on them.

“Or who laid its cornerstone?” ... It is obvious to everyone: Who is he, to whom the Holy Book refers as the “Cornerstone”; ... He, who took in Himself, the Jews on one side, and the Gentiles on the other side, and bound them together as two walls in the building of the church; as it is written: *“has made both one”* (Ephesians 2: 14). He manifested Himself as a Cornerstone, not only in the lower things, but in the higher things as well; having unified the Gentile nations with the people of Israel on earth; And unified both of them together with the angels in heaven; When the angels proclaimed at His birth: *“Peace on earth”* (Luke 2: 14)

Pope Gregory the Great

“Who are You, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it’ (Zechariah 4: 7).

“Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone” (Ephesians 2: 20)

St. Augustine¹ believes that, by calling the Lord Christ the “Cornerstone”, being the Head of the church; the church, in turn, would become the cornerstone that binds the Jews on one side, and the Gentiles on the other side.

❖ On that day, when He was born, properly called ‘the Theophany’; namely, ‘the Divine Proclamation’, both the (Jew)

¹ *Sermons on N.T. 39: 4.*

shepherds and the (Gentile) Magi, worshipped Him ... He was indeed born as a Cornerstone for those two; And as said by the apostle: ***“To create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross”*** (**Ephesians 2: 15-16**). What is a cornerstone other than binding two walls of two different directions; as though kissing each other! The circumcised and the un-circumcised; namely, the Jews and the Gentles; Those who used to bear mutual animosity; and who have basic things that separate them from each other: The Jews worshipping the One true God; and the Gentiles who used to worship several vain gods; He drew the two groups to Himself, and reconciled them with God in the one body; the apostle added: *“By the cross, killing the animosity¹”* (Ephesians 2: 16).

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (**Job 38: 7**).

When building a house, a church, or any other project, the start of digging and the laying the foundation are usually celebrated by the builders.. *“When the builders laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord,... ‘For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel’. Then the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid”* (Ezra 3: 10-11).

And when God sets His church, it is said: *“He shall bring forth the cornerstone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it”* (Zechariah 4: 7). And on the birth of the Lord Christ, the Cornerstone of the church of the New Testament, *“Suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God”* (Luke 2: 13).

What an amazing portrait! The “morning stars”, the heavenly hosts of light setting forth, praising God, and shouting for joy, when they saw that the foundations of the earth were laid.

¹ *Hom for Epiphany, Ser. 204, PL 38: 1037.*

Although they were not laid for their sake, but for that of the man (to be created), Yet with love they counted the happiness of mankind as their own.

God likens Himself, when He created the world, to an Architect who built an amazing house; on which the heavenly hosts rejoiced. ... Where was 'Job' then?!

In the seventh chapter of **father Cerinus'** debate, he stated **that God created the heavenly hosts before creating the world;** as is clear from His words to 'Job': "When I made the stars, the angels sang together, shouted loudly for joy, praising Me" (Job 38: 7 LXX); Which indicate that angels were there as God started creating the world, praising Him for His work¹.

In a commentary on the signs of the end of the world, that came in (Matthew 24: 29), **St. John Chrysostom** says that, as the angels shouted loudly for joy. praising God on His creation of the stars (38: 7 LXX); They will praise Him more, at the end of time, when the ultimate change will happen, and the stars will fall down; as there will be no need for them, because there will be no night in eternity².

❖ All that unutterable glorious harmony among the high heavenly hosts, and in their ministry to God, is initiated and kept by the guidance of the Holy Spirit³.

St. Cyril the Great

❖ Whoever dare to claim that the angels were created following the six days of creation; his foolishness would be apparent by the words said by God to 'Job' in (38: 7). The stars were created on the fourth day; shall we say that the angels were created on the third day?! Far from it; as we know that on that day, the dry land separated from the seas, and then the earth produced everything on it⁴.

St. Augustine

¹ *Cassian: Conferences, 8:7:2.*

² *Cf. Homilies on Matt., Homily 76:3.*

³ *On the Spirit, 16: 38.*

⁴ *City of God, 11:9.*

3- JOB'S IGNORANCE OF THE WAY GOD FIXED LIMITS FOR THE SEA:

“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?” (Job 38: 8).

This probably refers to the third day of creation, when God said: *“Let the water under the sky gather together into one place”* (Genesis 1: 9). The dry land and the sea were mixed together; and when God commanded them to separate, water burst forth as though from the womb of the earth to form the huge seas, that became, as though shut in with locked doors, from which they cannot come out.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the sea here symbolizes the heart that man cannot keep sanctified without the divine grace.

- ❖ What is this sea but our heart rebellious in violent and bitter struggle, boasting with the haughtiness of pride, and oppressed by the deceit of evil? How mighty are its turbulent waves! Something realized by those who understand the secret of the temptations of thoughts within themselves.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ He says: *“When it burst out of the womb?”*, to show that all that happened in stages, and not in a single strike. It reflects what Moses said; as though he was personally there when the sea was born: That the sea started by bursting out, and then took up its form, gathering together in one place (Genesis 1: 9). Do not think that it is something natural for the sea to be limited by shores; because God allowed for the water at first to spread all over the earth.

St. John Chrysostom

“... when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness (the mist) its swaddling band” (Job 38: 9).

He likens the sea to a newly born baby, needing a garment and a swaddling band; So God provided it with the clouds as a garment to cover it; and the mist as a swaddling band to hold it

tight. God deals with the huge sea, with its mighty waves and sweeping currents, as a tiny baby that needs a nurse to care for it. He did not charge that responsibility to the mountains, the hills, and the rocks, but charged it to the clouds and mist; something that would never come on man's mind!

- ❖ Do not look at the mist above the water as a something natural or haphazard; It is there through a divine command!

St. John Chrysostom

“When I fixed My limits for it, and set bars and doors”
(Job 38: 10).

Lest the sea would rebel and destroy man's life on earth, God committed it to certain limits, and set for it bars and doors to limit its movements. Yet these bars and doors were not set to make the sea lose its role, or suppress its mission; but, on the contrary, they are for the benefit of both the sea itself, and the earth.

God set for us His divine laws or commandments, not to suppress our freedom to breathe, or to deprive us of happiness; but, to let us by them, conform, in order to assume once again the image of God, according to which we were first created, for the sake of our happiness and that of others. The commandment are not meant to confine us as though in a prison, but to make our hearts more spacious with love toward God and fellow men, even those opponents to us; to love all creation, beside loving ourselves in the lord.

“When I said, ‘This far you may come, but no further; and here your proud waves must stop’ (Job 38: 11).

Here we find nothing of the legends that prevailed in the old, like the appearance of huge and horrible sea creatures; But everything took place in a magnificent and spiritual way; portraying the sea as though born in a peaceful atmosphere, with a vital role to interact with the dry land for the benefit of man; with limits set, not to be broken, despite the hugeness of the oceans, and the might of its waves.

- ❖ The sea, with its great depth, and mighty waves and currents, being told: *“This far you may come, but no further, and here*

your proud waves must stop”; It stops at a clear boundary made by the waves, proclaiming its utter abidance to the fixed limitation set for it¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

The prophet Jeremiah says: “*Do you not fear Me?, says the Lord, Will you not tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though the waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it*” ((Jeremiah 5: 22). **Father Theodoret**, bishop of Koresh, presents the sea as an evidence of the divine care:

- ❖ I draw your attention to the sea with its depths, extension, gulfs, shores, ports, islands, fishes of different kinds, races, and forms; ... Notice the limitation set by the divine ordinance on its waves, to rein its progress toward the sand of the shore; likening a spiritual horse reined by its coach, to whom it bows its neck, as it reaches the shore, as though offering a kind of repentance².

Father Theodoret, bishop of Koresh

- ❖ How amazing, that the mighty sea is reined by the weakest thing in nature, namely the tiny particles of sand on the shore!

St. Cyril the Great

4- JOB’S IGNORANCE OF HOW DAWN EMERGES:

“Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place?” (Job 38: 12).

God poses to ‘Job’ confusing questions to make him know his utter inability to realize God’s wisdom, and feel that there is no comparison between his mind and that of God. These questions, although the progress of science gives answers to some of them, yet the secrets of nature remain above any human intellect; What we know cannot be compared to what we do not.

He does not ask him: Can you hasten dawn to emerge, and the morning light to shine? But He asks him two things: Was man

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 9:11.*

² *On Divine Providence, Discourse 2: 18.*

there when God commanded the light to appear? And can he instruct dawn to emerge?! ... As expressed by the Psalmist: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork*” (Psalm 19: 1).

❖ The heavens (the heavenly bodies) obey Him; moving peacefully in abidance to His laws.

Day and night, they follow their designated routes, without hindering one another.

The sun, the moon, and the stars go their ways according to his ordinance, without any diversion.

The fertile land, in abidance to His will, produce in due season an abundance of food for man and beasts, and for all creatures on earth.

The depths (the bottomless abyss), and all the unknown orders of the lower world, submit to the same laws.

The vast sea, abides to the limitations set for it by God;

Who said: “*This far you may come, but no further, and here your proud waves must stop*” (Job 38: 11);

An un-passable ocean; and a world beyond it, under the guidance of God (probably referring to the American continent not yet discovered) ¹.

The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, peacefully follow one another.

The winds² do their role, freely, and with no hindrance;

The inexhaustible springs offer their breasts for the benefit of mankind; and the large and small animals peacefully coexist.

Everything is ordained by the great Creator, in complete harmony, for the benefit of all, especially for us, who find refuge in

¹ يعلّق Lightfoot (ص ٨٤) على هذه العبارة بأنه من المحتمل أن يكون اكليميندس متوقعًا أرضًا في أقصى الغرب وراء المحيط مثل جزيرة اتلنتس الخرافية التي ظن أفلاطون وجودها في المحيط الأطلسي، أي ريمًا قصد أمريكا الحقيقية التي لم تكن مكتشفة بعد.
² أوزان الرياح (أي ٢٨ : ٢٥).

His compassion by our lord Jesus Christ; to whom is the glory, forever, Amen¹.

St. Clement, the Roman

Pope Gregory the Great, in his symbolic interpretation, believes that the holy church, being enlightened by the rays of the Sun of righteousness, is called “dawn”; anticipating the reward of the shining heavenly life, and forsaking the darkness of sin.

“That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it” (Job 38: 13).

He portrays the dawn appearing with its beautiful colors, out of the darkness, to put an end to the works of the wicked who find in the darkness of the night their chance to practice their evil deeds.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that “*the ends of the earth*” refer to the humble fishermen, who were picked up by the lord Christ, and who later on, muted the teachers of the law.

“It takes on form like clay under a seal; and stands out like a garment” (Job 38: 14).

The bricks in Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria, used to bear a seal, to designate the different brick factories where they were made. The ancient Egyptian wine pots and the coffins of mummies were likewise sealed. In Assyria, documents were excavated, kept in covers of clay with the official seal. Discovered underground chambers, where treasures were kept, were found so sealed; and most probably the tomb of the Lord Christ had such a seal (Matthew 27: 66). Clay was preferred to wax, as the former becomes harder by fire, while the later melts down².

As with every new dawn, the sun rises on earth, and appear as though clothed with a new garment; the Sun of Righteousness shines with His light on His church, to let her enjoy with the advent of every morning, a new experience of God’s love; The image of the Lord Christ appearing on His church and on His true believers, the way a seal appears on the clay.

¹ 1 Epistle, 20.

² James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 214-5.

“From the wicked their light is withheld, and the upraised arm is broken” (Job 38: 15).

‘Job’ already talked about how thieves and the adulterers dread the morning light which exposes them (Job 24: 13). Here God proclaims the rays of morning light; namely, the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, that cover the true church with the splendor of His garment of righteousness; And that, at the same time, withhold the light from the wicked, and break their arm, upraised against God and men.

The light of the Lord Christ, who grants an eternal life to His believers, is judgment to His opponents; according to the words of Christ Himself: *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin”* (John 15: 22); And to those of the apostle: *“To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life”* (2 Corinthians 2: 16).

❖ To whom is it ***“the aroma of death to death”***, but to those who do not believe, and do not submit to the Word (Logos) of God? ... And again Who are those who are saved and get the inheritance, but to those who believe in God, and abide in his love, as did Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun (Numbers 14: 30), and the innocent children (Jonah 4: 11) who had no sense of evil? But who are they who are saved now, and will enjoy the eternal life? But those who love God, believe in His promises, and are children in malice (1 Corinthians 14: 20)¹?

St. Erinaos

¹ Adv. Haer. 4:28:3.

5- JOB'S IGNORANCE AND NON-COMPREHENSION OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH AND DARKNESS:

“Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?” (Job 38: 16).

He asks him if he knows what the depth of the sea contains of treasures; if he can describe the springs of the sea; and if he realizes the secrets of the water and the secret of death.

- ❖ Referring to Job's obvious confusion, **God asks him if he walked in the recesses of the deep**, and says to him, that he is, not only unable to do any of the things that He did, but even to know how they were done, or to imagine how and what they really are. By these words God intended to draw Job's attention to the vast gap between God and him.

St. John Chrysostom

“Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?” (Job 38: 17).

After asking him about things that concern nature, like the appearance of dawn, the springs of the sea, and the contents of its depth; He asks him now about something that touches the life of man; namely, death; that, although it accompanies him since the moment of his birth, yet he has no idea, when, or how it will happen, cannot describe it, nor can describe where his soul will go, or what he will do there after death! Although death is a fact that touches the life of every man, Yet what concern it are only presented to us by faith, and revealed to us by the loving Creator;

Some believe that, by death, He means the place where souls gather together after departure; namely, the kingdom of the dead, or Hades.

Whereas by the shadow of death, He refers to the moments and the process by which souls depart and set forth; things that are vague to man, but revealed to God.

- ❖ How could we marvel that man has failed, with his earthly wisdom, to realize the secret of God the Father, and our Lord

Jesus Christ, “*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Colossians 2: 3); the secret that the angels would never know unless proclaimed to them.

As, Who, by himself – and not by faith – can imagine and follow the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, descending from high up in heaven, down to Hades, Then ascending from Hades up to heaven; while, at the same time dwelling among us, without any decrease from what He was?!

Heavens could not endure the glory of resurrection from the dead, of Him who ultimately got caught in the narrow bonds of the tomb; that even the angels stood perplexed and in awe before that heavenly secret!

Preceded by the astonished angels and the archangels, the victorious Lord came to His holy temple, with amazing spoils, set free from death by the conquest of the cross, and brought over to an eternal conquest.

As all the gates were not wide enough to accommodate His glory, they searched for more spacious ways for the return of the Lord. Yet, because the gates of righteousness; namely, those of the Old and the New Testaments, opening to heavens, were everlasting gates, and cannot truly change, they were lifted up, because the One who is going to enter through them, is not a man, but is the whole world entering in the person of the Savior of all.

St. Ambrose

“Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell Me if you know all this” (Job 38: 18).

As by that time, no one has ever got around the globe, it was not possible to estimate its exact dimensions; although the planet earth, in itself, is not more than a point amid this entire great universe created by God.

“Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place?” (Job 38: 19).

Man is used every day to watch the light and the darkness following one another; But Does he know the secret of each, and where they dwell? ... And if he is not able to fix a designated place for the seen light and darkness, how could he know the unseen God

who created the light, and separated it from the darkness? And what could man know about the Light of the divine righteousness, and the darkness of evil?

Man may know that God can turn man's heart from the darkness of evil to the light of righteousness. But he cannot exactly explain how could this be realized?. Every day we get in touch with this work of God, shining with the light of His righteousness on the sinners, to transform them into saints.

“That you may take it to its territory, that you may know the paths to its home?” (Job 38: 20).

It often happen that man longs for the light of the day to shine, in order to do a certain work; and longs for the darkness of the night to dwell, in order to get some rest from the labor of the day. Yet he does not know where this or that go!

“Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great” (Job 38: 21).

By that, God intends to reveal the true value of man outside the circle of His grace! It is not befitting of man to debate with God in things beyond his ability, like the creation of light; but, in faith he should listen to His divine words: *“I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create calamity (chastisements); I the Lord do all these things”* (Isaiah 45: 7).

6- JOB'S IGNORANCE OF HOW THE CLOUDS, THE HAIL, THE THUNDER, ETC. ARE FORMED:

“Have you entered the storehouses of snow, or have you seen the storehouses of hail?” (Job 38: 22).

After discussing the issue of creation, He referred to the natural phenomena, like the falling of the rain and the snow, and the blowing of the wind, etc. All of which God created for the sake of man. It was befitting of 'Job' to meditate in these amazing works, that the human mind cannot completely explain, although they are there for his sake; instead of being only preoccupied with the temptations dwelling upon him. There is no comparison between the afflictions that God allows on man, and His divine care for the entire world for the sake of man. It is befitting of the

believer to make his mind and heart more spacious, to glorify the Creator for ordaining everything for his own sake.

Watching and marveling at the huge and limitless amount of snow that fall on vast stretches of land, the inhabitants of those cold regions feel the care of God for them; and see in the snow great treasures; as it keeps the warmth of the land, keeps its temperature from falling much below zero; as well as gives fertility to the land, which is apparent directly after the period of snow falling, when the plants of the land that was covered with snow grow with an incredible pace.

“Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war” (Job 38: 23)

The Lord has used those storehouses of snow and hailstones to chasten the wicked (See Exodus 9: 18; Joshua 10: 11; Revelation 16: 21; Isaiah 28: 17; Psalm 18: 12-13; Haggai 2: 17).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the snow and hail refer to the cold hearts as far as God’s love is concerned; as it is said: *“the love of many will grow cold”* (Matthew 24: 12). Yet God does not even despise those hearts, but looks at them as treasure that need to be moved; as He did to the heart of Saul of tarsus, who confessed that he was a blasphemer against God, and a persecutor of His believers; and made out of Him an apostle flared with the fire of holy zeal.

“By what way is light diffused, or the east wind scattered over the earth?” (Job 38: 24).

In the phenomenon of the thundering clouds, flashes of lightning momentarily appear; Yet who can explain exactly how it is produced, its speed, its essence, and how it is scattered. Some believe that he is talking here about the light that appears with dawn and diffuses on the earth, a simple phenomenon, although noticed daily by men, yet they do not realize its secrets.

“Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war” (Job 38: 23).

The Lord has used those storehouses to chasten the wicked (See Exodus 9: 18; Joshua 10: 11; Revelation 16: 21; Isaiah 28: 17; Psalm 18: 12-13; Haggai 2: 17).

He also asks 'Job' whether he knows how the east wind is distributed over the regions; probably binding the light with the east wind, both originating from the east, before spreading over all the land.

“Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, or a path for the thunderbolt?” (Job 38: 25).

It may seem to the watcher, on certain occasions, that there is no control over the rain water overflowing on vast stretches of land, as though they have gone out of obedience to the Lord, who meant for them to be orderly! But everything is actually going on according to His will; as is said: *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes”* (Proverbs 21: 1). The way God directs the routes of the rivers of water; He has as well authority over that of the thunderbolts.

“To cause it to rain on ... a wilderness in which there is no man” (Job 38: 26).

God with His care allows for rain to fall even on desolate land where is no man, in order to provide the beasts of the wilderness, or a traveler passing by to quench their thirst.

“To satisfy the desolate waste, and cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass” (Job 38: 27).

If God cares for man in particular, Yet He does not disregard even the irrational tiny creatures and the wild beasts in the wilderness; According to the words of the Psalmist: *“He makes springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal, the wild asses quench their thirst”* (Psalm 104: 10-11).

“Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?” (Job 38: 28).

As He spoke of the mighty sea as a newborn baby who got out of the womb by God’s command; clothed it with clouds, and swaddled it in mist; As though taking the role of a nurse even for the irrational sea; He is now portraying the innumerable drops of rain and dew in the same way. God works in the whole nature, with His own good and exalted care.

St. John Chrysostom believes that God often uses the expression of bringing forth newborns, even as far as the lifeless bodies are concerned; to confirm that no creation came haphazardly, but everything is in the loving and caring mind of God.

❖ ***“Who is the father of rain? And Who has begotten the drops of dew?” (28).***

Who has concentrated the moisture in the clouds, and got them bound to produce golden drops of rain?!

“Who can number the clouds by wisdom?” (Job 38: 37).

“Who brings the wind out of His treasuries?” (Psalm 135: 7); “Who has begotten the drops of dew? (28) And from whose womb comes the ice?” (29). Although its material is water, yet it is as hard as a rock!

He sometimes turns water into snow like wool; scatters the frost like ashes; Or turn it into ice as hard as rock.

❖ Out of water as one nature, being in all fruits created by God, God produces things of assorted strength; In a vine, He produces wine that makes glad the heart of man; In an olive, oil that makes his face shine; and in bread, nutrition that strengthens man’s heart (Psalm 104: 15)¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“From whose womb comes the ice? And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth?” (Job 38: 29).

Water freezes into snow and ice for a very concise period of time, and in immeasurable quantities, that reveals man’s inability to comprehend natural phenomena that happen before his eyes, with an unpredictable speed, that no created power could imitate!

“The water hardens like stone, and the surface of the deep is frozen” (Job 38: 30).

Pope Gregory the great is grieved to see the Jews who were likened to rain that water the earth; have, because of their lack

¹ *Catechetical Lectures, 9:9.*

of faith, lost every spiritual warmth, and turned into cold frozen stones!

7- JOB'S IGNORANCE OF THE STARS OF HEAVEN, AND HOW THEY INFLUENCE ON EARTH:

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion?” (Job 38: 31).

As many philosophers connected the destinies of men to the movements of celestial bodies, He talked about the chains of stars that God created with wisdom. Even with man's growing knowledge of the science of Astronomy, and of certain secrets of stars, Yet he has no authority on them; Nor the stars, have any authority on the destiny of men.

❖ Do you know who is the One who counts the number of stars, and calls them by names? Do you recognize the difference in glory between each of them (See 1 Corinthians 15: 41); Or the systems of their movements; As then, I probably may trust in your wisdom when you attempt weaving the affairs of men, or when you arm the creature against his Creator¹!

St. Gregory the Nezenzian

“Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?” (Job 38: 32).

By ‘Mazzaroth’ He means the stars of the south; And by the ‘Great Bear’ those of the north. No one among men can have authority to move stars? Yet, God, alone, can use them; according to what came in the Book of Judges: *“They fought from the heavens, the stars from their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5: 20).

The terms ‘Mazzaroth’ and the ‘Big Bear’, came in the Septuagint version as the Mazzaroth and the (evening stars). **Pope Gregory the Great** distinguished between the morning and the evening stars. He believes that the ‘Morning Star’ is the Lord Christ who proclaimed for us the eternal morning; Who, rising in the

¹ *Second Theological Oration, 30.*

morning up from the dead, shining with the splendor of His light on us, and destroying the darkness of our corruption; He was called by John as *“The Bright Morning Star”* (Revelation 22: 16). The ‘evening star’, on the other hand, to come, is the anti-Christ, whom God allows to prevail upon the children of earth; on the unbelieving hearts that accept his authority on them.

❖ God the Father, brought up the ‘Morning Star’ in due time; being written: *“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law”* (Galatians 4: 4-5); Having been born of a Virgin, He appeared as a ‘Morning Star’ amid the darkness of our night; And having scattered the darkness of sin, He proclaimed to us the eternal morning. He manifested Himself as a ‘Morning Star’, because in the morning. He rose up from the dead; And, because with the splendor of His light, He overcame the horror of the darkness of our death; And having appeared alive after death, He became to us, and was fittingly called by John the ‘Bright Morning Star’ (Revelation 22: 16); sometimes in his Person as an example of resurrection. He referred as well to the deceiving coming light; as he allows for the evening star to submit the children of the earth, allowing the anti-Christ to submit the non-believing hearts of the Jews ... The Lord says in the gospel: *“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; If another comes in his own name, him you will receive”* (John 5: 43); And Paul says: *“Because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved; For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie”* (2 Thessalonians 2: 10-12). That is why the evening star will never submit those who intend to become the children of heaven.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?” (Job 38: 33).

While no one on earth knows the ordinances of the heavens, or realize their secrets; those in heaven realize and reveal the

secrets of God's love, and His plans toward humanity. It is as though God says to 'Job': 'While you do not know what goes on in heaven, those in heaven know why I allowed for afflictions to dwell upon you; know how much I love for you, and how far I defended you against Satan.

8- JOB CANNOT RECOGNIZE GOD'S MIGHT IN THE ATMOSPHERIC AND NATURAL PHENOMENA:

“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?” (Job 38: 34).

We already know that the clouds refer to the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New Testament; God talks through His saintly men as though through the clouds; And He alone covers man with the water of His grace, and the gift of His Holy Spirit.

The Lord came to talk through the clouds, when the prophets testified to Him, and the apostles preached Him; many people have been covered by an abundance of the water of faith. It was not possible for the blessed 'Job' or to men of the Old Testament to comprehend that secret clearly, as realized by the coming of the lord Christ.

“Can you send out lightning that they may go, and say to you, 'here we are'” (Job 38: 35).

As we said, the clouds refer to the apostles who set forth to preach the gospel; The lightning that come out of the clouds, on the other hand, refer to the signs and wonders granted by God to the apostles to testify to the divine truth; like when the apostle Peter said to the lame man: *“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you; In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”* (Acts 3: 6-7).

And as the clouds submit to God; The lightning as well obediently testify to Him.

“Who endowed the heart with wisdom, or gave understanding to the mind?” (Job 38: 36).

In the Septuagint version it came as: “*Who gives women the art of weaving, and that of embroidering?*”.

❖ Notice how He talks about the practical side, mixing the little things with the big things!

St. John Chrysostom

St. Ambrose sees in this phrase a reference to the weaving of the heavenly vest of the Lord Christ, in His capacity as the Greater High Priest; That is woven out of God’s power, wisdom, and righteousness, and adorned by precious stones. Or it is the robe of the heavenly wedding, adorned by an assortment of precious stones, woven of gold threads; which is the fabric of the working faith¹.

“Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heaven?” (Job 38: 37).

The ‘waterskins’ were some kind of leather vessels. Can man, whatever his wisdom can reach, count the clouds in heaven, and estimate their size and weight? And can he measure the quantities of rain that pour from heaven as though from huge waterskins?!

“When the dust hardens in clumps and the clods of earth cling together?” (Job 38: 38).

“The ungodly are ... like the chaff which the wind drives away” (Psalm 1: 4), or like the dust hanging in the air, because they are without the love that binds them together by the Spirit; God, on the other hand, in His love, grants His children the spirit of love, to make them cling together like useful clods of mud.

9- GOD’S CARE FOR THE IRRATIONAL ANIMALS:

“Can you hunt the prey for the lioness? Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions?” (Job 38: 39).

Choosing these animals (38: 39; 40: 30), is not without reason, as they represent the kinds of beasts and birds of prey, considered by man at that time as enemies of the human society;

¹ cf. *St Ambrose: Of the Christian Faith, Book 2: 10.*

that the demons were often portrayed in their forms. Yet God's care is exalted even for such wild and fierce creatures; Their ways are known to Him, submit to Him, and are even subsisted by Him. If God cares for the irrational animals, from the land beasts to the birds of prey, which He created from naught; and cares for the laws of nature, from the wind to the rain and snow; How could He not care for man for whom He created them all?!

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the lioness here refers to the haughty Jewish nation, receiving faith in Christ through the preaching of the church. The Lord Christ Himself would satisfy the souls of its children.

“When they crouch in their dens, or lurk in their lairs to lie in wait” (Job 38: 40).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that He refers here to the period between the passion of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, on the day of the Pentecost; As the disciples and the apostles stopped their ministry, like a lioness which crouches in its den, or lurks in its lair; Anticipating, for fear of their opponents, the time when they would be clothed with a power from high above to start preaching.

They are like a lioness, waiting together with its cub in their lair, for the lion to come to them with a prey.

“Who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?” (Job 38: 41).

How amazing is God's care, even providing the young ravens with their food! (Psalm 147: 9). Man may only care for the creatures of benefit to him; But God cares for all His creation. It is said that the ravens do not care for their young ones that cry to God to feed them. This teaches us to cry to God, saying: “Abba Father!” He will listen to us, when our own parents do not; as said by the Psalmist: “*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the lord will take care of me*” (Psalm 27: 10).

If He likened the Jews receiving faith in Christ to the lioness; He likens the Gentiles to the ravens; And God would satisfy the needs of these and those: “*He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry*” (Psalm 147: 9).

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOB 38

GRANT ME TO REALIZE THE GREATNESS OF YOUR CARE

- ❖ For my sake You laid the foundation of the earth, and set it as though on pillars.
No one can know their hidden secrets but You!
When the heavenly hosts saw Your works for my sake, they praised you in harmony like a choir;
They sang and praised in a spirit of joy; everyone shouted rejoicing for Your love and care.
You set limits for the sea!
You shut it in as though with bars and doors
You broke its haughtiness, and the pride of its waves.
Let me go down to the depths of the sea;
Let me walk there, to marvel at its hidden treasures.
- ❖ At every dawn, I stand in awe, as I watch glimpses of light start shining.
Who can fix where they start, or measure their dimensions?
How an amazing and mighty Creator You are!
- ❖ With every morning, the sun rises anew, to give joy to the earth.
In its rays, I feel the splendor of Your grace.
My soul rejoices in your daily works.
- ❖ When I watch the clouds, I cannot realize their size;
Or accurately estimate their weight.
Even the storms, the snow, and the ice, All of them are in Your hands.
They all work with Your permission.
- ❖ You submit all nature for my sake.
You give me rain to water the land.
Amazingly, Your care covers even the wild beasts of the wilderness.
You care for me as a king You set to rein over the earth.

And also cares for the animals of the land, and the birds of the air.

You care even for the solid nature.

You provide the wild animals in the wilderness or in the forest with their food.

You even listen to the cries of the young ravens, and feed them.

Glory is to You, who cares for every creature.

CHAPTER 39

THE LAND ANIMALS AND THE BIRDS OF PREY CALL ON US TO APPROACH GOD

He talks about the animals running wild and untamed in the wilderness; and Yet God cares for them; For the horses tamed to use in battles; and for the birds of prey, with their amazing ability to see their prey while flying from afar, and their habits of building their nest on high up places.

What came here could not be a collection of the telltales of travelers of those days, who had knowledge of the habits of animals and birds.

It is a splendid and beautiful portrait of God's work in His creatures, big and small, of benefit, or fierce and voracious. He is the amazing God who created exalted wonders!

This chapter presents to us some features of certain land animals and birds, before which the believer can only stand humble to learn:

1- In the **mountain goats and the deer**, He can see the need to resort to the Lord Christ, the Rock of ages; The thirst to the streams of water of the Holy Spirit; And the trampling with their hooves on the old serpent, to crush its head by Jesus Christ, and to get rid of its authority.

2- In the **deer giving birth in the wilderness**, He can see the exalted care of God; from which the believer may learn, how to draw the souls, to testify to His Christ, and to give birth to children in the gospel, by the truth, by preaching, and in baptism,

3- In the **wild donkey and the onager**, and their enjoyment of freedom in the wilderness, He can hear a call to man to set forth to tranquility, to free him from the bondage of the world, and not to be preoccupied with its worries, that corrupt his inner peace.

4- In the **wild ox** that could not be used to plow, nor to share the manger with the domesticated beasts; He can hear a call,

not to lean upon the haughty and arrogant human might; and a call to enjoy the food of the spirit; namely, the Word of God.

5- In the beauty, hugeness, but at the same time, the lack of wisdom and foolishness of **the Ostrich**, that she does not embrace her own eggs; He can hear a call to seek wisdom, and not beauty.

6- In the strength of **the horse**, its nobility, loyalty, and not fearing death in battle, He can see how we should be ashamed of ourselves; And how it is befitting of us to die every day together with the apostle for the sake of the Lord.

7- In how **the hawk** fly toward the warm south in order to have its feathers renewed; He can see how, by seeking the warmth of the Spirit, we set forth toward our Christ; By His Holy Spirit, we take off our old man, and put on the new man, who is renewed every day.

8- And in **the eagle**, He can hear a call to use, by the grace, our possibilities, to fly toward heaven, not to look for a prey, but to get to enjoy Him, who became a sacrifice for our sake; To join St. John in flying up high to behold the great day of the Lord, and to enjoy discovering the exalted secrets of God.

1- The mountain goat and the deer	1 – 4
2- The wild donkey	5 – 8
3- The wild ox	9 – 12
4- The Ostrich	13 – 18
5- The horse	19 – 25
6- The hawk and the eagle	26 – 30

1- THE MOUNTAIN GOAT AND THE DEER:

“Do you know the time when the wild mountain goats bear young? Or can you mark when the deer gives birth?” (Job 39:1).

Most people do not preoccupy themselves with the wild animals that wander in the wilderness or the forests; but are only preoccupied with their own flocks of sheep, horses, and pets like cats and dogs, etc. God, on the other hand, cares even for the

animals in the wilderness and birds, for their food drink, nests, dens, and for their giving birth to young.

Husband and wife get preoccupied, once the wife gets pregnant; They refer to a specialist to tell them about the expected time of delivery, and to take care of the pregnancy until the of delivery; after which would start the great expenses of child care and upbringing! Now, who is to take care of the mountain goat and the deer in a similar situation? God cares for all their needs. And if he does, Would He not cares for man, His very beloved creature?!

We can say together with the apostle: *“Is it oxen God is concerned about?”* (1 Corinthians 9: 9). Is He concerned about them getting pregnant and giving birth?! Yes, He is very concerned about (the human goats and deer), the spiritual teachers, who work with His Holy Spirit; strive until they give birth to souls for the Lord; strike the heads of the serpents with their hooves to kill them; and each putting its head on that of the other, all working together to gain souls for the kingdom of God. The spiritual teachers would then sing together with the apostle Paul: *“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 4: 15); And: *“I appeal to you for my son Onesimus whom I have begotten while in my chains”* (Philemon 10).

❖ It is the habit of the female deer to kill the serpents they encounter; While the serpents try in turn to bite their legs. And it is said, that while crossing a river, each of them rests its head on the deer preceding it, to relieve herself from the burden of its weight. Why was ‘Job’ asked about the delivery of the mountain goats and the deer, except because they refer to the spiritual guides?!

They are like the mountain goats that give birth between the rocks; As, through the teachings of the fathers, which are called ‘rocks’, they give birth to souls through leading them to the truth ... Commenting on the teachers, who through slothfulness, forsake their offspring they have got by their preaching; Jeremiah says:

“Even the deer in the field forsake their newborn young and leave, because there is no grass” (Jeremiah 14: 5).

Like deer, they trample on the deadly serpents, namely the sins; and by so doing, they become more flared, longing for the fountain of life; hence the saying of the psalmist: *“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God”* (Psalm 42: 1).

It is as though, said to ‘Job’: You may believe that you are working on a high level; not foreseeing the time when the spiritual masters will be sent to the world to bear young, and through their strife, to gather fruitful souls for the Lord¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Can you number the months that they fulfill? Or do you know the time when they bear young?” (Job 39: 2).

Man does not preoccupy himself with numbering the months fulfilled by the pregnant animals in the wilderness, or with when they deliver their young. If he is ignorant of those things that go on around him on the earth on which he dwells, will he assume to realize what goes on in the mind and heart of God, His plan for him, and how much He loves him?!

“They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended” (Job 39: 3).

Delivery of offspring in the wilderness is surely tough, with no one to help easing them; Yet they are brought forth sound through the help of God, and the mother forgets her labor and pain.

While the delivery of newborns, especially in the more advanced societies, is very costly both on the individual level and on that of the nation that in the wilderness costs nothing for anyone. *“They crouch down and bring forth their young, their labor pains are ended”*.

I wish the spiritual teachers would trust in the amazing work of God, to bring forth for Him, through them, children in the gospel, through the free grace of God.

¹ استعار البابا غريغوريوس ما ورد عن الأيائل من القديس أغسطينوس في تفسيره المزمور 42.

- ❖ When the saints think of the spiritual progress of their flock, they become as though in a state of pregnancy in the womb. Let us consider one of many who are like the deer – the apostle Paul– who utters, as if he roars out of an intense pain of labor; saying: *“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you”* (Galatians 4: 19).

Pope Gregory the great

“Their young ones are healthy, they grow strong with grain; they depart and do not return to them” (Job 39: 4).

The young ones in the wilderness or those of animals in general, do not need a long time to reach maturity, nor be taught to eat, walk or move about. Those of man, on the contrary, need a long period of training, until they depend on themselves. What an amazing gift for both man and animals! While the young animal needs no one to train them, its mother being not qualified to do that; That of man, on the other hand, needs a long period of training to be able to eat, to walk, etc. which it gets from the family, benefiting from a collective culture, and the experience of predecessors. God did everything with wisdom, both for man and animals.

“They depart and do not return to them”. While the young of animals, after a short time depart to search independently for their food, and would not stay a burden on their mothers; Those of man remain several years, subsisted by the family, until they consummate the education, and practical training on a certain profession, before they depart from their parents.

2- THE WILD DONKEY:

“Who set the wild donkey free? Who loosed the bonds of the onager?” (Job 39: 5).

Some fathers see in the wild donkey and the onager, that roam in the wilderness with no hindrance, a symbol of those who lead a life of solitude in the freedom of spirit.

- ❖ The wild donkey that lives in solitude, liken those who dwell far from the crowd of people. He fittingly added the word “free”; as the burden of the world behavior on people is indeed great, that

by which their mind is preoccupied, even though acceptable to them. To set oneself free from such servitude, he should covet nothing in this world that the devil uses as horrible yokes of bondage.

He, who sets his neck free of the yoke of temporal lusts, will certainly enjoy a kind of freedom in this world... That heavy yoke was seen by the lord, when He said: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11: 28)... The lord loosens the bonds of onager, when He tears apart, the chains that shackle the free minds of His elect.

Pope Gregory the great

- ❖ The wilderness is the mother of tranquility; it is the haven where we find comfort from all troubles¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ A mere look at the wilderness would grant tranquility to our souls, and kill the carnal lusts in us.

St. (Mar) Isaac the Syrian

- ❖ **St. Mark** said: [**The reason that tranquility is good** is that man sees in it nothing that would harm his soul. Because the things unseen do not reach the soul to stir up in man’s mind the memory of unbecoming things; he would enjoy within himself deep tranquility, and, “*shall delight himself in the abundance of peace*” (Psalm 37: 11)].
- ❖ An elderly was asked: [Why did St. Anthony say to his disciple St. Paul: Go and live in silence, to receive the temptations of the devil? The elderly answered: Because the perfection comes to the monk through the spiritual behavior; that originates from the tendencies of the heart; that come in turn from the tendencies of the mind; based upon the persistent prayer, and the struggle against the devils. This persistent prayer, and the struggle against the devil, whether, **in thoughts or in visions, would never have a chance without silence and tranquility.**]

¹ In Matt. hom 50:1.

❖ A brother asked **St. Cronius**: [What should I do to fight against forgetfulness (or slothfulness) that enslaves my soul? Before having the chance to realize anything, I would be led to sin! The elderly answered him: Because of the evil of the children of Israel, the foreigners took away the ark of the covenant, and brought it to the temple of their god Dagon. “*Early in the morning there was Dagon fallen on its face to the earth*” (1 Samuel 5). When the brother asked about the meaning of this, the father answered: [If the devil attempts to take over the spirit of someone, he leads him into a secret hidden pain (a deep tendency). Here, if his spirit, remembering the eternal judgment, returns and seeks God, that pain would be instantly driven away and disappear, according to the scripture: “*In returning and rest, you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength*” (Isaiah 30: 15).

Garden of the monks

“*Whose home I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling*” (Job 39: 6).

The domesticated donkey is mostly confined to a little space in a barn, where his movement would be very limited; the wild donkey, on the other hand, counts the whole wilderness as his own dwelling place, where he moves freely, and chooses its preferable abode.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that whoever chooses to practice a life of solitude and tranquility, although he would have the whole desert as his home, where he is free to move in security and peace, Yet, through his own free will, he would choose to dwell in salty marshes that flare man’s thirst and hunger to an intimate fellowship with God.

❖ “**Whose home I have made the wilderness, and the salty marshes his dwelling (his tent)**” (6)... Those who live in solitude, and are free from carnal lusts, would be like the wild donkey, to whom the Lord has given the wilderness as his dwelling place...

The salinity is equivalent to thirst; The saints dwelling in such a salty environment of the quietness of heart, are thirsty all the time, and longing for the heavenly city; according to the Scripture: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5: 6).

Pope Gregory the Great

❖ About those perfect men, or may I call the flowers and fruits, produced by ‘the tree of saints’, the Lord spoke in a symbolic way to ‘Job’ saying: *“Who set the wild donkey free? Who loosed the bonds of the onager, whose home I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling? He scorns the tumult of the city; He does not heed the shouts of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searches after every green thing”* (Job 39: 5-8). In the Book of Psalms it is said: *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy”; then He adds: “They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses”* (Psalm 107: 2, 4-6). Jeremiah describes them as: *“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him”* (Lamentations 3: 27, 28). And from the heart, the words of the Psalmist say: *“I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop”* (Psalm 102: 6, 7)¹.

Father Beamon

“He scorns the tumult of the city; He does not heed the shouts of the driver” (Job 39: 7).

The wild donkey scorns the men of the city who try to catch him; he will easily slip off their hands. And unlike the domesticated donkey, **he does not heed the angry shouts or strikes of a driver**; he certainly feels that he is better off than his domesticated counterpart.

¹ Cassian: *Conferences*, 18:6:3.

If we adopt the symbolic interpretation of Pope Gregory the Great, saying that the wild donkey refers to those who lead a life of solitude and tranquility; those could never be confined in narrow concepts; nor would be led astray by a lust or sin.

“The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searches after every green thing” (Job 39: 8).

He, who lives by the spirit of the true tranquility, is as though dwells in the range of holy mountains, searching after the heavenly pasture.

- ❖ The mountains of pasture are likewise the higher angelic hosts, who support us by their ministry and help; And could be taken as well to refer to the exalted words of the Holy Book, about which the Psalmist says: *“The high hills are for the wild goats”* (Psalm 104: 18). As those who know how to practice the high jumps of meditations, could ascend to the high mountain tops.

Pope Gregory the Great

3- THE WILD OX:

“Will the wild ox be willing to serve you? Will he bed by your manger?” (Job 39: 9).

“The wild ox”: Pope Gregory the Great refers to it as (the rhinoceros), a symbol of the pride of this world; or to the hosts of the evil kingdom of the devil, that destroy men by the spirit of pride; whom the believer would not expect to serve him, or to bed by his manger, where the word of God – the food of the soul – is found. Pride would destroy, not edify the believer, would corrupt his concepts of the word of God, and would not fulfill his depths with it.

- ❖ The ‘Rhinoceros’ mostly refers to pride; according to the testimony of the prophet, saying: *“I said to the boastful, ‘Do not deal boastfully’; and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn’”* (Psalm 75: 4). Therefore to what does the ‘rhinoceros’ refer, but to the might of this world, or to the forces of darkness of its kingdom, who boast with the pride of haughtiness?

To 'Job', as a representative of the holy church, it is said: ***"Will the wild ox be willing to serve you? Will he bed by your manger?"***. By the manger here, is meant the Holy Book itself, the food of the Word of God, about which is said by the prophet: *"Your flock found a dwelling in it"* (Psalm 68: 10). That is why, when our Lord was born, the shepherds found him in a manger.

Pope Gregory the Great

As 'Job' assumed that he could submit everything under his will, God said to him: "Let us consider the rhinoceros; can you, with your intelligence, domesticate him to serve you in place of the camels and the donkeys you have lost? Can you manage to make him bed by your manger, and feed on the food you offer him?"

"Can you bind the wild ox in the furrow with ropes? Or will he plow the valleys behind you?"

"Will you trust him because his strength is great? Or will you leave your labor to him?" (Job 39: 10, 11).

It is befitting of man to realize that he has lost the service of the wild beasts, because of his sin. Having rebelled against God, those beasts, likewise rebelled against him. And if the domesticated beasts submit to him, and serve him, It is out of the mercy and love God.

Some believe that the domesticated animals that serve man, are generally weaker than the wild ones. It is as though dealing with man, made those lose much of their strength. In a symbolic story, a tiger, astonished to see a cat that carried much of his features, yet far smaller in size and weaker in body, asked the cat about the secret of his great weakness, the later answered: Dealing with humans has humiliated and weakened him.

"Will you trust him to bring home your grain, and gather it to your threshing floor?" (Job 39: 12).

Man may trust a domesticated animal; he may leave a little kid to lead his donkey laden with things, or an ox bound to a plow; but he would never trust a rhinoceros with such works.

4- THE OSTRICH:

“The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork” (Job 39: 13).

The ostrich is a bird of a very large size, that some call it a camel with wings. When you see it flapping with its large wings, you may assume that it can fly with a great speed, yet; on the contrary it is unable to fly.

❖ **The wings of an ostrich are like those of a ‘heron’ or a ‘hawk’,** who's flying speed, surpass all other birds. But an ostrich cannot lift itself up from the ground, to do an actual flight. So are all the hypocrites who pretend to have the behavior of good people, and may even have their appearance. It is as though God says to them: Although you have the appearance of wings, and look as though you can fly, Yet the heavy burden of your behavior, brings you down to the deepest depth!

The heron and the hawk, because they have small size, yet are provided with dense wings; they can fly with a high speed, because what would burden them is less, while what would support their flying is more ... Elect men are compared to the heron and the hawk. Living in this world, they could not be without a sin, however small it may be. But, as long as what would burden them down is small, they would have an abundance of good work that would lift them high up.

Pope Gregory the Great

“For she leaves her eggs on the ground, and let them warm in the dust; forgetting that a foot may crush them” (Job 39: 14).

Although the ostrich has beautiful feathers, and walk proudly around like a peacock; yet her beauty and large size is not adorned with wisdom. She even does not find for herself an isolated place to build a nest like a sparrow or a swallow (Psalm 84: 3), and does not lie on her eggs to keep them warm until they hatch, but leave them anyplace on the dust, to be warmed by the sun.

This is a painful portrait of some believers who do not care for the salvation of their children, whether of their flesh and blood,

or those whom they bring forth in the gospel; but forsake them as though on the dust of this world. Yet, the grace of God would often seek them and support them with the warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, to let them enjoy the resurrected life.

- ❖ Leaving the eggs on the ground, is not caring for the proper upbringing of the children, brought forth through preaching, either by lifting them up through giving good counsel, or supporting them by presenting good examples of heavenly life. Yet the Lord warms up those eggs forsaken on the dust, and flares the fire of His love in those little souls, even those dwelling among sinners. Deprived of the serious care of the preachers.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Or that a wild beast may break them” (Job 39: 15).

Pope Gregory the Great by his symbolic interpretation, believes that some preachers, after presenting to God children through their

preaching, forsake those who received faith as though in the dust, among the wicked, disregarding what they may face of being crushed under the feet by those who attempt to dampen their spirit; or being broken down by wild beasts; namely, by the temptations of the devil.

“She treats her young harshly, as though they were not hers; Her labor is in vain, without concern” (Job 39: 16).

You should not marvel that the ostrich treat her young harshly, as though they were not hers that her labor is in vain, without concern; contrary to the majority of birds and beasts, that may risk their life even to death for the sake of their young. But you should rather marvel at the rational human being, who disregard his children, according to the flesh or to the spirit, as though they were not his own; and his whole life would thus turn tasteless and with no value.

- ❖ He, who does not enjoy the grace of love, would look at his neighbor as though at a stranger, even though he might have brought him forth in God.

How compassionate has Paul been, who used to run for the sake of his children with such warmth of great love, saying: “*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you*” (Romans 1: 9-11). He did not, like the ostrich, forget his children and disciples, but always feared for them, while suffering persecutions in their preaching among the wicked non-believers. He even considered the wounds of his body as nothing compared to any harm that may come over his children.

Pope Gregory the great

“Because God deprived her of wisdom, and did not endow her with understanding” (Job 39: 17).

God allowed for the large and beautiful ostrich not to enjoy wisdom that the tiny ants we despise enjoy. By that He intends for us to learn through both of them, to seek wisdom, treasure it, and practice it.

In His love, God wish for all to be saved, and to come to the truth, offering wisdom to everyone who longs for it and seeks it. Yet in case we disregard it, we shall be deprived even of the natural wisdom.

“When she lifts herself on high, she scorns the horse and its rider” (Job 39: 18).

Despite her disregard for her young; if she feels herself in danger, she would hasten to lift her wings on high, and sets forth galloping with an exalted speed, scorning the horse and its rider!

❖ Let God be your hope, endurance, strength, atonement, praise, conquest, place of comfort, and help in your strife....

The mighty, is the arrogant man who lifts himself haughtily before God, as though he is something in himself. Such a man would not be saved by his own strength.

He may happen to have an elegant, strong, sound and swift horse; and may assume that, in time of danger, his horse would save him from any harm he may face. But let him hear this: “The

salvation by a horse is vain"! Let us take the horse as a symbol of any possessions in this world, or of any honor on which we may proudly lean; counting that the higher we get, the more secure we become! Do not you realize that the higher you get the heavier and harder would be your fall?! How then could security be realized? It would not be realized through power, authority, honor, glory, or the horse!

St. Augustine

5- THE HORSE:

“Have you given the horse strength? Have you clothed his neck with mane?” (Job 39: 19).

After speaking about the wild beasts and the birds of prey, He provides ‘Job’ with an example of a domesticated animal, in the service of man – the horse.

He asks him: The horses used to help man in battles, Who gave them that power; it is not a gift from man, but from God. Yet, whoever depends on horses, and not on God, the Grantor of strength, will lose conquest; according to the words of the Psalmist: *“A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither that it shall deliver any by its great strength”* (Psalm 33: 17); And it is said: *“He does not delight in the strength of horses”* (Psalm 147: 10; See also Hosea 14: 3; Psalm 20: 7; Isaiah 31: 1, 3).

Horses in the Holy Book are used to bear several meanings, of which are:

1- They may refer to Leaning upon temporal honor: *“I have seen servants on horses, while princes walk on the ground like servants”* (Ecclesiastes 10: 7). Servants here refer to the wicked who are enslaved to sin; yet they boast temporal positions and vain honor.

2- They may refer to the possibilities and energies of the believer to confront the opposition of the devil, by which he can overcome through God’s support. *“The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the Lord”* (Proverbs 21: 31).

3- Horses may refer to preachers: *“You trampled the sea with Your horses, churning the mighty waters”*(Habakkuk 3: 15).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that a horse here in (Job 39: 19), refers to the good preachers who gain the souls through God's work in and by them.

Despite the great strength of the horse that makes man depend on it to protect himself, his country, and his possessions, it is so tame that a little kid can easily lead it without any resistance on its part.

“Do you make him leap like a locust? His majestic snorting strikes terror” (Job 39: 20).

God asks 'Job' if he can terrify the horse and make it leap like a locust; when its majestic snorting in battles strikes terror; and it charges at the enemy, with no fear for its life.

“It paws violently, exults mightily; It gallops into the clash of arms” (Job 39: 21).

He talked about the rhinoceros, how because of its great strength despises man and does not serve him; But here He presents the horse that, although very strong, yet it submits to man and serves him in peace and war at the expense of its own life, with no fear of death.

In the Septuagint version it came as: Like someone seeking the heavenlies, ***“It merrily kicks the earth with its paws”***, daringly and violently, not submitting to the lusts of his body; keeping on his mind the proverb saying: ***“Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house”*** (Proverb 24: 27).

“It laughs at fear, and is not dismayed; it does not turn back from the sword. Upon it rattle the quiver, the flashing spear, and the javelin” (Job 39: 22, 23).

Out of loyalty to its owner, the horse mocks at death, is not terrified of the attacks of enemies, never retreats, but goes consistently forward, giving its owner the spirit of courage.

Here, the apostle Paul, presenting himself to us as a splendid example of love even to death; says: ***“What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is***

written: *For Your sake we are being killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered*" (Romans 8: 35, 36).

"With fierceness and rage it devours the ground; Nor does he stands (still) at the sound of the trumpet" (Job 39: 24).

If the horse confronts the battle with such courage, zeal, self-restraint, and devours the ground with such fierceness and rage, Is it not befitting for the believer in his spiritual battle, to be armed with like courage and confidence in God's work with him?

"Nor does he stands (still) at the sound of the trumpet"
What does this mean? When the apostles preached the gospel, the high priest sounded the trumpet; not to work to God's account, but to declare war against preaching the kingdom; *"When they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus"* (Acts 5: 40). The apostles, realizing that that was not the sound of the trumpet of the truth; said *"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4: 20).

"At the blast of the trumpet he says, 'Aha'. He smells the battle from afar, the thunder of captains and shouting" (Job 39: 25).

❖ When the believer gets the weapon of the Lord, Once he hears the sound of the battle and smells it from afar, he would charge with thunder and shouting (Job 39: 25); And at the mere sound of his prayer, the enemies will fall to the ground¹.

St. Maccar the Great

6- THE HAWK AND THE EAGLE:

"Does the hawk fly by your wisdom, and spread its wings toward the south?" (Job 39: 26).

The hawk is a bird of prey, known for its strength and for flying with high speed. It spreads its wings and heads toward the south away from the cold regions in the north; at a time when it

¹ Sermon 2: 23.

replaces it old feathers with new ones. Who has given it this wisdom, but God¹?

- ❖ Who is the hawk who enjoys his new fathers in the south, but every saint who flares when he gets in touch with the warm breath of the Holy Spirit; putting off from himself the old and cold habit of vain debate; according to the advise of St. Paul, saying: “*since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man*” (Colossians 3: 9); And, “*Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*” (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

To “***spread our wings toward the south***” means to open our hearts in confession, with the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, So that we no more find pleasure in hiding ourselves by defending it, but expose it by accusing it.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Who contemplates in the different nature of birds; how some of them have nice chirping voice; some have beautifully colored wings; and some, like eagles, soar up high, and seem to be standing still in the air; would not marvel to hear that the hawk “***spread its wings toward the south***” ... How could he then comprehend the works of the Creator of all³?!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“***Does the eagle mount up at your command, and makes its nest on high?***” (Job 39: 27).

The eagle - the king of birds - presents to us an example of the mighty possibilities given by the Lord, even to such a bird; as a symbol of the possibilities given to man, that he can use, either for edification to the account of the kingdom of God in his heart and those of others; Or to the account of destruction and violence.

Here, He demonstrates the following features of the eagle:

¹ Matthew Henry's commentary.

² hawk أي الصقر

³ Catechetical Lectures, 9:12.

1- It “Mounts up high” by the strength of its wings; is this a gift from man? God who granted this possibility to the eagle, Would He not grant man the possibility to soar up high by the Holy Spirit, to enjoy setting forth toward the heavenlies?

The eagle flies high to get away from sight; and by its sharp eyes and incredible speed, it can suddenly dive down upon a prey. In a similar way a wicked man can use the possibilities given to him to harm others, instead of helping or supporting them.

2- It “Makes its nest on high” on the edge of a rock, so that no one can reach its young.

“It dwells on a cliff, and there it resides; A rocky crag is its stronghold” (Job 39: 28).

It is befitting to the believer to make his nest in Jesus Christ, the true Rock, so that no evil will approach him. But he, who haughtily and proudly, assumes that he has set for himself his own unapproachable rock, and securely walk in evil; He would hear the voice saying: *“Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there’, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 49: 16).*

3- It has sharp eye sight: The believer will have his insight open to behold and to enjoy the advance payment of heaven; whereas the wicked uses his sharp eye sight to look downward; with his heart filled with violence and fierceness.

“From there, it spies out the prey; Its eyes observe from afar” (Job 39: 29).

4- Its young ones suck up blood from their early days.

“Its young one suck up blood; And where the slain are, there it is” (Job 39: 30).

The wicked are thirsty for blood as their daily food; whereas the believers will gather like eagles around the Lord Christ, as their eternal dwelling place. Christ would be their spiritual food; *“For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together” (Matthew 24: 28).*

❖ In the Holy Book, the word ‘eagle’ sometimes refer to the evil spirits that corrupt souls; and sometimes to the hosts of the present world; Jeremiah testifying to the spirits lying in

anticipation, says: *“Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of heaven”* (Lamentations 4: 19) ...

It also symbolizes the earthly forces; as said by the prophet Ezekiel: *“A great eagle with large wings and long pinions, full of feathers of various colors, came to Lebanon, and took from the cedar the highest branch. He cropped off its topmost young twig”* (Ezekiel 17: 4, 5). This eagle certainly refers to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

The word ‘eagle’ may also refer to the keen concepts of the saints, or to the ascension of Christ. Hence came the description by the prophet Ezekiel of the four evangelists he saw, under the appearance of living creatures: in the form of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. By the eagle, the fourth living creature, he certainly refers to John, who in his flying, he soared above the earth, and through his keen understanding, he went through inner secrets by his concept of the Word.

Looking at the eagle itself, the nest of hope in the heights; the apostle Paul says: *“For our citizenship is in heaven”* (Philippians 3: 20); And: *“He raised us together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 2: 6) ... As he who ascends a mountain, would look down to see things down there small in size; In the same way, the higher the level to which man progresses in his strife, the more he will find out, by the same strife, that the glory of the present life is naught, and he will soar above the things of the earth.

Pope Gregory the Great

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 39

YOUR CREATION CALLS ON ME TO ENCOUNTER YOU

- ❖ For my sake, You created the earth with everything on it.
Even the beasts and birds call me to encounter You.
Grant me, together with the mountain goats, to run toward You.
And to hide in You, O the Rock of ages.
- ❖ Grant me, together with the deer, to thirst in You.
To strike by You the head of the serpent.
Not to let the devil have authority on me.
By You, I can crush him; as You have brought him down from
heaven like lightning.
Even if he looks luminous, yet it is only for a moment, before
his deceit is exposed.
- ❖ Grant me to become a productive deer;
To bring forth children for You.
That is Your work, O Shepherd of all.
- ❖ Let me learn even from the wild donkey, the freedom of the
wilderness.
Why should I confine myself in the hold of animals?!
Let me set forth to the wilderness of the spirit.
Let my soul fly with joy and rejoice to You.
- ❖ When I see the rhinoceros, my soul is terrified lest I fall into
pride.
Why should I boast what You granted me of strength,
possibilities, and talents?
Why shouldn't I commit myself to a spirit of humility, by which
I may proceed close to the manger?!
You are the food of my soul.
You are both my fulfillment and gladness.
- ❖ When I see the huge beautiful ostrich;
I fear lest I become preoccupied with outer appearances, without
the wisdom of the spirit.

I fear lest I may foolishly forsake my young ones in the dust.
I fear lest I may not offer the weak the warmth of love, and the
strength of the spirit.

- ❖ Count me as a holy horse, to carry You in my heart, O the unique
Horseman!

Then, I would not fear the spiritual battles, and would not care
for the death of the body.

I would not pay attention to the javelins of the enemy;
Nor fear the sword of the devil.

By You I conquer and become crowned.

- ❖ Let me, together with the hawk, renew my feathers.

Let me always take off the old man and all his deeds.

And always put on the new man.

That I would daily be renewed by the work of Your Holy Spirit.

Let me sing by You, saying:

Behold, everything became new!

- ❖ Let me fly high to heaven, together with the eagle;

Let my depths set forth to eternity.

Let the eyes of my heart look forward toward the prepared
crowns.

Let me throw myself into Your bosom, and live by, and in You.

CHAPTER 40

THE DEFEAT OF THE MIGHTY BEHEMOTH

We often find no interpretation for the creation of certain creatures; Yet, as the wisdom of God remains beyond our comprehension, It is befitting of 'Job' to refrain from referring any fault to the ways of God (1-2).

'Job' almost stood silent before God; and if he dared to answer he did it in a very concise way. God gave no direct answers to Job's questions; but asked him if he intends to get a divine mandate to do a better ordinance of life; a way of thinking that brought perdition upon the wicked (9-14).

It would not be difficult for God to crush the wicked; as is clear from presenting such a sample of voracious beasts – the mighty behemoth! (15-24).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1- The first answer by 'Job' | 1 – 5 |
| 2- The second talk of God | 6 – 24 |

1- THE FIRST ANSWER BY 'JOB':

Although God gave 'Job' the chance to answer His inquiries, Yet, because he realized his true weight, he could not answer any question. In the days of Job's greatness; *"The princes refrained from talking, and put their hand on their mouth; the voice of nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth"* (29: 9-10). Now, realizing his true weight before God, he said: *"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth"* (40: 4). The word "vile" in Hebrew, came to mean (worthless or lightweight). He was not preoccupied with his sins, to say: 'I have sinned'; but was so absorbed into the divine secret, to realize the truth of himself before his Creator.

"The Lord answered 'Job' and said: 'Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? Let him who accuses God answer Him'" (Job 40: 1, 2).

God asks 'Job': Can the creature oppose the will and the wisdom of his Creator? Before such a question, man should hasten to confirm that no one would dare to do that!

It is as though God says to him: So far, seeing only your exaltation and your righteousness; you do not take into consideration my care for you, and my wisdom in allowing temptations to dwell upon you. Have you not learned from the beasts of the wilderness and the birds of prey, how to attach yourself to me?

“Then ‘Job’ answered the Lord and said...” (Job 40: 3).

'Job' is convinced that he crossed the line in his view about the Lord; but now, he has a good understanding of the conformity and harmony that govern God's creation. Confessing that God is capable of doing anything He likes, and that His purposes have to be consummated, 'Job' saw himself invited to bow under the mighty hand of God, and to submit humbly to His wisdom. By entering into such a fellowship with Him, he moved into the circle of light and hope. When God revealed Himself to 'Job', 'Job' in turn revealed himself, forsaking his human wisdom of looking at the Lord as 'God the Fighter', to consider Him again as 'God the Friend', who came to him out of the whirlwind.

“Behold, I am vile, What I shall answer You, I lay my hand over my mouth” (Job 40: 4).

Although 'Job' has surpassed his contemporaries in virtue; And could prevail in debate over his friends, Yet, once God talked to him, he admitted that he is weak and vile, and had to lay his hand over his mouth, to keep silent.

Here 'Job' gives us a lesson in debating with God. Even if we are righteous in His eyes, we should keep silent, lest we would justify ourselves by anything we say. We should rather let our life and practical behavior, by His grace, do the talking. Talking to Him by the language of deeds would be much better than by that of the tongue.

❖ The saints learned how to control the lapses of their tongues before the eyes of God, by presenting a good life; They learned

how to refrain from exaggerated talk, through the weight of their good work.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ ‘Job’ did not keep silent, as far as his sins are concerned; having been a true worshipper of God, he offered his confession in truth¹.

St. Augustine

- ❖ Let us now contemplate in the definition of man. Let us not take the heathens’ definition, who says that man is a rational, mortal, reasonable, and knowledgeable animal. But let us take ours from the Holy Books, testifying about ‘Job’, saying: “*That man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil*” (Job 1: 2). Those who do not respond to this description, would never be able to acquire knowledge, and are not recognized by the Holy Book as human, but are called dogs, horses, serpents, foxes, wolves, or any lowly animal. ... Whoever lives just for the pleasures of life, and thinks of nothing becoming, could not be defined as man?! Pleasures could never conform to dignity; as one would destroy the other! Even the heathens say: ‘The one with an overfilled stomach could never have a clever mind’².

St. John Chrysostom

“Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further” (Job 40: 5).

In a true repentance, ‘Job’ says: I spoke once concerning my inability to interpret the wisdom behind the temptations dwelling upon me; dared to admonish God, and wished to enter into a trial, to present my case before Him. ...; I probably repeated this once or twice; but now, having encountered the Lord, “*I will proceed no further*”.

- ❖ If we look into the words already said by ‘Job’, we shall find out that he uttered no evil. But weighing himself with the highly

¹ *On Nature and Grace, 73.*

² *Homilies on Timothy, homily13.*

accurate balance of God, he confessed that he has erred in his talk once or twice.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ If you confess that you are a sinner, the truth would be in you; Truth Himself is light. Having sins in you would not make your life shine with a perfect splendor. But once you start to be enlightened, before anything else, comes confession, to be followed by love. ... As it is said about love: *“Love will cover a multitude of sins”* (1 Peter 4: 8) ... Pride quenches love, and humility makes it stronger; Love quenches sins, and humility goes hand in hand with confession.

Tell God who you are; because If you do not, He will condemn you on what He finds in you.... Do you want Him to forgive you? Say to Him: *“Hide your face from my sins”*; and, *“I acknowledge my transgressions”* (Psalm 51: 3, 9)¹.

St. Augustine

2- THE SECOND TALK OF GOD:

In His second talk, God made it clear to ‘Job’, that, as there is no comparison between the creature and his Creator, It is not the right of the creature to question his Creator.

“Then the Lord answered ‘Job’ out of the whirlwind, and said: ‘Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall answer me’” (Job 40: 6, 7).

Defending himself against the strikes allowed for him by God, ‘Job’ would be, as though accusing the divine justice. But accepting the temptation with thanks, he would be justified and glorified.

- ❖ Whoever wrestles to defend himself against the strikes of God, would be disregarding the ordinances of God who gave them. ... He who claims that he was stricken for no obvious fault on his part; would be accusing the Striker! ... The strikes of heaven against ‘Job’ were not meant to chasten him for his sins, but rather to add to his worthiness; that he, who in his time of

¹ Homily, on 1 John.

tranquility, has shone with such a great holiness; would now proclaim the virtues of perseverance that was hidden within him... But having assumed that he was unjustly stricken, and finding nothing in him that warrant correction; Lest in his innocence, he would be puffed up with pride, the divine voice rebuked him, Actually, there was no controversy between the blessed man and God, but rather conformed with Him, yet with some difficulty, because of the strikes.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?” (Job 40: 8).

According to the Septuagint version, this verse came as: “Don’t you think that I dealt with you for any other reason but to proclaim your righteousness?” It is as though God strongly reveals to ‘Job’ His exalted care and love for him. If He allowed for him to go through such great temptations, it is to justify him and to let him enjoy the conquest over the devil.

- ❖ This exalted declaration by God of the victory of the wrestler is an ointment to his wounds; a crown to his struggle; and a reward for his perseverance¹!

St. Gregory the Nezenian

- ❖ The righteous endure the temptation here in this world, to be tested, because they are sojourners and strangers in a foreign land. What In Job’s case, God so dealt with him for no other reason but to proclaim his righteousness? The sinners, on the other hand, when they suffer any tribulation, it would be because of their sins.

Therefore, under any circumstances, Let us thank God, as in both cases it is for our good; as God does nothing out of hatred, or of animosity toward us, But out of His care for us².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ *On the Great Athanasius, 18.*

² *Homilies on Timothy, homily 8.*

- ❖ If ‘Job’ did not fight the battle, and conquered, he would not have got the crown of righteousness; and would not have heard the words of the Lord: “Don’t you think that I talk to you, for any other reason, but to proclaim your righteousness?” (Job 40: 8 LXX)¹.

St. Jerome

- ❖ I think that the ‘wind’ refers to temptations; Like the wind, temptations would reveal that the heap of believers includes both chaff and wheat grains. When you are swept away by a certain temptation, It does not turn you into chaff, The temptation only reveal your true status; what you actually are! ... On the contrary, when you endure the temptation with courage, temptation does not make a perseverant believer out of you, but it rather reveals the virtues of courage and perseverance that were hidden in you; to hear the proclamation of the Lord: “Don’t you think that I warn you for any other reason than to proclaim your righteousness?” (Job 40: 8 LXX)².

The scholar Origen

“Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?” (Job 40: 9).

God admonishes ‘Job’, saying that there is no point of comparison between the arm and voice of God, and his own arm and his voice; God is mighty in His work, as well as in His words.

- ❖ When we talk about God’s arm and His voice, we should be cautious not to assume referring anything material to Him; As by limiting in the frame of a body, He who is no not material, who is filling all, and embracing all; We would be falling into the heresy of ‘Anthropomorphism’; namely. Referring human characters to divinity. To draw us closer to Him, the Almighty God, in His Holy Book, condescends to use sometimes, analogies from the human body, and even from those of animals and birds.

¹ Letter 108: 18.

² Homilies on Luke, hom. 26: 4.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty” (Job 40: 10).

Man may adorn himself with glory and splendor, to impress others, and to gain the friendship of great men; But this would still be nothing compared to the glory of God, and His majesty.

❖ *“The Lord reigns; He is clothed with majesty”* (Psalm 93: 1). He becomes exalted in us, when we are aware that His nature could not be searched by our minds; He is glorious; and needs no commendation; He is clothed with beauty; and designates saintly angels to minister to His beauty. He created them, and set His church as glorious garment, with no defilement or wrinkle; as it is said to Him by the prophet: *“You are clothed with honor and majesty; You cover Yourself with light as with a garment”* (Psalm 104; 1-2).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud and humble him” (Job 40: 11).

It is as though God says to ‘Job’: ‘There is no point of comparison between me and you; In case you are frustrated and angry, can you, by a mere look, destroy your haughty opponents. As for me, the Scripture testifies: *“The day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up, and it shall be brought low”* (Isaiah 2: 12); No haughty man can stand before His sight!’

If ‘Job’ has managed, to a certain extent, to mute his friends during their extended debate; One look from the Lord would be enough to shake the being of every proud and lofty!

“Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; tread down the wicked in their place” (Job 40: 12).

It is as though God says to ‘Job’: ‘I know that your request was not out of haughtiness or pride; but from a humble heart; even though you admonished me at the time of your anguish, and sought a reason for what has dwelt upon you. If you got frustrated because of the haughtiness of your friends and their unjust accusations

against you, do not get dismayed! I allow you to look at the haughty wicked with the eye of faith, and to tread them down in their place, even before they move to confront your looks.

If they assume that they are more honorable, richer, or happier than you, on account that they had not suffered what you did; they will be crushed, and no temporal glories, nor worldly possibilities, or even their children, would be of any benefit to them.

- ❖ The lofty and haughty would be disturbed by the look of the Lord; whether here on earth, where He, in His mercy, exposes and condemns their faults; or there, when He punishes them with their justice. **Pride is the place of the wicked**; as it is written: “*The beginning of pride is sin*” (Sirach 10: 13); Pride dwells where the wicked do; even though it is difficult to distinguish between wickedness and pride. The wicked will therefore be trodden in his place; being destroyed by the same pride that exalted him ... While progressing in his vain glory against God, the haughty and proud, would get down in true misery.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ In a letter to “Eustochium, St. Jerome wrote: [I do not want you to be proud, but I prefer you to be rather fearful! You are like a girl traveling with gold, fearful of robbers! This temporal life is a kind of race; we contend here to be crowned later on. You cannot feel secure among serpents and scorpions!¹].
- ❖ It is not only adultery that defiles him who practices it; He is more defiled by pride²!
- ❖ Humility is granted to everyone according to the level of his greatness; and pride is harmful for all; it seeks to corrupts, in particular, those who are great³.

St. Jerome

¹ Letter to Eustochium. PL 22:395 ff.

² In Ioan 16:4.

³ On Vrginity, ch 31 PL 40 ; 413.

- ❖ It is obvious that exaggerated pride was one of the features of false prophets¹.
- ❖ It would be awful to combine haughtiness with sin ... If he who does well loses his labor in case he is puffed up; what would be the iniquity of him who adds to his sins that of haughtiness? Such a person cannot practice repentance².

St. John Chrysostom

“Bury them all in the dust together; Shroud their faces in the darkness” (Job 40: 13).

As the proud assume that they have overcome and conquered, God demand from ‘Job’ not to fear them, but to bury them in the dust, as though in a dark grave, so that their names would be no more; the way Moses did to the proud Egyptian (Exodus 2: 12).

“Shroud their faces in the darkness”; where they cannot stand before God, the true Light, but go down to the outer darkness of the pit.

- ❖ God by His just ordinance, buries the proud and sinners in the dust; allowing for their hearts to be swallowed by earthly things, according to their wish, in disregarding the love of their Creator.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ What a folly! Doesn’t the proud man know that his glory will eventually go away and evaporate like a dream; And that his greatness and authority are no more than a deceiving mirage³?!

St. Cyril the Great

“Then I Myself will admit to you, that your own right hand can save you” (Job 40: 14).

God is proud of His creation, He wishes to commend them, and seeks to honor them; But, Can ‘Job’, despite God’s testimony to his uprightness, save himself by his own right arm? He who

¹ In 2 Cor. hom 22:2.

² In Rom. Hom. 5.

³ راجع الأب الياس كويتر المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، 1989، ص 309. عظة 20.

disregards God's support to him, and leans upon his own might, would not be commended by God.

It is befitting of the believer to sing: *“For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them”* (Psalm 44: 3).

- ❖ As long as we are still in the middle of the battle, fighting and getting wounded, we should ask ourselves: Who is the one who conquers?

He, brethren, is the one who leans on God, who supports him in his fight, and not upon his own arm and might. Although Satan has his own experience in war, Yet, if God is on our side, we shall overcome him. If we do like Satan, who fights by himself, he will surely overcome us. As he is a capable fighter, we should seek God's help to confront him.

If you let Him (the Lord), who is undefeatable, dwells in you, you will overcome him (Satan), who is used to conquer. Whom does he conquer? Those in whose hearts God do not dwell¹.

- ❖ God is aware of your labor, and your good will; He anticipates your strife, supports your weakness, **and crowns your conquest**².

St. Augustine

“Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you, he eats grass like an ox” (Job 40 15).

The word 'behemoth' is a pleural of 'behemah', a term still used in Egypt to mean a domesticated beast like sheep, donkey, horse, etc. It differs from the Hebrew word 'chaytow' that refer to the wild animals of the wilderness.

Although some believe that it refers here to Hippopotamus; Adam Clark believes it refers to the extinct 'mammoth'. While others refer it to the elephant, on account to its great size; although many scholars refuse that view.

¹ Com. on 1 John, 4:3.

² Robert Llewelyn, *The Joy of the Saints, Spiritual Readings throughout the Year*, Springfield, Illinois, 1989, p. 56.

Anyway, whatever it is, this animal is characterized by its huge size and great strength that makes wrestling against it something improbable.

St. John Chrysostom says that some scholars interpret this phrase with a spiritual concept, that that beast is the devil. And being the devil, and feeding on weeds like an ox, this may signify that, when the body has authority over the soul, man would become, like the weeds of the land, a fodder for the devil.

By talking much to 'job' about behemoth as the symbol of the devil; God probably means to draw his attention to this enemy; And to that, instead of grumbling against God's ordinances, it would be befitting of 'Job' to put in mind the existence of such a dangerous enemy, who seeks to devour the entire humanity. He also means to draw his attention to the fact that it is he (the devil) who asked the permission from God to put 'Job' under temptations; but those temptations may turn the devil into a ridicule and a plaything even in the hands of little kids.

- ❖ The demon of adultery intends to stir up carnal lust, particularly in the minds of monks; in an attempt to make them forsake their vows; planting in their souls the doubt that their monasticism is with no benefit. Once he succeeds to defile the soul, he starts to prepare it to listen to certain evil talk that would make it easy for that evil act to come alive to their minds¹.

St. (Mar) Oghris of Pontus

“See now, its strength is in his loins and his power in the stomach of its belly” (Job 40: 16).

The elephant has its strength in the neck; the lion in the claws, the horse and the ox in the chest; whereas that of the behemoth is in his loins; In Nahum it is said: *“Gird your loins; Collect all your strength”* (Nahum 2: 1). It is befitting of the believer to gird his loins, not allowing the flesh to lust against the Spirit (Galatians 5: 17).

¹ القديس مار أوغريس البنطي: إلى أناتوليس *Anatolius* عن "الأفكار الثمانية"، 3.

- ❖ In case we intend to feed on the body of the Lamb, we are committed to bring our loins (namely the works of the flesh) to death; and to destroy in ourselves, what ‘Job’ referred in the devil: *“His strength is in his loins, and his power in the muscles go his belly”* (Job 40: 16). It is befitting of us not to allow the flesh to lust against the Spirit (Galatians 5: 17); But by the Spirit, to bring to death the works of the flesh; By that endeavor we would become worthy of enjoying the body of the Lamb¹.

St. Jerome

In his message to Eustochium, **St. Jerome** made it clear that, although leading a hard life is worthless in itself; yet is an important tool to attain chastity, and to bring the soul and the body under control:

- ❖ The Creator’s pleasure is not in the empty stomach ... other than it is a tool to keep chastity. Although ‘Job’ was commended by God, saying that he is *“blameless and upright before me”* (Job 2: 3); Yet hear what He says about the devil: *“his strength is in his loins, and his power is in the muscles of his belly”* (Job 40: 16). As a matter of fact, those terms were so said for the sake of decency of expression; but they actually refer to the sexual parts of both sexes. The descendant of David to sit on his throne, according to the divine promise, was said to be the fruit of his loins (See Psalm 132: 11). ... All the 75 persons, the descendants of Jacob, who came down to Egypt, were his ‘seed’ (Genesis 26). ... And when Jacob’s hip socket was struck, and put out of joint, when he wrestled against God, he stopped to bring forth any more children. ... The Israelites were commanded to celebrate the feast of Passover with girded loins (brought to death) (Exodus 12: 11). ... God said to ‘Job’: *“Gird your loins like a man”* (Job 38: 3); ... John the Baptist was clothed with a leather belt around his loins (Matthew 3: 4); ... The apostles were committed to gird their loins to bear the lamp of the gospel (Luke 12: 35); ... When Ezekiel, in the name of

¹ On Exodus, *The Vigil of the Pasch, homily 91.*

the Lord, addressed (Jerusalem) who was born in the land of Canaan, he used the words: “*your navel cord was not cut*” (Ezekiel 4: 6). ... That is why, the devil in his attack on men, he has his power is in his (groin); while in his attack on women, his power is in his navel. ... In case you need a more convincing proof of my confirmations, hear this: Samson was more courageous than a lion and steadier than a rock ... Yet in the presence of Delilah, his resistance was obliterated! ... David’s heart was like that of God, and his lips persistently praised the Holy One, the Christ to come. Yet, taking a stroll on the roof of his house, he was seduced by the nakedness of Bathsheba; then added murder to adultery. Notice how man, even in his own home, cannot use his eyes without danger on himself¹!

St. Jerome

- ❖ It is clear to all that adultery would not be consummated without a bodily action; Notice how God says about the devil: “*His strength is in his loins, his power is in the muscles of his belly*” (Job 40: 16)².

Father Serapion

“He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit” (Job 40: 17).

Like what is said about the dragon: “*His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth*” (Revelation 12: 4).

He is so strong that if he treads on someone with his feet, he would crush him dead, as “***the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit***”

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi tells us how the devil cannot stand the salvation of man; and how, when he sees a sinner start to walk along the way of repentance, he would command his angels to concentrate their effort on destroying him by evil thoughts, by vain glory, and by every possible way.

¹ Letter 22, to Eustochium, 11-12.

² Cassian: Conferences,, 5:4.

In a message to two harlots called Lantia and Maria, who repented and shut themselves up in their cell; warning them against the expected wars of the devil, and his violent opposition, he wrote:

❖ Now, the leader of the harmful hosts of the left, will command his soldiers, saying: [Stop fighting the pure and the perfect, or any of my strong enemies! And concentrate on these two who were my own, then despised and ridiculed me; and turned to become among the saints!

Bring over them the loss of hope; Fill them up with slothfulness!

Plant in them the spirit of envy toward each other,
Submit them to weakness; Let them burn with the lust for food.

Bring their thoughts back to their past deeds; Disturb them with the thoughts of adultery.

Hinder their prayers, lest they become strong enough to consummate their vows.

Give them the feeling of greatness, and bind them with the love of glory.

Let them think that they have already become good.

Send the infirm to them to pray for their sake; and send others to proclaim that they are healed by their prayers.

Deceive them that they are not just repentant, but they are virtuous¹.

St. (Mar) Jacob El-Serougi

“His bones are like beams of bronze; his ribs are like bars of iron” (Job 40: 18).

❖ This great mighty leader of the satanic hosts; The Lord of power and truth calls him “*a little fox*” (Songs 2: 15); and He considers all his hosts, to be the object of ridicule, and calls them as well. “*Little foxes*”, provoking the hunters against them².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

¹ الرسالة السابعة والثلاثون.

² Commentary on Song of Songs, homily 5.

“He ranks first among the works of God; Yet his Maker can approach him with His sword” (Job 40: 19).

In the Septuagint version it came as: ***“This is the first work of God, whom he made the ridicule of His angels”***. Some scholars quoted this phrase to claim that Satan was created evil; and that he did not fall by his own free will. **St. Augustine** wrote against this view in his work, ‘The Literal Meaning of Genesis’¹.

Who can deny that God has created Satan as one of the greatest among the heavenly hosts; And that, through his own free will, he became the laughingstock and ridicule of the angels of God?

❖ Saying that Satan was ***“the first work of the Lord, who made him the ridicule of His angels”***, does not mean that he was the first of His creation; nor that he was created evil since the beginning; But, with God’s prior knowledge that he was going to have an evil will, that would tend to harm the good, He created him, despite his evil intention, to be for the benefit of the good, This is the meaning of the words: “to become the ridicule of His angels”; As God has indeed foreseen that, when He created him².

St. Augustine

Satan has been a prominent star among the heavenly creatures; He was the ***“Morning star, son of the dawn” (Isaiah 14: 12)***; He not only enjoyed the light, but shone with his light on others; being the morning shining light, as a divine gift. Yet, he felt haughty above God his Creator, who granted him the light. Having assumed that he could exalt to the level of God Himself, and even greater than Him: Having isolated himself from the Source of light, and intended to sit on Mount Zion (Psalm 48: 2), the holy Mount of God; And having counted himself like God in greatness, and soared above the clouds; He has fallen to become darkness instead of light.

¹ St. Augustine: *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book 11. Ch 20 ff.*

² *Literal Meaning of Genesis, 11: 22.*

- ❖ Those who say that Satan is not God’s creation, are wrong; Being Satan, he is not God’s creation; But being himself, as (a creature), he is the creation of God. This is the same as saying that the murderer is not a creation of God; but as a human being, he is a creation of God¹.
- ❖ It is clear from these words (Isaiah 14: 12), that he, who was before “Lucifer”, who appeared in the morning, has fallen from heaven. As, if – as claimed by some –he has been a being of darkness, why was it said that he was like “Lucifer”; namely, (the bearer of light). Or how could he be the “son of the morning”, if he never had light²?

The scholar Origen

- ❖ By saying “The prince of this world”, the Lord Christ means ‘Satan’; not that he governs the heaven and the earth; Or else he would turn the creation upside down; But that he governs those who deliver themselves to him.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ From these words, we understand that there is only one King – the Creator of the whole universe; While, on the other side, there is **‘the prince of this world’**, who calls himself ‘the king of the hosts of darkness’. The true King is ministered by thousands of thousands of angels; whereas the king of the hosts of darkness, is surrounded by as many of demons (Colossians 1: 13). The King of kings, and the Lord of lords, is followed by principalities, authorities, and virtues; And at the end, the Lord Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after putting an end to all rule, all authority, and all the power of the enemy; For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 25)³.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

¹ *In Job. tome 2. c 7.*

² *De Principiis 1:5.*

³ *Homilies on Song of Songs, 14. ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار.*

“The mountains are his pasture; and all the wild animal play nearby” (Job 40: 20).

Some see here the amazing goodness of God; as despite the huge size and might of this beast, yet he is not being carnivorous like a lion or a tiger. Because if he is, he would, with his enormous size, need to devour an incredible number of prey. But he is herbivorous, and feeds on the weeds and vegetation that abound on the mountain. That is why the other beasts of the wilderness, of weaker bodies, do not fear him, but play nearby.

“Under the lotus trees he lies, in the coverts of the reeds and in the marsh. The lotus trees cover him with their shade; The willows by the brook surround him” (Job 40: 21, 22).

As the animals of the wilderness play around him, he does not need to hide in dark caves, to jump all of a sudden on a prey; but in peace he lies under the shade of the lotus trees, with the other animals playing nearby.

Pope Gregory the Great presents to us a symbolic interpretation of this phrase, saying: [Behemoth finds a kind of peace and comfort in those who become cold through their retreat from the warm rays of the sun. It is said: ***“He lies in the shade”***; namely in the wet places. ***“The willows of the brook”***, are the minds of the earthly people, with the wetness of their carnal lusts, where the devil puts the fingerprints of his evil, and dwells in their minds as though in a wetland. As the feet do not slide on dry land, but on a slippery wetland; those who cannot stand upright, pass through this life on wetland].

“Indeed the river may rage, yet he is not disturbed; He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth” (Job 40: 23).

As this huge animal need a considerable amount of water, it so seems as though capable of drinking the whole river. He would not become disturbed if the Jordan floods over, but would comfortably drink from it with no fear.

Pope Gregory believes that the waters refer to peoples; the devil opened his mouth to drink the whole river; namely the entire human race; considering them his drink, and it is his right to

swallow them up. When the Lord Christ came to the Jordan, the enemy intended to open his mouth to drink the river into which the Lord descended; but in vain the enemy tried to take hold of the Lord Christ, who crushed the head of the dragon in the waters of the Jordan.

The enemy is still persistent on opening his mouth to swallow the whole Jordan River; namely, to take hold of those who gain the secret of baptism, and become the children of God; whom, in case they become slothful, the devil would deceive them to regain their son hood to him.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, talking about the gift of Baptism, as a liberation from the authority of the devil – the beast dwelling in the depths of water – says: [In the book of ‘Job’, it came that in the water there was the beast in whose mouth the Jordan was gushed (Job 40: 23). As “*the head of Leviathan had to be broken*” (Psalm 74: 14), The Lord descended and chained him in the water, in order that in it, we would gain the power and the authority to trample on the serpents and the scorpions (Luke 10 19). That beast was so great and horrible¹; and was so agitated against anyone whom he encounters, that the “Life” Himself descended there to encounter him, to shut up the mouth of death; And once we are saved, we cry out saying: “*O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15: 55). The sting of death was taken out by Baptism! ... Behold, You enter into the water carrying your sins; and with the grace of God sealing your souls, you will not be any more swallowed by the fearful beast²].

“Can one take him with hooks, or pierce his nose with a snare?” (Job 40: 24).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the snares that pierces the nose of behemoth (the devil), are the serious counsels of the saints, and their firm concepts, by which the Lord pierces his nose, takes away his power, and destroys his deceiving tricks.

¹ عوض أي 26:40.

² Cat. Lect. 3:11,12.

It is amazing how the Lord allows for the existence of the devil, and at the same time, He leaves me to confront him; knowing for sure that, by Him, I shall overcome him; by the spear of the cross I shall strike and break his haughty nose. By the Spirit of the Lord I live a conqueror; singing with the spirit of conquest in victory over Satan who is falling like lightning from heaven.

❖ The devil aims his arrows against me; But I have a sword.

Although he carries a bow, **yet he does not dare to approach me, he aims his arrows from afar¹.**

❖ With his compassion, He shows that even if the devil has mastered tens of thousands of plans against the human race, yet they are of no benefit to him; As God always guide us to greater honor.

You have lost the paradise (the Garden of Eden); But God granted you the heaven.

You have fallen under judgment, to labor for some time; but you are honored by the eternal life.

God ordered the earth to produce thorns and thistles; whereas the soil of the Spirit will produce fruits. Don't you see how the gain is greater than the loss²?!

St. John Chrysostom

❖ Paul incites us to be brave and strong like a wrestler and a soldier of Christ, doing everything with love for God, and for one another.

St. Dedymus the blind

❖ Let us put on our head the helmet of salvation, lest we get wounded and die in the battle.

Let us gird our loins with the truth, lest we find ourselves weak in battle.

Let us stand and wake Christ up, to calm down the waves of the sea for us.

¹ *Baptismal Instructions, 3:11.*

² *Sermon in Gen. 7, PG 5: 614 C–D.*

Let us take up the shield against **the evil one**, in preparation for the gospel of our Savior (Ephesians 6L 15-16).

Let us receive from our Lord **the authority to trample on the serpents and the scorpions** (Luke 10: 19).

Let us rejoice in our journey all the time (Roman 12: 12); to make Him rejoice in us, He who is our hope and Savior.

Let us take for ourselves a weapon for the battle (Ephesians 6: 16) - the preparation for the gospel.

Let us knock on the door of heaven (Mathew 7: 7); to have it open before us, and to enter through it.

Let us seek mercy diligently, to get what is essential for us.

Let us seek His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6: 33)

Let us meditate in what is up high, in heaven, where Christ ascended and is glorified.

Let us forget the world. Which is not ours, to reach what we are invited for?

Let us raise our eyes up high, to behold the transfigured Light.

Let us lift our wings up like eagles, to see where the carcass is (Matthew 24: 28).

Our enemy who fights against us, dear brethrer, is clever; prepares himself to attack the brave and victorious, to make them weak.

Whereas the feeble, who are his, he does not bother to fight against them, as they are already captives, delivered to him.

Who has wings, should fly away from him, to avoid the arrows he aims toward him.

The spirituals see him fight, and his weapons never prevail against them.

All the children of light do not fear him; as darkness flee before the light. The children of the Good do not fear the evil one; because they are provided with the power to trample on him with their feet (Genesis 3: 15)¹.

St. Aphrahat

¹ *Demonstrations*, 6.

❖ Not a single sin coming from a satanic tribulation could approach the body of the Lord. The Lord ascended before the temptations of the enemy, to give humanity its conquest back. He turned Satan into a plaything; as proclaimed by David: “*And there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there*” (Psalm 104: 26); And, “For the afflicted to crush the oppressor” (Psalm 72: 4); And “*You broke the heads of Leviathan in the waters*” (Psalm 74: 13-14); And in the book of ‘Job’, the Lord proclaims that Leviathan will become a plaything, and will be caught in this temptation, saying: “*You draw Leviathan with a hook*” (Job 41: 1)¹.

Father Chromatius

¹ Chromatius: *Tractate on Mathew, 14:5*. صديق القديس جيروم وروفيوس.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 40

WHO CAN SAVE ME FROM THE DEVIL, BUT YOU

- ❖ Amid my afflictions, my soul is embittered.
I enter with You into a bitter admonishment.
I forget my true size!
I forget that I am just vile dust, before a great Creator.
- ❖ I erred in both my thought and my words;
I spoke once and twice;
I wondered: Why would You make the way of the wicked a success?
Why would you allow for me to have tribulations?
But I shall proceed no further.
I shall keep silent before You.
Your arm is mighty, and Your voice is thunder.
Your majesty and Your splendor, who can describe them?
- ❖ I discovered the truth of my weak self.
And knew the violence of the devil my enemy.
Who will lift me up but you?
Who will save me from this enemy but You, O the Philanthropic One!
Give me the strength, O Lord, to bring my loins to death.
Not to allow the lusts of the body to destroy those of the Spirit.
The strength of the enemy is in his loins and the muscles of his belly.
Keep me safe from him, and sanctify my loins and my belly.
- ❖ You created him as a luminous star.
Yet in his evil, he was brought down to the pit.
He wishes he can draw me together with him.
Who will save me from him, but You?
He open up his mouth to swallow the whole human race.
I wish I can hide in You, that he cannot approach me.
I wish I can enjoy Your cross, to pierce his nose with it.
Let me live with Your Holy Spirit.

To break down his haughty nose!

CHAPTER 41

THE UNTAMABLE DRAGON

This chapter begins with an enjoyable talk by God, not just addressed to 'Job', but to all humanity, to reveal to them the new possibilities that became ours by Jesus Christ. If Leviathan, the enemy of mankind boasts his abilities and authority, Our Christ caught him by a snare, and turned him into what is like a little sparrow for the children to play with without fear.

In this chapter God admonishes 'Job', who more than once, sought to stand before God, face to face, to debate against Him, concerning the tribulations that dwelt upon him. Here, God presents to 'Job' several questions, going around one point: If you cannot confront the horrible and most fearful crocodile in the river, and catch him? How dare you seek to confront the Creator?!

If no man can confront the horrible Leviathan, the river crocodile, who can destroy the life of man; and who symbolizes the devil, the real enemy of man; without a support from God; How can he enter into a confrontation against God Himself, the Grantor of conquest to man, even against the devil, and all his hosts?!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- Who can confront Leviathan? | 1 – 10 |
| 2- A description of Leviathan | 11 – 34 |

1- WHO CAN CONFRONT LEVIATHAN?

“Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook? Or snare his tongue with a line which you lower?” (Job 41: 1).

In His talk to 'Job' about the devil, God intends to confirm to him, that even with what characterize him of strength and violence; Yet, as far as the believer is concerned, he is no more than like a large fish, that can be caught with a little snare!

The identity of **Leviathan**; meaning here the devil; was the object of much controversy; of which:

1- He is a huge, violent and voracious aquatic creature, whose name came in the Septuagint version as 'Dralaonate'; namely, 'a dragon'; the way it also came in the Syrian and old

Arabic versions. The false prophet and the anti-Christ were likened to the sea dragon and the land dragon.

2- A unique deadly kind of venomous serpents. In certain Jewish stories, it came that a huge serpent winds itself around the entire earth, giving forth its venom on it.

3- A kind of destructive whales.

4- According to Bochart, it is the crocodile of the Nile River.

5- According to Hasaeus, it is not a whale, but an 'Orca'; which is a kind of huge and distorted-looking aquatic creature, armed with sharp teeth that bring terror even to whales.

6- According to Grotius, it is enormous huge fish, by the name of 'mular' or 'musar', found in the Mediterranean Sea.

7- According to Scultens, it is a symbolic name of an ancient horrible animal, meaning the devil.

8- **Pope Gregory the Great** believes that it is given the name 'Leviathan' as a sort of mockery; meaning something huge and horrible.

Those who think it as a kind of crocodile, depend on the following facts:

1- There are no whales in the Mediterranean or in the rivers in this region; but the crocodile were abundant in the River Nile, and in the rivers of Asia and Africa. Therefore 'Job' had no knowledge of the whales, but only of crocodiles. It was indeed God who was talking; and was aware of everything He created; But still, He would not talk to 'Job' about an animal he knew nothing about!

2- The description mentioned here applies to the crocodile, being voracious; violent; un-tamable; with a horrible mouth gape, armed with formidable teeth; with a body covered by overlapping scales; has horrible eyes; could not be caught by traditional methods used to catch wild animals; usually between 18 and 20 feet long, but may reach up to 30 feet; considered to be among the most fearsome aquatic animals; floats quietly on the surface of the water to catch any prey he finds, or hide among the papyrus reeds to jump on any animal, drag it under the water to drown it and then devour it.

3- What would confirm the assumption that it is a crocodile, is what came in Job 40: 15, about 'behemoth', also an aquatic animal, most probably (hippocampus), that also abounded in the same region of the River Nile.

In some drawings in 'Herculaneum', we find scenes of Egyptian nature, with a crocodile lying among the water reeds, and a hippopotamus on an island nearby. In the famous mosaic in Praeneste, we find plants and animals of Egypt and Ethiopia together in the River Nile. Herodotus refers to the facts that some Egyptians in regions like Thebes, Ombite, Arsinoite, and Maadbeh (facing the city of Manphalot nowadays), used to consider the crocodile as holy, deal with it with exaggerated reverence, offer to it fish and costly food, and adorn its head with valuable jewelry and precious stones, and after its death embalm it with fragrant ointments. While in other regions, it was the other way round, people used to despise it, and use every chance to attack and destroy it.

Gesenws believes that the word 'Leviathan' is derived from the word 'Laowah', when a certain animal twist its body around another animal, to kill and devour it.

Herodotus mentions that among the ways to catch the crocodile was to fix a big piece of pork flesh on a snare, and let it float on the water surface. Then bring a live pig on the shore and beat it violently until it screams loud. When a crocodile is drawn by its screams, and heads toward the shore to devour it, it finds the piece of pork meat, and swallows it together with the snare. Dragging the crocodile to the shore, the hunters cover its eyes with mud to make it easy to control it,

Thevonet believes that some hunters used to dig a deep hole on the shore and cover it with reeds; And when a crocodile falls in one, and cannot climb out of it, they leave it there for a few days without food to weaken it, then tie up its jaws with ropes, and drag it up.

Having no tongue, or a tiny one attached to its lower jaw; and referring to usual way of drawing a fish by a snare through its

tongue, God asks if 'Job' cannot draw Leviathan by its tongue; how would he deal with the devil the enemy of all mankind?!

The devil, that extremely violent and unbeatable enemy; when the living Son of God descended to our land, and incarnated, His incarnate body, or His Manhood, became the (snare) to catch the devil. Assuming that Christ, having carried a body like man, and with a like soul, he could have authority on Him, to bring Him over to His kingdom of darkness, he stirred up his followers to demand His crucifixion; not aware of the snare set for him; as by the cross he (the devil) was made of no reputation, lost his authority, and was deprived of the captives whom he took under his authority.

The lord let the devil and his followers blaspheme Him, and accuse Him; not aware that by the same tongue they blasphemed the Savior of the world, he and his angels were drawn to hell.

- ❖ Leviathan was caught by the snare of the body of our Savior at the time of His passion, when he was stabbed to death by His Godhead.
- ❖ Do you understand, O 'Job', what I did when I sent my only-begotten Son in flesh for the perdition of the corruptor? In My Son, the mortal body is apparent, and not the power of His eternity. This is a kind of snare that conceals the power by which it pierces the one who swallows it!

"You snare his tongue with a (cord)" ... The sin is symbolized by a 'cord', or a 'rope' according to the words of the prophet: "*Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity*" (Isaiah 5: 18) ...; and: "*A threefold cord is not easily broken*" (Ecclesiastes 4: 18). The faith in truth, woven by the mouth of preachers, through the Holy Trinity, abides in the elect; and is only broken in the heart of the wicked. Thus here, we can understand the word 'cord' as (faith) or as (sin); As our incarnate Lord has bound the mouth of Leviathan by a cord (or a rope), as He appeared in the likeness of the body of sin, and condemned all the wrong teachings ... Through the likeness of the body of sin, the tongue of Leviathan

is bound; when the truth became known, before which the vain teachings were muted!

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ Now dear brethren, the devil is slain; the tyrant who is against the whole world, no longer owns death, but life prevails instead of death; When the Lord said: “*I am the Life*” (John 14: 6), everything was filled with joy and gladness; according to the scripture: “*The Lord reigned, let the earth rejoice*” ... Now, as death is no more, and the kingdom of the devil is destroyed, everyone got filled with joy and gladness.
- ❖ If the devil, the enemy of our race has fallen from heaven, to our lower range, he got the authority over his followers who work deceit for the sake of disobedience, not only in those who are deceived, but attempt to hinder those who are exalting upward; according to the words of the apostle: “*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2: 2). **The Lord came to drive the devil away, and to cleanse the air of him**, preparing the way to heaven, “*through the veil, that is, His flesh*” (Hebrew 19; 20); ... What kind of death can realize this, but the death that takes place in the air; namely on the cross?! ... By being lifted up on the cross, the lord cleansed the air of the evil of the devil; according to the words of the Lord Himself: “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Luke 10: 18); by which a new inauguration for the way to heaven was realized, according to the words of the Psalmist: “*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!*” (Psalm 24: 7 – the Septuagint). ... The divine Word was in no need for the gates to be opened; as being the Lord of all, nothing of his works is closed before Him; but it is us who need the opening of the gates; Carrying us in His body, He prevailed on death to our account, and paved for us the way to heaven¹.

¹ *De Incar.* 25.

- ❖ The Lord got in touch with every particle of His creation, and set it free from all the deceits of falsity and illusion; And according to the words of the apostle Paul, **He disarmed by Himself the principalities and powers, triumphing over them on the cross**; that no one after Him would be deceived, but find everywhere the word of the true God¹.

St. Pope Athanasius the apostolic

- ❖ The Lord, by standing fast before the temptations of the enemy, to give the conquest back to humanity; made the devil a plaything; as David proclaimed: “*Leviathan You have made to play there*” (Psalm 104: 26); and: “*You have broken the heads of Leviathan on the waters*”. And the Lord proclaims in the book of ‘Job’ that Leviathan, in this temptation, will become a plaything: “***You draw out Leviathan with a hook***” (Job 41: 1)².

Father Khromotius

- ❖ The devil is deceived through being wounded with his own sting; and through immunizing the one he intended to weaken, against him. The blessed ‘Job’ got immunized when he was wounded; his whole body got covered with sores; endured the stings of the devil, and resisted the effect of his venom. It is well said to him: ‘You draw out leviathan with a hook’; you play with him the way a kid plays with a sparrow; and you lay your hand on him” (Job 41: 1, 5, 8 LXX).

You saw how Paul ridiculed him, when the serpent took hold of his hand, and could not harm him. He drew Satan from his hidden place, and turned his venom meant for the destruction of the flesh, into a balsam to heal the spirit; as what harms the flesh would benefit the spirit (1 Corinthians 5: 5).

Therefore, I shall let the serpent strike everything earthly in my body; I shall let her bite my flesh and turn it blue; Then the Lord will say about me: “*Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life*” (Job 2: 6).

¹ *De. Incarn. 45.*

² *Tractates on Matt. 14: 5.* (صديق روفينوس وجيروم).

How amazing! God delivers the keeping of the soul of man, into the hand of the devil who wishes to destroy him ! ... By the command of the Lord, the devil became the keeper of His flock; ... Against his own will, he turned into an executioner of the commandments of heaven; And despite his cruelty, he became obedient to the commandments of meekness¹!

❖ **The day of the crucifixion of our Lord, turned into a day of great tribulation and grief for the devil and his hosts;** because by His death and His descent to Hades, He did to them what He previously did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians; ... He delivered the sons of men from their bondage, the way He delivered the children of Israel from the land of Egypt².

St. Ambrose

❖ Despite the abundance of boasting and insolence of the devil, the Savior caught him as a great dragon (Leviathan) by a fishhook (Job 41: 1); and as a beast He pressed down its tongue with a line, put a reed through his nose, and pierced his jaw with a hook (Job 41: 2). The Lord chained him to let us play with him as a bird (Job 41: 5), together with his followers, the demons, as serpents and scorpions (Luke 10: 19), for us to trample them under our feet³.

Pope Athanasius the apostolic

“Can you put a reed through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?” (Job 41: 2).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the openings of the nose refer to his deceit; whereas the reed refers to the divine might.

If the devil keeps blowing his deceits and tricks as though from his nose, in order to let man fall into a series of sins, then into despair

to become unable to stand upright; Yet the mercies of the Almighty God nullifies these deceits, fills man with hope in the

¹ *On Repentance 1: 13:64-65.*

² *On Belief in the Resurrection 2:110.*

³ *Vita antonii, 24.*

forgiveness of his sins, and makes him stand by the grace of God working in him.

Although some believe that He means the jewelries by which some Egyptians used to adorn the crocodile as a god; Yet it is obvious that The talk here is not concerning worshipping the crocodile and adorning it as a god, but concerning his violence that makes it difficult to tame him.

“**A reed**” (agmon), a kind of rope, refers to the fact that Leviathan enjoys a tremendous strength that makes it impossible to put a rope around his ears to bind his jaws. It was the custom in the east to put a ring in the ear of oxen and cows to drag them by it.

“**A hook**” (choach), a collar. It was the custom and still is to pierce an iron hook in the jaw of the big fish caught, to hang it in water by a rope, until the time comes to draw it out, when there is a buyer¹.

“Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you?” (Job 41: 3).

When man falls into captivity, he would humbly make supplications to his captors; But not the devil; being like a fierce animal, he would not stop struggling, even after being caught, in an attempt to find a chance to devour his catcher. He knows no language of compassion.

- ❖ The devil may utter soft words to the incarnate Son, saying: “*I know You, who You are – the Holy One of God*” (Luke 4: 34); and may make supplications to Him, as he did through ‘Legion’, saying: “*If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine*” (Matthew 8: 31).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The devil always works hard, especially when he faces the risk of losing his spoil².

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 215.

² *Homilies on Corinthians*, 43:5.

- ❖ He is always consistent, and would never despair! We should learn from this, that even if we fall a thousand times, and stand upright again; the devil would never quit or hesitate to go on fighting us.
- ❖ The prophet Zechariah teaches us that “*the angels go to and fro throughout the earth*” (Zechariah 1: 10-11); That miserable devil, does the same, to be more condemned for his evil, and for us to be more cautious toward him, who is called “*the ruler of the darkness of this age*” (Ephesians 6: 12).

Speak out, O devil, what have you done? He says: I went to and fro throughout the earth, and here I am!.

What have you achieved by going to and fro? ... Having achieved nothing good or of benefit, he does not answer.

St. John Chrysostom

Although the devil never submit, nor calm down, even when defeated once and several times; The Lord Christ has cast out many demons from several people. Sometimes the demons humbly confess that He is the “Holy One of God”, hoping that He would not torture them, other times they ask his permission to enter into a herd of swine; or ask Him: Why did you come to torture us? ... So it will be with him, who bears the Lord Christ inside him; Before him the demons would get confused, as though supplicating to him not to fight them by his prayers, and through his deep fellowship with the Savior.

As the believers make a practical renewable covenant with God, and set themselves free from the covenant done with the devil, the devil would collapse; because instead of them being enslaved to him, he would be enslaved to them; His venomous tricks and deceit against them would turn to their edification, justification, and glorification.

- ❖ Through His passion “*the Lord ascended on high, led captivity captive, gave gifts to men*” (Psalm 68: 18; Ephesians 4: 8). He granted those who believe in him the authority to trample on the

serpents and scorpions, and all power do the enemy; namely an authority over the leader of apostasy¹.

St. Erinaos

❖ Here, the ‘**immunizing protection**’ goes hand in hand with a permission to be stricken; The divine ordinance is realized through protecting, as well as through forsaking the elect servant; namely, while being forsaken, he is protected. This way the blessed ‘Job’ was delivered into the hand of his adversary (Job 2: 6), while his soul was kept in the hand of God, his Helper; being among His flock, about whom He says: “*No one shall snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10: 28).

Moreover, ‘Lucifer’ would never be seen (by the believers) standing again. About him, Isaiah says: “*Lucifer, the son of the morning has fallen from heaven, is cut down to the ground*” (Isaiah 14: 12); referring to that by falling from heaven down to earth, he would never regain his past honors;**God gives him, who would not be deceived by the traitor, the authority to trample on him by his feet, and to cut him to pieces.**

Father Hecichius of Jerusalem

“Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him as a servant forever?” (Job 41: 4).

He refers to the fact that that animal, even if he falls in trap, would never enter into a covenant with man, or consent to serve him; he could not be tamed.

We often, assuming that we are strong, would not be harmed by sin, and would not be deceived by the enemy; we become slothful toward the sin, by which we open the door to the devil, thinking that he has become our servant forever. That way, Eve opened the door before Leviathan, by entering into a conversation with the serpent, and by intending to make a covenant, together with her husband, and her descendants, with the devil and his hosts. Assuming that he would reveal to her the way to enjoy divinity and knowledge; she instead, fell into the humiliation of servitude to him. Entering into a debate with the devil, to make

¹ Adv. Haer 5:24:2:20:3.

covenants with him, would never benefit us, but would rather bring us down to eternal perdition.

On the other hand, the devil, during the temptation on the mount, presented several offers to the Lord Christ, But when the Lord rejected them, *“The devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him”* (Matthew 4: 11).

❖ You are not alone in doing evil, but there is always the devil, who suggests it to you, and who violently provokes you to do it; yet without having the authority to commit anyone to accept his suggestions; hence the Scripture says: *“In case the spirit of the oppressor comes upon you, do not forsake your position”*¹.

If you shut your door, and drive him away from you, he would not be able to harm you; but if you slothfully receive the evil thought, his deceit would take root in you, he would seduce your mind with his tricks, and would bring you down to the pit of evil.

You may say: I am a believer; no lust can come into me, even if I think much about it! Don't you know that, through consistent pressure, the stem of a tree can break up a rock?! Do not allow the seed of evil to find a place in you, lest it would destroy your faith, and tear it apart; Root evil out before it produces flowers; lest through slothfulness at the beginning, it would need axes and even fire!

Treat any inflammation in your eyes in due time, before it causes more damage, that even an able physician would not be able to cure².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

“Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you put him on leach for your little girls?” (Job 41: 5).

For fun, birds could be put in cages for little girls to enjoy watching them; and sometimes ignorant parents may even put a bird on a leach for the children to play with. But that is not the case with Leviathan!

¹ جا 10 : 4. راجع أيضا أف 4 : 27 "ولا تعطوا إبليس مكانا".

² *Catechetical Lectures*, 23:3.

The devil may assume that he is the prince of this world, on whom no one could have any authority; not realizing that, once the incarnate Word delivered Himself a sacrifice for the whole world, the devil lost his kingdom, became a helpless captive, and was put on a leach, for the little children to play with, and to trample on him with their feet.

God turns His believers into a spiritual army of salvation, against their only enemy -- the devil and his angels; He trains His believers on the spiritual fight, And grants, even the children the possibility of conquest. It is said about the church which was like dry bones cast away on the valley: "*Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army*" (Ezekiel 37: 10). And that she is: "*Awesome as an army with banners*" (Songs 6: 4).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that the devil in his deceit uses every possible way to deceive man. He may appear to him as a weed-eating ox; as Leviathan in the water, that could be caught with a snare; or even as a bird of prey in the air. He chases man wherever he finds him on land, in the sea, or in the air. Yet, despite his dangerous and even deadly tricks, being foolish, he lost his glory and his eternity.

- ❖ God, indeed, played with him as with a bird; when He gave him the bait in the passion of His only-begotten Son; then caught him in the net.

Pope Gregory the great

- ❖ We stand in awe before His limitless and unutterable love, His longsuffering, perpetual forgiveness of our sins which we confess to Him; and His acceptance of us despite our unworthiness, but according to His mercy and grace. That is beside offering us the limitless chances of salvation; granting us the son hood; providing us, since our childhood with the grace of the knowledge of His laws; granting us to overcome, by Him, the enemy (Satan) through His good will in us; presenting to us the eternal gladness and the perpetual crowns. And above everything, His ordinance of the incarnation for the sake of our

salvation, and the abundance of the wonders of His secrets that He presents to all nations¹.

Father Moses

- ❖ In the regular battles, the leaders do not arm the women, the children, and the elderly; whereas our divine Leader the Lord Christ distributes this royal weapon (which is acquiring Christ Himself) equally on all, in order to teach them about the crafty tricks of the devil².

Father Theodoret

- ❖ Follow the heavenly Groom, to be able to stand fast before the unseen enemies.

Make war against the principalities and the powers (Ephesians 6: 12), to drive them, first, away from you, so as to give them no portion in yourself; Then to drive them away from those who resort to you for protection, seeking your counsel.

As their leader, and protector, Cast them under your feet,.

Deny those arguments against faith in Christ.

Fight by the word of godliness against the bad and evil counsel; according to the words of the apostle: “*casting out arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*” (2 Corinthians 10: 5).

Above everything, put your confidence in the arm of the great King, by whose mere appearance His enemies tremble and become terrified³.

St. Basil the Great

“Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among the merchants?” (Job 41: 6).

Being a source of terror and great danger, hunters do not care much to catch him by any way, as the trouble of catching him would not be comparable to their profit, if they divide him among the merchants.

¹ Cassian: *Conferences* 1:15.

² *Epistle to the Ephesians* 6:11.

³ *An Introduction to the Ascetical Life, (Frs. Of the Church, volume 9, p. 10-11).*

In the Septuagint version it came as: “Will the nations feed on him?”; In the Volgata, it came as: “*Will friends divide him?*”; And in the Arabic version it came as “*divide him among the Canaanites*”.

“Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears?” (Job 41: 7).

The large fish are usually caught by harpoons; Yet that is impossible in case of the crocodile; as no harpoon can wound him unless it pierces his belly, which is difficult to reach; whereas his back is covered by formidable scales that no harpoon can pierce.

“If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again” (Job 41: 8).

The blessed ‘Job’, however righteous he is, should put in mind the earlier battle that took place between him (in the person of his early parents Adam and Eve) and the devil; as because of its bitter memory, man would not attempt to enter into a similar battle against that Leviathan. God says to him: Touch him if you dare; but remember that past battle before attempting to enter into a new one; to avoid worst consequences.

- ❖ ‘Job’ prophesied the coming of the Lord, saying that He will defeat the great Leviathan (Job 41: 8); a prophecy that actually materialized, when He cast that horrible devil down, and humiliated him at the end of time, through the honorable passion of His body¹.

St. Ambrose

Here God warns ‘Job’, not to enter a battle with his own strength against the devil, with the assumption that he is capable of laying his hand on him; namely, of submitting and overcoming him.

- ❖ What, if God makes light the burdens that He allows us to carry; but withdraws His help from us; and lets us face alone the temptations of that Leviathan? To whose help shall we then

¹ *Of the Christian Faith, 5:2:30.*

resort, to confront such a formidable enemy, if not to that of our divine Creator?!

In case you see the sword of the adversary coming against you; do not complain because of the strokes I allow on you; as you cannot realize the danger of the enemy from whom I protect you, by my strokes on you! ... You should keep silent while you are under the chastisement of your divine Father. ... You should feel your weakness before that enemy; because my strokes, are meant to reform you, and to train you on endurance; ... If you take the might of your enemy in consideration, you would not count your suffering as hard; Because by the outer pains, you will be liberated from the inner ones!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Indeed any hope of overcoming him is vain; shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him?” (Job 41: 9).

- ❖ Conquest is not realized by great wealth, nor by an abundance of power; does But the Lord grant His help for free to those who seek it through dense sorrows. So was the apostle Paul, who made his sorrows the subject of his boasting; to become able to say: ***“When I am weak, I am strong”***. Can’t you see how sorrows can lead you to “the hope that would never fail¹?”

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ Let us not be overcome by despair; as we have an abundance of incentives in good hope; Even if we err every day, let us keep approaching Him, supplicating, begging, and seeking forgiveness; by which we may get farther and farther from our sin, the closer the designated time becomes; We can thus drive the devil away; call on the love and compassion of God; and gain the blessings of the age to come, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His love for man².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ Hom. 20 On Ps. 59.

² Homilies on Matthew, 22:8.

“No one is so brave that he would dare stir (the mighty) up. Who then is able to stand against me?” (Job 41: 10).

If no wise man dare to stir the crocodile up, and enter into a battle against him; how could he then be able to stand before God as an Adversary, and oppose His plan, ordinances, and wisdom? If this is the situation with a creature made by God to be underneath the feet of man, to whom God gave the authority over creation; how can man take a position of rebellion against his Creator? Who can stand before the wrath of God?

❖ By ‘the mighty’, is meant the devil; by ‘his house’ is meant his kingdom on earth; And by ‘his possessions’, is meant those who follow the lead of the devil, their father, in their affairs and works. As we consider the saints as holy vessels and dedicated possessions of the Lord; we can likewise, call the wicked, vessels and possessions of the devil, as they are his partners in good and evil. Christ alone entered into the devil’s house, that earthly world, and *“cast him down, and delivered him into chains of darkness”* (2 Peter 2: 4). He saved Levi, the tax-collector, from being a captive in the kingdom of the devil, and by his repentance he became worthy of the divine blessings; By that we learn that repentance is the sound way to salvation and redemption; according to the Scripture: *“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth”* (Isaiah 45: 22)¹.

❖ Habakkuk, referring to the enemies of the apostles, says: *“Woe to him who increases what is not his, and to him who loads himself with many pledges! Will not his creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty?”*(Habakkuk 2: 6, 7). When the devil gathered together in his fold, all the inhabitants of the earth -- who are not his -- and made them worship him; he imagined himself important and great; Yet, all of a sudden, some of them rose up to rob him of his spoils ... The apostles cast the net of

¹ In Luc hom 21.

their teachings over the captives and the sinners, brought it back to God filled with the entire people of the earth¹!

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ *“He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor”* (Psalm 72: 4). He does well by calling the devil *“the oppressor”*, as he oppressed God, by wrongly claiming that He forbade Adam and Eve of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the assumption that if they eat of it, their eyes will be opened and they will be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3: 5); And he oppressed ‘Job’ by saying to God: *“Does ‘Job’ fear God for nothing? ... Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face”* (Job 1: 9, 10). In Psalm 8, he was called *“an enemy, and an avenger”*; but here he is called *“an oppressor”*² (Psalm 72: 4).

Theodoret, bishop of Coresh

2- A DESCRIPTION OF LEVATHAN:

“Who has preceded me that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine” (Job 41: 11).

Who thinks that he could give me anything, when everything under heaven is mine?! It is befitting of man to submit to the Creator, and to receive everything with thanksgiving.

“I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his mighty power, or his graceful proportions” (Job 41: 12).

Here again He gives a detailed description of Leviathan whom He has already described in a general way. He so does, not to show his beauty, but to demonstrate his mighty power and his elaborate weapons of offense and defense.

“Who can remove his outer coat? Who can approach him with a double bridle?” (Job 41: 13).

¹ In Luc hom 23–24.

² Commentary on Ps.72.

No one can strip him of his solid outer solid, to reveal his inner skin. And no one can dare to put a double bridle on his jaws, as done with other beasts, to control his horrible teeth.

- ❖ That Leviathan publicly presents to the wicked the evil things they covet; But in a concealed way, he cast his nets over the good, and deceive them under the false pretence of holiness ... That is why the apostle Paul, seeing that some dedicate themselves to serve their bellies, under the garment of preaching, says: “*And no wonder! For Satan he transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is not a great thing if his ministers also transforms themselves into ministers of righteousness*” 2 Corinthians 11: 14). Having this in mind, when Joshua encountered an angel, he asked him: “*Are you for us or for our adversaries?*” (Joshua 5: 13).

Pope Gregory the Great

“Who can open the doors of his face, with his terrible teeth all around?” (Job 41: 14).

This description, according to ‘*Bochait*’, applies more to the crocodile, which has 30 formidable teeth size; some of which protrude outside, and others are like a saw, that a prey could never escape their bite.

- ❖ The doors of his face refer to the wicked teachers; as through their vain preaching, people may enter to meet that Leviathan of royal power; and the door of perdition is opened before the miserable listeners.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His rows of scales are his pride, shut up tightly as with a seal” (Job 41: 15).

“One is so near another that no air can come between them; They are joined one to another, they stick together and cannot be parted” (Job 41: 16, 17).

The rows of his scales are like a solid armor. The only way to penetrate his body are through his eyes, throat (when he opens his mouth), or his belly.

‘Umbreit’ and ‘Prof. Lee’ believe that the word “*pride*” here, in the Hebrew version, came as (geewoh, like gewah or gevah), meaning ‘back’; as the back of the crocodile is covered with scales. And when his mouth is shut up,, it becomes as though tightly closed with a seal, that not even air can pass through his jaws or teeth.

- ❖ The heart of the devil is hard as stone, non-compassionate, like the solid anvil of the ironsmith; and his depths never calm down; Yet the saints have trampled on him under their feet by the power of Christ, who said: “*Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you*” (Luke 10: 19); That is why Christ said (to Peter): “*Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail*” (Luke 22: 31)¹.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ The scales of the wicked are solid and so joined one to another that no breath of life from the mouths of preachers could get through to them. Those who are alike in practicing transgression stick together in evil packs, to defend their common sinful selves; Everyone of them fears for his own safety when he sees his fellow rebuked or reformed. Defending one another in the fellowship of their evil ways, they do not let a breath of holy teaching get through to them by any means... Their union makes their deviation stronger, and renders their reform more difficult.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His sneezing flash forth light and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning” (Job 41: 18).

The amphibian animals, as they dive under water, usually suppress their breathing for extended periods; and when they resume it, they seem as though sneezing what looks like a rainbow. ... When the crocodile is under water, his eyes appear pale;. ...but once he ascends to the surface, the first thing to appear of his body

¹ *Commentary on Luke, Homily 144.*

is his very glittering eyes; to be like the appearance of the morning; Being directed toward the sun they seem as though emitting fire;

❖ **St. Anthony** says: The devil mostly appears, as revealed by the Lord to ‘Job’: “*His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning; Out of his mouth go burning lights; Sparks of fire shoot out; Smoke goes out of his nostrils, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes; His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth*” (Job 41: 18-21). So appears the prince of devils, who as I already said, is horrible, and talk with haughtiness and arrogance; as condemned by God when He said to ‘Job’: “*He regards iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood*” (Job 41: 27). He counts the sea as his private pool, its bottom as his yard, and its waves as his driveway. And as said by a prophet: “*The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake*” (Exodus 15: 9); and by another: “*As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; As men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries*” (Isaiah 10: 14); All these things are boasted by the devil, and are promised by him to deceive those who worship the true God. Therefore it is befitting of us, the believers, not to fear the apparitions of the devil, nor care for his words, because he is a liar, and never says the truth¹.

St. Athanasius the apostolic

“*Out of his mouth go burning lights; Sparks of fire shoot out*” (Job 41: 19).

The animal here is described as though he vomits fire all around him; or breathes fiery breaths, that burns the prey and kills it.

❖ “*Out of his mouth go burning lights*”, the wicked preachers flare their listeners’ minds by their wrong views; and while pretending to be full of wisdom, they burn them with evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

“*Smoke goes out of his nostrils, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes*” (Job 41: 20).

¹ Vita antonii, 24.

This analogy also applies to the horses in battles, out of whose nostrils come out the smoke of burning fire.

- ❖ The dense breath of Leviathan is produced by his evil pride ... and goes out of his nostrils as a smoke screen of his deceitful false miracles that may produce doubt for some time, even in the hearts of the elect; and like mist that may corrupts the eyes of those with sound minds.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth” (Job 41: 21).

This same poetic description was used to describe the wrath of God (Psalm 18: 8).

- ❖ These coals refer to the corrupt minds of some people, kindled with earthly lusts or temporal desires; their longings do not allow their minds to be in a state of balance or tranquility. The breath of Leviathan kindles coals, when his secret suggestions lead the mind toward evil pleasures.

His breath kindled the coals of pride in Eve’s mind, by suggesting to her to disregard the commandment of the Lord; ... kindled the coals of envy in the mind of Cain, when he was grieved by God’s acceptance of his brother’s sacrifice, and killed him; ... kindled Solomon’s heart with the coals of desire for the love of women, that led him to worship their idols, and to forget to present the fitting honor to His Creator; ... And kindled the coals of greed in the mind do Ahab, inducing him to seek the vineyard of another, to kill him for its sake.

The flame of the mouth is indeed the same as offering a secret evil suggestion.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Strength resides in his neck, dismay goes before him” (Job 41: 22).

“Strength resides in his neck”, means that it is always there; breathing horror, it dances for joy before him, scattering terror all around.

❖ From these words we understand that there is only one King, the Creator of the whole universe; whereas, on the other side, there is **the prince of this world**, who calls himself the king of darkness! Thousand of thousands of angels minister to the true King, while the king of darkness is surrounded by a like number of demons. (Colossians 1: 13). The principalities, the powers, and the virtue, follow the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; *“Then comes the end when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet”* (1 Corinthians 15: 24-25)¹.

St Gregory of Nyssa

❖ Leviathan’s neck refers to stretching his pride of authority, and haughtiness on God, together with pretending holiness. The prophet Isaiah testifies to such pride, expressed as the neck, when he rebuked the daughters of Jerusalem, saying: *“They walk with stretched necks”* (Isaiah 3: 16). It is said that strength resides in the neck of this Leviathan; and because of the authority added to his pride, he goes on practicing his haughty pride and all his evil plans, through his temporal power.

Pope Gregory the Great

+By like words St. John (12: 31; 14: 30; 16: 11), refers to the devil as the prince, not on God’s creatures, but on the sinners, to whom he refers as “this world”, using the word “world” to mean (evil). The Lord refers to those who love this world; referred to in another place as *“Friendship with the world is enmity with God”* (James 4: 4). **Far from it, for us to understand that the devil is the prince of the world, in that he controls the ordinance of affairs of heaven and earth, and everything in them;** The world, about which it was said, *“The world was made through Him”* (John 1: 10); namely through Christ the Word.. The whole world from the highest heaven to the lowest earth, submit to the Creator and not to

¹ *Homilies on Song of Songs, 14.* ترجمة الدكتور جورج نوار

the fugitive; To the Savior and not to the destroyer; To the Rescuer and not to the enslaver; and to the Teacher and not to the deceiver¹.

- ❖ The prince of this world (the devil) who prevails where deceit and disturbance are is not able to approach those, on whose life, peace and perfect order prevail, and where the Son of God has authority. As when this peace originates and abides in their inside, all the outside disturbances stirred up by the prince of this world, **would not be able to harm their inner building**, the strength of which on the inside, would lead to the failure of the plots of the devil on the outside. That is why the Lord goes on to say: **“Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”**² (Matthew 5: 10).
- ❖ **“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve **God and mammon**³ (wealth)”** (Luke 16: 13). Whoever worships wealth, ministers to the devil, who is called by our Lord as **“the prince of this world”**, on account of his vain authority on the earthly affairs? Man either “hates” that one (the devil), and “loves” the other (God); Or be loyal to the one (the devil) and despises the other (God); **Whoever submits to his lust for wealth, submits, and is loyal to the devil**, despite his hate toward him – as who among us loves him?! He will be like someone in love with a maiden of a great man; despite his lack of love toward her master, yet he would submit to his cruel servitude for the sake of his beloved⁴.

St. Augustine

“The folds of his flesh are joined together; They are firm on him and cannot be moved” (Job 41: 23).

The folds of flesh in the neck or belly are usually soft and weak; but in that animal, the folds of the flesh in his neck are joined

¹ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 79: 2.*

² *Sermon on the Mount, Book 1:2:9.*

³ إله المال.

⁴ *Sermon on the Mount, Book 2:47.*

together, firm and strong, as though made of iron. What a horrible portrait!

The way the body of Christ grows to embrace every day, new souls to enjoy His righteousness and holiness, and to become fellows with Him in glory; So would the body of the devil, grow to embrace those who are more evil than their predecessors; and all of them would join together as folds in the flesh of the devil, as one firm mass of iron that cannot be moved toward repentance, and the return to God. The union together of the wicked corrupts the souls, and closes the door before many, who may seriously think of enjoying the divine truth.

If the Lord Christ has embraced us to become members in His one body, through our enjoyment of faith in Him, and our birth in the Spirit as children of God in the water of Baptism; Our mission, in turn, would be to embrace in love, every day, those who are saved, to enjoy together the fellowship with Him, in the new resurrected life that He granted us.

The folds of the flesh of the devil are likewise those who accepted son hood to him, became united with him through his works; and are persistent on embracing many others to become together with them members in the body of the devil, to share with him his ultimate destiny; As the wicked would be more content to embrace to himself those who are to become worse than him!

- ❖ The body of Leviathan (those already wicked) is altogether corrupt, having no longing toward their spiritual city; And the folds of his flesh are those who join those persons in an evil life, and may even precede them on their evil way ... In the wicked congregation of Leviathan, those are the members of his body, who, by their evil works, would draw to him others who would become more evil than them.

Pope Gregory the Great

“His heart is as hard as stone, Even as hard as the lower millstone” (Job 41: 24)..

The Lord Christ says: *“God is able to rise up children to Abraham from these stones”* (Matthew 3: 9). What are these stones

that give children to Abraham, but the idol-worshippers who worship stones, and the children of the devil, who have his heart, hard as stone (24), to become the children of God, bearing the faith of Abraham.

Some believe that the voracious wild animals, with their cold feelings, and cruel hearts, are not moved by the screams of their prey, or by their blood shed by their fangs.

Comparing the hardness of their hearts to the lower millstone is because the lower millstone has to be harder and heavier, in order to endure the movement and the pressure of the upper stone.

Some may wonder, why wouldn't the devil be given a chance to repent?!

Since his fall, he is not only consistent on his opposition to God, but he is getting more and more violent, is provoking mankind to follow his lead, and would be most happy if they share his destiny. With the passing of time his cup of evil is rather getting fuller, not caring for the eternal punishment.

- ❖ The heart of our old enemy will stay hard; will never soften by any remorse or repentance; but will only be prepared for the eternal condemnation.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ He is violent, knows no compassion; his heart would never become peaceful; And as said by the Holy Book: "***His heart is as hard as stone; even as hard as the lower millstone***" (Job 41: 24). Yet the Lord Christ puts him under the feet of the saints, saying: "*Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you*" (Luke 10: 19)¹.

St. Cyril the Great

"*Satan transforms himself into an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11: 14); Not that he would ascend again to where he

¹ *Commentary on Luke, homily 144.*

has been; **as his heart is as hard as stone**¹, and his will has become unable to repent; But he so does to drown those who walk along an angelic life, in the darkness of blindness.

Many ravenous wolves walk around in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7: 15), to deceive the innocent by their false appearance, and then bite them with their deadly venomous fangs².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

- ❖ There is a common saying, concerning those who find themselves in a very difficult situation; they are said to be “between a hammer and an anvil”; (*or between a rock and a hard place*). In the holy books these two refer to the devil and the serpent (or the dragon). In confidence, I shall proclaim that there are those who are not affected by ‘The hammer of the whole earth’... Let us now search for a material that is harder than the hammer and can endure its strokes. I found it in the ‘adamant’ (a hard unbreakable rock, assumed by some to be diamond); which even if placed between the hammer (the devil), and the anvil (the serpent or dragon), It would never yield, as long as it is in the hand of God, and under His care³.
- ❖ You can say that a holy saint is an adamant stronghold, or an adamant rock in the hand of God; that would neither be affected by the hammer from above, nor by the anvil from below; And the more it is stricken, the more the splendor of his virtue shines. Being ignorant of such adamant rocks, the devil intends to test them through several strokes by his hammer; but only God knows well their material⁴.

The scholar Origen

“When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid; Because of his (thrashings), they are beside themselves” (Job 41: 25).

¹ راجع أي 24:41 الترجمة السبعينية، وقد أُستخدم هذا النص في الرد على الأفكار الأوريجانية القائلة عن الشيطان أنه يمكن أن يخلص.

² *Catechetical Lectures*, 4:1.

³ *Homilies on Jeremiah* 27:3.

⁴ *Fragments from Catena (on Jerm.)*, 30.

When he raises himself up to charge or to defend himself, the mighty are so afraid that they try to escape, but get lost, and do not know where to go!

“Though the sword reaches him, it cannot avail, nor does spear, dart, or javelin” (Job 41: 26).

Nothing can pierce his armor of scales.

- ❖ While the spear of the holy preaching is gentle and delicate, if it strikes us we die, as far as sin is concerned; the sword of the crafty devilish calling, on the other hand, if it strikes man, it would cause deadly wounds that deprives him of the uprightness of life.

Pope Gregory the Great

“He regards iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood” (Job 41: 27).

What preoccupies the devil’s mind, is not his bitter destiny; as much as how to draw the souls of men to evil, especially those of the believers. If he encounters a soul as strong as iron, and adamant as bronze; he hastens to aim the arrows of his evil, to turn the iron into straw, and the bronze into feeble rotten wood. The enemy concentrates his strokes more on the preachers who testify to the evangelic truth, the laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

- ❖ When that Leviathan holds that sword, called by the holy books as ‘The anti-Christ’, to practice his evil, he would turn iron into straw, and bronze into rotten wood, unless the divine care intervenes to grant protection against him, lest he would turn the strength of preachers to straw, and consume them with the fire of his evil, to turn them into ashes.

Pope Gregory the Great

“The arrows cannot make him flee; slingstones are like chaff to him” (Job 41: 28).

We can interpret this phrase, that; If the devil does his best to provoke the believer toward evil, and his battle against the church of Christ would never stop; The believer on his side, as long as he hides in the Lord Christ, and bears the weapon of the living

faith; should not fear the arrows of the devil's bow, nor his sling stones, that would all turn into chaff, that cause him no harm.

- ❖ Claiming that the adversary power is too severe; and that evil has a full authority on man, is as though referring injustice to God, who condemns man for his submission to such a very strong and irresistible devil; **And as though making the devil greater and stronger than the soul. It would be like condemning a kid who loses his battle against a grown up man¹.**

St. Maccar the Great

- ❖ Do not fear then; as there is no weaker than the devil, who is without body, when he charges against man with a body; and there is no stronger than that man, who is brave and daring, even though he bears a mortal body².

St. John Chrysostom

“A clubs seems to him but a piece of straw, he laughs at the rattling of the lance” “Job 41: 29).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that this phrase applies to the devil when God rebukes him, as though striking him with a hammer; Yet he, persistent on his evil, does not care for the strokes of the hammer, even laughs at it in ridicule, counting it as a piece of straw.

This also applies to the wicked followers of the devil, whom God allows to be chastened, hoping for their return to the divine truth, But, being stubborn and persistent on their evil ways, His hammer of chastisement, become for them like straw, and like their evil master – the devil – they do not care for the rattling of the lance to chasten them.

- ❖ The Lord rattle the lance against Leviathan, threatening to destroy him with a severe verdict of eternal perdition; But the rebellious spirit, disregarding the threats of death by the Creator of life, laughs at Him, who rattles the lance. Whatever is his

¹ عظة 3:6.

² *Resisting the Temptation of the Devil, homily 2:4.*

prior vision of his horrible destiny, he does not fear its dwelling on him; but the more he realizes that he cannot avoid the eternal condemnation, the more violent would be his practice of evil.

Pope Gregory the Great

With the intention to conform His true believer according to his wish, God would allow for him to be put by the devil on the anvil and to be stricken with his hammer; but the strokes of the hammer would become like straw, with no harm nor effect on his mind and life

God does not keep away the devil's temptations and seductions, But He grants His believers the strength, so that the temptations on them would turn into naught; and they would gain a conquest and a crown,

“His undersides are like sharp potsherds, it spreads itself like a threshing sledge on mire” (Lob 41: 30).

Here he probably refers to scales on his undersides like sharp potsherds, that spreads itself on the mire like a threshing sledge; Or could be interpreted, that laying on a rocky bottom of the river with sharp or broken edges, he would feel like laying on soft mire; Or still, according to some scholars, that if arrows or spears are aimed at him, they would be broken on his hard cover of scales, into what are like broken potsherds scattered all around him.

“He makes the deep churn like a boiling caldron; he stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment” (Job 41: 31).

Some believe that by his swift motion in the deep, he stirs up the mud, like stirring up a bottle of ointment to bring up the particles sedimented on its bottom.

The term 'sea' here refers to the River Nile, on account of its greatness; a common term used even nowadays in Upper Egypt, and also applies for the River Euphrates.

❖ The term 'sea' may also refer to the lovers of the world, and the 'deep' to their deep and hidden thoughts. Leviathan makes this deep sea churn like a boiling caldron; like he did during the days of the recent persecution, when he stirred up the minds of the wicked against the elect with the fire of cruelty.

Pope Gregory the Great

With his deceit, the crafty enemy stirs up the deep thoughts of the wicked, who liken the sea, to provoke them to persecute the children of God by any possible means; and, according to the words of the Lord Christ Himself, when they kill them, they will think that they offer God service (John 16: 2).

Their depths churn with evil, and count that they are offering the ointment of truth with its nice fragrance; the way – according to them – the Lord Christ – the Truth – offers in the life of His children, who say together with the apostle Paul: “*For we are to God the fragrance of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2: 15).

“He leaves a shining wake behind him; one would think the deep to be white-haired” (Job 41: 32).

Because of his swift motion, he leaves behind him a wake of white foam, like the white hair of an elderly.

The way the Lord Christ makes His true believers “the light of the world”, shedding light on those around, to bring them over to the kingdom of light; The enemy, appearing as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11: 14), deceives his followers and let them think that they know the truth, and light the way; And because of their vain hidden reasoning waves or depths, appearing like a white-haired elderly; give the false impression of long experience and practical wisdom!

❖ One should not marvel at the multitudes of heresies prevailing nowadays, which are actually there from the beginning; because the devil has for long, cleverly mixed between the lies and the truth. Like God who, from the beginning has promised men many good things; the devil, likewise, seduces men with his false promises. God planted for them the Garden of Eden; then came the devil to say to them: “You will be like gods”; although he actually delivered nothing to them; Yet he managed to deceive them with his promises, the way the deceitful heretics do¹.

St. John Chrysostom

¹ In 2 Tim. hom. 8.

**“Nothing on earth is his equal – a creature without fear”
(Job 41: 33).**

In Hebrew it came as “Nothing on the mire is his equal”. The earth has never produced such a violent, strong, brave, and fierce creature; As though he was created to challenge fear!

And as said by **Pope Gregory the Great**; Despite men’s knowledge that he has fallen because of his deeds; Yet he did not lose his (angelic) abilities, he turned into evil, that he boasts, by which he managed and still is, to draw the human race to submit to his authority.

❖ That is the enemy from whom we should flee; and against whom St. Peter warns us, saying: **“Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith” (1 Peter 5: 8-9).**

Although you are human Yet you are higher and far exalted than the devil, whose corruption caused him to fall. Coming up from (Hades), the place of his punishment, it is said: **“The lion has come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of nations is on his way; He has gone forth from his place to make your land desolate. Your cities will be laid waste, without inhabitant. For this, clothe yourself with sackcloth, Lament and wail” (Jeremiah 4: 7-8).** Supplicate to God with prayers that He would destroy that lion and save you from falling a victim to his fangs. He is trying to catch you by through your ears, when he let you hear false words, albeit nice to hear, to make you deviate from the way of the truth; Or through uprooting your feet from the soil of truth. Well, Let him try! All you have to do, when you see the enemy approaching you, is to clothe yourself with sackcloth; beat your chest; **lament and wail**; bring forth the cries of war,; That, once you enter into the **fortified city**, God’s wrath would be lifted up from you. Let us then thank God who saves us in Christ Jesus, to who is the glory and the might, to the age of ages, Amen¹.

The scholar Origen

¹ عظات على إرميا، عظة 14:5 ترجمة جاكلين سمير كوستي.

“He looks down on all that are haughty; He is king over all that are proud” (Job 41: 34).

He ends His description that he (Leviathan) haughtily looks down on the other entire animal that think of themselves as fierce and mighty; and considers them in a lower level than him. Being the one with authority; No other creature can oppose him; all submit to him, and he submits to no one. The lion who calls himself the king of the wilderness, or the king of animals, and is proud of its might and abilities; would lose his title before him.

- ❖ Looking down, as though he is above all; and despising all other creatures; On him, apply the words said by the prophet: *“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes”* (Isaiah 5: 21); as well as those said by the apostle Paul: *“Do not be wise in your own opinion”* (Romans 12: 16).
- ❖ *“He is king over all that are proud”*. Leviathan, the way he has destroyed his past blessed life, by striking himself with pride; he is using the same weapon to attack the ointment of our eternity. God, at the end of his talk, after mentioning all Leviathan’s other evils, refers to his pride as the worst of them all.

Man who without shame, boasts with haughtiness in his own mind, will soon face destruction; according to the Scripture, saying: *“Pride goes before destruction”* (Proverbs 16: 18).

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ We have fallen under the authority of our enemy – **the prince of this world** – and consequently became in need of redemption by Him who purchases us, in order to return from that state of sojourning from Him, Hence, our Savior gave His blood to redeem us. ... And as **the forgiveness of sin**, that follows redemption, would be impossible unless man is liberated; In order to be able to enjoy the forgiveness of our sins, the healing from the wounds of sin, and to carry out the works of godliness and other virtues; We have first to be liberated from the authority of the one who took us captives, and kept us under his authority; we have to be liberated away from his hand.

❖ But if we prefer lust to God, sin will prevail on us; according to the words of the apostle: “*It (would) reign in our mortal body*” (Romans 6: 12).

Therefore sin or the devil reigns on the wicked; And Justice, namely, Christ reigns on the righteous.

Aware that Christ came to take away his kingdom, and to bring under his authority, those who have submitted to his deceit; Satan “***showed Him (Christ) all the kingdoms of the world***” (Matthew 3: 8); showed Him how he reigns over all people by lust, by greed, by love of vain glory, etc. Asking Him if he wishes to reign on all creation! He showed Him all the uncountable multitudes who submit to him! Actually, to realize the extent of our misery, we shall find that the devil reigns on most of the world; Hence the Lord Calls **him ‘The prince of this world’** (John 12: 31; 16: 11).

Saying to Jesus: “Do you see the multitudes submitting to my authority?”; the devil would do that in an instant of time; ... He is as though, saying to the Lord: Have you come to wrestle against me, and to take away all those under my authority? ... NO; Do not try to compare Yourself to me, and do not subject Yourself to the troubles of such a battle. ... “*All these things, I will give you if you will fall down and worship me*” (Matthew 3: 9).

Wishing to reign, yet through justice, truth, and every virtue ... And not wishing to be crowned a King without labor (the cross); the Lord answered him, saying: “*It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’*” (Deuteronomy 6: 13; Matthew 3: 10); My royal will is to have all worship Me, and not anyone else.... Do you want me to sin; I who came to destroy sin, and to liberate men from it?!

Let us then, having become His own, rejoice and be glad, Let us supplicate to Him to kill the sin that has long reigned in our bodies (Romans 6: 6); in order that He would reign alone on us¹.

The scholar Origen

¹ In Luc. Hom 30:1-4.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 41

BY YOU, I SHALL OVERCOME HIM, WHO HAS OVERCOME HUMANITY

- ❖ I have nothing to offer You, O Lover of all mankind;
You came to our word and became clothed in our humanity;
Because you became a real man; the devil intended to have you!
Assuming that You, like every other man would submit to him!
- ❖ You presented Your body to him as a bait on the cross; And he hastened to jump to devour it.
There, the divine snare caught him.
He who thought of himself as the king of this world, turned into a plaything.
He fell into the trap; his tongue was tied, as though with the rope of faith.
He was mocked by little maidens, out of the heaven of their hearts he fell down like lightning.
He fell down under their feet.
He assumed that, by soft the words of deceit, he could escape from Your hands.
He confessed that You are Holy; and realized that You came to send him away from his kingdom.
Although he was perplexed and confused, yet, he stuck to his evil ways.
- ❖ By Your cross, You tore up my covenant with the enemy.
You liberated me from him, he who assumed that he would submit me eternally.
Instead of my humiliation to him, he himself became humiliated.
Although he goes on opposing me, Yet he is no longer destroying me;
By you, I have overcome him, he who has overcome humanity.
- ❖ I shall no longer trust in his promises;
I shall no longer enter into a debate with him.
I shall no longer let his words corrupt my time;

Your amazing covenant is good enough for me.
That which You presented to me, written by Your blood on the cross.

- ❖ his deceit, he approaches me wherever I am;
On land I see him feeding on weeds like an ox.
In the sea I see him swimming like a crocodile.
And in the air I see him setting forth high like a bird.
He uses every way to embrace me.
He stirs up in me, lusts in which I may find pleasure.
He breathes in me the spirit of pride and self-righteousness.
He sometimes appears like a lion to terrorize the onlookers.
And some other times, he appears like an angel of light to deceive the believers.
- ❖ He binds the wicked to himself, as though to the scales of a crocodile.
All of them unite together to form a solid tightly knitted armor.
They are only preoccupied with drawing new scales every day.
Their conscience becomes content when they all work together.
By their union together, they let no one escape from their hands.
They would never allow the breath of holy counsel to get through them.
- ❖ The enemy breathes his evil pride through his nostril;
And out of his mouth goes forth burning light.
He fills the air with the smoke of deceit by his false miracles.
And infiltrate into the minds of the corrupt by his false light.
- ❖ Out of his mouth, sparks come out on the minds of the wicked,
and turn into a destructive fire.
That flares the evil lusts in them.
He stretches his neck like one of authority;
He creates a spirit of hatred in the world.
To turn the hearts of many into stones that bear the hardness of his cruel features
- ❖ How amazing that his war against the church never calms down;

With the intention of turning the iron-like souls into straw;
And the solid hearts into rotten wood;
He concentrates his strokes on the preachers of the truth;
And aims his swords and spears to those who labor in the
vineyard of the Lord.
He did not learn a lesson from the battle of the cross;
When even the little children, by the cross, turned into heroes.
When the arrows of his bow turned into chaff.

- ❖ How stupid is the devil, who did not learn a lesson from the
battle of the cross.
Arrogantly, he provokes his wicked followers to persecute the
children of God.
And while they kill the righteous, they assume that they are
serving God.
And while opposing the truth, they count themselves as though
bearing the fragrance of the truth.
- ❖ He puts the believers on the hard rock, and strikes them with all
his might by the hammer.
He assumes that he is able to conform them to be according to
his image.
Although the Crucified does not keep him from striking His
believers, Yet He turns his hammer into straw.
And his temptations into a cause of conquest and crowns of
glory for the children of God.

THE SIXTH SECTION

**‘JOB’ RESTORES TWICE AS
MUCH AS HE LOST**

(Chapter 42)

CHAPTER 42

‘JOB’ RESTORES HIS GLORY THE LAST EPISODE

The three friends who have come to comfort ‘Job’; they instead almost destroyed his soul, and deprived him of his inner peace. This was always the case with humans – They give vain comfort! God, on the other hand, Even if He spoke firm to ‘Job’, Yet He, as the true Comforter, allows for temptation, yet presents a way out; allows for wounds, yet He heals; He even glorifies those who are tempted. If God’s words to ‘Job’ enticed him to practice humility, humility opened before him the storehouses of the divine love. God restored to ‘Job’ more than he could imagine; He not only justified him, but made him an intercessor on behalf of his friends. He became a symbol of the Lord Christ, the Intercessor on behalf of humanity, and opponent to Him.

A JOYFUL END:

1- Once ‘Job’ showed in his response to God, an amazing submission, God transfigured before him, **and answered his questions in a practical way**. As ‘Job’ has been perplexed because of the tribulations and the afflictions that have dwelt upon him, God’s answer came to him, that they are the way of conquering the devil and all his tricks, of gaining the crown of glory, and of enjoying beholding the Lord through the purity of heart. While on a heap of trash, ‘Job’ discovered his true treasure fulfilling all his inner needs; namely, **beholding the Lord**.

2- **The Lord responded to all the charges directed against ‘Job’ by his friends**; by testifying before them, as He did before the devil himself; saying: “*You have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant ‘Job’ has*” (7). His friends accused him of being evil and a hypocrite; and claimed that his offerings on behalf of his children were not well received by God. Here, the Lord Himself proclaims his priesthood, commanding his friends to seek

from him to pray for their sake, and to present burnt offerings on their behalf; that God would take their folly away from them.

3- 'Job' asked to encounter with God face to face to present his case; Here, **encountering with Him in the proper time**, he finds no complaint to present to the Lord; accepts His exaltation of God; and realizes that God's ordinances are un-searchable by the human mind.

4- **Realizing his true self, 'Job' humbly presented** repentance before God (5-6). Proclaiming that he has no complaint before God, 'Job' realized that the way to his reform, would be realized through the free grace of God, and not through his own self-worthiness.

5- Job's reform was realized at the very moment he **forgot about his sufferings, and interceded on behalf of his brethren**, who, in turn, consented to appear before everyone present, as sinners, who are in need of Job's prayers and intercession for their sake before God.

It is to be noticed that God did not condemn Elihu along with the three friends; Because of the purity of his heart, and his true jealousy toward the righteousness of God; It was enough for him to watch how 'Job' was glorified in the sight of God; and how his three friends sought his intercession on their behalf.

6- When the trial came to an end, God did not let 'Job' die in his present sufferings; **but restored to him twice as much possessions as he lost; together with as many sons and daughters**; as those who departed are alive with God. By the end of Job's life, God intends to proclaim that, as long as man watches God, and his heart offer Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, he should enjoy and be pleased with God's gifts.

7- Having lost the battle against 'Job', the devil got a bitter slap on the face!

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1- THE HUMILITY OF 'JOB':

There is no other way to glory, but to enjoy the spirit of humility with love; namely the fellowship in the features of the Lord Christ who says:

“Learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11: 29).

“Then 'Job' answered the Lord, and said ...” (Job 42: 1)

While Job's friends were persistent on asking him to confess his hidden sins, that, according to them, were the cause of all those successive tribulations that dwelt upon him, and to seek God's forgiveness on them; God did not rebuke him on hidden sins, but presented to him certain questions to answer, intending for him to realize that he cannot search the wisdom, plans, and ordinances of God. 'Job' should have confidence in the exalted care of God, even if He allowed for him to go through tribulations that seem unbearable.

Whatever man's wisdom may reach, he, as a creature who submits to time, is not able to realize God's thoughts, and to recognize His purposes concerning our eternity.

“I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted” (Job 42: 2).

After confessing the exalted might of God, 'Job' admitted his ignorance of God's purposes; and that it was befitting of him to trust in Him unconditionally; As though he says to God: 'As Your might is with no limits, and Your wisdom is absolute; I should unconditionally deliver my life to You'

Indeed, when temptations dwell upon us; especially when they are heavy, sudden, and successive, many questions may come to our minds, among which are:

* In case these temptations are chastisements on certain sins; Let me then search and contemplate in God our Savior; As He is the Forgiver of sins; who remembers them no more.

* In case they are a war from the devil to break me down; I should not fear the enemy and all his tricks; and remember that God has given me the authority to trample on him; and that he has become the footstool of the believer.

* In case they are intended for testing me; the way it happened to 'Job'; Let me trust that the Lord Christ will ultimately grant me the strength and the spirit of conquest.

* In case they are for reasons beyond my knowledge; Let me humiliate myself before God, trusting in His un-searchable divine wisdom.

❖ After the Lord revealed to his faithful servant 'Job', how Leviathan, his enemy, is strong and deceitful; 'Job' responded by saying: *"I know that You can do all things"; As to his hidden plots, he added: "No purposes of Yours can be thwarted"*¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

"You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things two wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42: 3).

The first part of this verse is quoted from the words of the Almighty God (Job 38: 2), which He uttered to rebuke Job on the way he used in explaining the dealings of God. God said it because we often hide the counsel of God, or distort it by words we utter in ignorance.

The second part, as though he says: I am the man without knowledge, my sin is before my eyes; In ignorance I did not realize Your divine purposes, concerning the tribulations that dwelt upon me.

In true humility and remorse, 'Job' confesses that his words were said under the pressure of pain; and that in ignorance, he entered into a debate about God's plan, as though between equals. As though he says: As a man, I have uttered what I did not know; I

¹ كما جاء في النص في كتابات البابا غريغوريوس (الكبير).

got myself into some amazing divine things beyond my comprehension.

Pope Gregory the Great believes that by this phrase, ‘Job’ is criticizing Leviathan [Although Leviathan works in secret against those he is tempting; Yet he cannot hide anything about his evil motives].

❖ *“I foolishly uttered things that surpasses my knowledge”.*

Every human wisdom, however accurate it is, is counted as foolishness, if compared to the divine wisdom. All the human works, however beautiful they may be, if compared to God’s justice and beauty, are counted neither just nor beautiful, or even non-existent altogether.

Although Moses was trained on the wisdom of the Egyptians; Yet, when he heard the Lord talking , he instantly discovered how unqualified he is, and said: *“O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now, I am slow of speech and slow of tongue”* (Exodus 4: 10). The same with Jeremiah, who when he heard the words of God, said: *“Ah , Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy”* (Jeremiah 1: 6)

The more ‘Job’ belittled himself, the more progress he made. I believe that, once he realized the secret of God’s wisdom, in His words that are beyond his imagination, his knowledge increased without measure.

Pope Gregory the Great

“Listen please, and let me speak; I shall question you, and you shall answer me” (Job 42: 4).

‘Job’ no more speaks to protest about what dwelt upon him; but in humility, he supplicates to God to reveal to him His wisdom, which he is longing to learn. His way of talk changed completely; He no longer debates with God, as though he knows everything, but confesses that he needs God to explain to him what he does not know or comprehend. He keeps on asking God to grant him the understanding, and humbly seeks to recognize the divine truth.

The Hebrew word ‘shaa’al’, meaning (asked), bears deep humility and serious desire to learn.

‘Job’ no longer seeks to enter into a debate with God, but supplicates to be allowed to sit at His footstool, to learn from Him about His un-searchable divine ways.

❖ **“Listening”**, for us, means to be at a certain location, and prepare our ears, to hear a voice that comes from another location. But for God, in whom there is nothing internal or external, ‘listening’, is to consider our ‘longing’ to ascend to Him from below. For us, ‘talking’ to God, who searches the heart, even of those who are keeping silent, is not to utter words coming from our throat, but to long for Him in a serious desire. And, because someone asks a question in order to learn something he does not know; therefore, as far as man is concerned, to ask God means to admit his ignorance in God’s sight; And God responds by proclaiming His secret to him who humbly admits his ignorance.

‘Job’ him, was asking God through his ‘longing’, and was seeking in humiliation, an answer from God; although he proclaims that he intends to present a question; Yet he actually presented nothing in the form of a question.

Pope Gregory the Great

2- BEHOLDING THE LORD:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You” (Job 42: 5).

‘Job’ confesses that his prior knowledge about God was by the hearing of the ear, which was both vague and dark. But now, he sees Him and enjoys His splendor; he is granted a direct knowledge through seeing; his knowledge of God became clear and splendid through the enlightenment of his inner eyes.

‘Job’ confesses that the answer to his questions came in an unexpected way; He probably expected from God to reveal to him through a vision or a dream, the reason for what dwelt upon him, to bring peace to his heart. He expected from God to tell him that what dwelt upon him is not to be compared with what He is

preparing for him in the age to come; But for God to appear and transfigure before him, and to talk to him, that was something unimaginable!

Yes indeed, seeing God, whether in the heart by faith, or face to face on the great day of the Lord, would be an exalted reward! The most that man could desire is to see God!

- ❖ By these words, he proclaims in a very clear way, that to see is more exalted than to hear; The progress he gained through the pain and suffering, made him different from what he used to be; And by becoming able to behold the light of the truth by the inner eye; he is now able to discern more clearly, and to realize the darkness of his human nature!

Pope Gregory the Great

“Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”
(Job 42: 6).

To defend himself before his friends, ‘Job’ often counted himself as righteous, as compared to those around him; But now, through being able to see the Lord with His holiness, righteousness, and majesty, he sees himself as naught, and discovered that he is a sinner and defiled. ... The same thing happened later to the prophet Isaiah, who, once he saw in a vision, the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple; he realized that he is a man of unclean lips (Isaiah 6: 1, 5)... And to the apostle Peter. when the Lord performed a certain miracle, and he realized His Godhead, he cried out, saying: *“Depart from my boat, for I am a sinful man, my Lord”* (Luke 5: 8).

In vain, Job’s friend tried to convince him that he is a great sinner; but before the presence of God, ‘Job’ hastened to repent from the heart, with humility and contrition.

Being unable to see through himself, one is unable to abhor himself; but the more he recognizes the light of the great grace, the more he comes to realize how blameful he is.... To *“repent in dust and ashes”*, once man contemplates in the exalted Being, is for him to know that he is nothing but dust and ashes. That is why the Lord

says in the gospel about the denying city: “*If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes*” (Matthew 11: 21). They are both used to express remorse, to get to know what we do through sin; and in order to realize the extent of what we reached through the verdict. Because in sackcloth one feels the rough nature of sin and its pricks; whereas the ashes are the dust of the dead.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ By the eye of faith, they look up to the justice of God, and do not long to set their self-righteousness; They, as ‘Job’ says, abhor themselves, and count themselves as dust and ashes (6); But by gaining the Spirit of God, they now say: “***It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me***” (Galatians 2: 20). This is how the face of the earth is renewed by the congregation of saints through the grace of the new covenant¹.
- ❖ There will be an exalted spacious power for the eye; not that of the sharp eyesight, like that of the eagles; which however powerful it is, discerns nothing but the material things; and not the spiritual ones. That great eyesight was probably granted to ‘Job’ while still in his mortal body, when he said: “*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now I see You; Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*” (Job 42: 5-6). That is despite the fact that there is no reason for us, not to say the same concerning the eye of the heart, about which the apostle says: “*The enlightened eyes of your heart*” (Ephesians 1: 18), by which no Christian doubts that God will be seen; he, who by faith accepts what our God and Lord says: “*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5: 8). ... But the question is: Shall we also see God in the life to come by our carnal eyes²?

St. Augustine

¹ *Literal Meaning of Genesis, 10: 8 (14).*

² *City of God 22:29.*

3- JOB'S FRIENDS ARE CONDEMNED:

“And so it was, after the Lord has spoken these words to ‘Job’, that 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).

Despite what dwelt upon ‘Job’ of sufferings, what he uttered about God is counted far well than what his friends have, while neither was tempted, nor suffering. ‘Job’ might have uttered some unbecoming words; But God listening to the words of his heart, his sighs and hidden cries, counted him more righteous than them.

The Lord proclaimed to Eliphaz – the oldest and wisest of Job’s friends – that, having been unable to realize the truth about that blessed man; their verdict and condemnation of their righteous brother, were wrong, and have aroused the divine wrath.

According to the outer appearances, ‘Job’ might have looked as though protesting against the divine ordinances; and his friend were defending them; Yet, according to the language of the heart, ‘Job’ was justified before God, whereas they were condemned.

- ❖ God kept on calling ‘Job’ his servant, to confirm that He wiped out everything he said that could be considered as unbecoming. ‘Job’ uttered the right concerning his good deeds; But you, by condemning him, have not

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ ‘Job’ was preferred by God to those who pretended to defend the divine ordinance ... By referring to him as “His servant”, God referred to the fact that he did not utter his defense in haughty pride, but in humble truth.

Pope Gregory the Great

4- ‘JOB’ THE INTERCESSOR:

“Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant ‘Job’, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant ‘Job’ shall pray for you. For I will accept his prayer, lest I deal with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant ‘Job’ has” (Job 42: 8).

What God does here, is amazing!; While admonishing ‘Job’ in His private talk to him, and revealing to him his inability to comprehend the power, wisdom, and plan of God, Yet, before Job’s friends and opponents, God glorifies him, and counts him as an intercessor on their behalf. God’s pleasure is to glorify His believers, and to lift them up before their brethren, before the angelic forces, and to bring them over to the divine bosoms.

The figure 7 was considered as a symbol of perfection; as it has always been when offering animal sacrifices (Leviticus 23: 18; Numbers 29: 32). Even among the non-Jews, we find Balaam demanding from Baalak, king of Moab to offer such a number of sacrifices (Numbers 23: 1, 29).

While Job’s friends were unable to offer him comfort amid his temptations; Yet ‘Job’, himself was justified for enduring those temptations; not only in the sight of his friends; But even while still amid affliction, before the healing of his body, before the restoration of his possessions, and before his enjoyment of begetting children, he was able to intercede before God on behalf of his friends, who have almost destroyed him!

Job’s friends assumed that they could reform him by their human wisdom and philosophy; but now, the Lord confirms to them that they are in need for his prayers to be themselves reformed.

- ❖ God used Job’s friends to present a testimony to his personal virtue; and at the same time, He demonstrated the seriousness of their sin, by using that exceptional way to offer a sacrifice. He would not have called for such huge sacrifices, unless the sin was serious enough to offer them. And He also made it clear that the sacrifice alone is not enough, if not accompanied with his

intercession on their behalf ... Through this we learn that accusing the righteous is not something to be taken lightly.

- ❖ Prayers of others on our behalf, is very useful, if, on our side, we take part as well by our own prayers. Just contemplate in the episodes of Cornelius and Tabitha (Acts 10: 3; 9: 36); and listen to Jacob saying to Laban: *“If the fear of my father Isaac had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed”* (Genesis 31: 42). And hear what God Himself says: *“I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David”* (2 Kings 20: 6). But He said that in the days of Hezekiah who was righteous. ... Now, if prayers were of benefit even as far as the very wicked are concerned, why hasn't God say that when Nebuchadnezzar came, and to whom the city was delivered? Because evil then prevailed! ... God, as well, listened to the prayer of Samuel on behalf of the Israelites, and let them conquer, when they also pleased God! ... You may ask: What is the need for the prayers of others, if I, myself, please God? Well, Do not say such a foolish thing! Yes there is need, and more need! ... Listen to God saying to Job's friends: ***“My servant Job shall pray for you, and I shall accept his prayer”*** (Job 42: 8). That righteous man, by his prayers, saved his friends, Now, listen to God saying by the prophet: *“Even though, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters”* (See Ezekiel 14: 14, 16); and again: *“Though Moses and Samuel stood before me ...”* (Jeremiah 15: 1); Notice how despite the prayers of those righteous men, their people would neither conquer nor be saved¹.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Notice how God, the Just and merciful, did not leave the faults of Job's friends without rebuking them; nor forsook their crime without reform. Being our divine Physician, He first reveals the extent of corruption of our wound, and then prescribes the treatment to cure it. We have already said that Job's friends refer

¹ *Homilies on Thessalonians, homily. 1.*

to the heretics who oppose God, while pretending to defend Him. How by their words they stand against the truth, while assuming that they serve it by their vain claims.

Notice how they were commanded to offer a sacrifice for their own sake; Yet, not to offer it by themselves, but through 'Job'. The same way, if the heretics return from their wrong dogmas, they would not be able to soothe the wrath of God toward them by offering sacrifices by themselves ... unless they return to the church, (represented here by 'Job') ... It is as though God openly says to the heretics: [I shall not receive your sacrifices, nor listen to your supplications, except through the intercession of the church, "*who says what is right of Me*" ... Through her alone, God will receive your sacrifices; And she alone can intercede on behalf of those who sin.

Pope Gregory the Great

“So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did as the Lord commanded them; And the Lord accepted Job’s prayer” (Job 42: 9).

The wise Solomon says: "*The end of a thing is better than its beginning*" (Ecclesiastes 7: 8). God did not keep Satan from tempting 'Job'; nor kept Job's wife or friends from opposing and ridiculing him, and from unjustly accusing him; Yet at the proper time He (lifted up his face) before the entire world; and kept it lifted up along the generations; He will lift it more and more in the great day of the Lord.

He did not send to him an angel, an arch-angel, a cherub, or a Seraf, to comfort him or to put his heart at ease; but He Himself descended to (lift up his face).

❖ When 'Job' lost all his possessions, and all his children, all things seemed to work against him (Job 1: 13-21); But, having loved the Lord, all the evils that dwelt upon him worked together for his benefit (Job 42: 9-17). The soars of his body prepared him for the crown of heaven; and above all, before his temptation, God never talked to him, Whereas after the temptation, God Himself came and talked to him as a friend to

his friend. ... Therefore, Let calamities come; Let catastrophes dwell! As long as Christ will come after them¹!

St. Jerome

It is befitting of us to contemplate in the phrase: “*God accepted Job’s prayer*”, or, according to the Arabic version: “God lifted up Job’s face”. Having forgiven his friends for the sake of his prayers; God counted this gift as presented to ‘Job’ him. Job’s heart was so simple and spacious by love, even to his adversaries, that his prayers on their behalf came as though they are for his own sake; as they were the subject of his love.

- ❖ Notice that God’s forgiveness that they gained, as proclaimed by the Lord, was given with certain reservation. The Lord did not (lift up their faces), but (the face of the blessed ‘Job’).

Pope Gregory the Great

5- JOB RESTORES HIS LOSSES:

“And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42: 10).

In the Arabic version it came as “The lord restored Job’s captivity” (10); an expression used when man restores his position and his possibilities; as though he is liberated from captivity, and returned home to practice his life in freedom and honor.

Given twice as much as he had lost, does not mean that it was realized all of a sudden, but most probably gradually.

No wonder to hear that “***The Lord restored Job’s (captivity) when he prayed for his friends” (10)***; As he has enjoyed the inner freedom, when he raised up his heart, mind, as well as his hands, for the sake of his adversaries, to ask the Lord to forgive them.

There is no way to enjoy freedom, other than to open our hearts by love; not only toward our beloved ones and relatives, but even toward our opponents and adversaries.

Having endured the temptations without blaspheming God, but was preoccupied with the kingdom of God; ‘Job’ got a double

¹ *Homilies on Ps. 6.*

reward even in this world. The Lord Christ, said: “*Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life*” (Luke 18: 29-30).

God who does not forget even a cup of water, will certainly pay us back many times more than we give, some way or another, in this world , as well as in the age to come. He may not give us material reward, but amid the affliction, He will grant us joy, heavenly peace, divine comfort, fulfillment of the soul, and perpetual happiness.

“*The Lord restored Job’s (captivity)*”: An oriental expression meaning that God restored to him his past prosperity; For he, who lost his success or his possessions, was considered as though been put in captivity or in prison, from which he longs to be set free. The Psalmist says: “*Bring my soul out of prison, that I praise Your name*” (Psalm 142: 7)¹.

St. John Chrysostom believes that God has even changed the nature of the land, to give ‘Job’ double its normal production. That is how the Lord honors those who honor Him!

When the lions recognized Daniel, they reined their fierce nature; whereas the Son of Man came to us, and we did not rein ours. ...

The lions preferred to die of hunger than to touch the body of the saint; whereas we see Christ (in His brethren), become naked, and die hungry, and we give them nothing of the surplus of what we have; we live in abundance and disregard the saints. Now we see even the land present to another saint of God (Job) an abundance of produce out of the ordinary²].

❖ Do you see what it means to give something for the sake of God? It means that you will be restored twice as much as you gave; and even as said by the gospels: “*shall receive a*

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 215-216.

² On Ps.12.

hundredfold and inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19: 29), in Christ Jesus¹.

The scholar Origen

- ❖ He made his prayers more active to his account, by offering them for the sake of others; As the sacrifice of prayer is more readily received by the merciful Judge, when it bears the breath of love to a neighbor; and would even be more so, if it is raised for the sake of an enemy; according to the teaching of our Savior who says: “*Pray for those who mistreat you*” (Luke 6: 28); And again He says: “*Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses*” (Mark 11: 25).

It was said to the afflicted (Kingdom of) Judah: “*For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you*” (Isaiah 54: 7) ... He, who was stricken by the permission of God, suffered as well through the words of his friends; And when he was comforted by the gifts of the divine mercies, he was qualified as well to be comforted by human love. The same way he was wounded by the two sides, he was also comforted by several sides.

Pope Gregory the Great

- ❖ The holy Scripture testifies that when Abraham confessed that he is dust and ashes, he found God’s grace in his great humility (Genesis 18: 27); And while ‘Job’ was still sitting on his ash heap, he restored all his losses (2: 8; 42: 10-17); According to the prophecy of David: “*God raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap*” (Psalm 113: 7)².

St. Ambrose

+As I already said, While many of those who called on God, were saved on the spot, without waiting for the life to come: As for example, ‘Job’, who was delivered into the hands of Satan, by the permission of God, restored in this life twice as much as he has

¹ On Genesis, homily 8.

² On Penitence, 2:1:4.

lost; When the Lord Christ was scourged, he got no help from anyone¹!

St. Augustine

What ‘Job’ enjoyed, bears an image or a symbol of what we enjoy in Jesus Christ; who restored our captivity, after being enslaved to the devil; and presented to us double the glory.

“Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house, and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold” (Job 42: 11).

Job’s friends and acquaintances showed that their opposition to him was out of ignorance; and once they were directed to the truth by God, they submitted from their whole heart, confessed their fault, and brought gifts to the man of God.

It is clear from this text that his brothers, and sisters did not come to comfort or to help him, all along the time of his temptation; something that added to his bitterness (See Job 19: 13-14).

“Each one gave him a piece of silver”; and according to the Septuagint version, it came as: *“Each one gave him a lamb”*.

It was the custom in the old, and still is in some regions of the Orient, that friends give gifts to the one who came out of a tribulation, in an attempt to compensate his losses, and to support him, and as an expression that they long to see him get back to his past prosperity; like what happened with Ezekiel (2 Chronicles 32: 23).

Pope Gregory the Great believes that Job’s brothers and sisters who disregarded him in the time of his temptation, and then came to give him gifts, when they heard that God restored his captivity; refer to the Jews who disregarded the Lord Christ at the time of His passion and crucifixion; and did not believe in Him; And that once Elijah will come at the end of time, when *“the*

¹ On Ps. 21, Discourse, 2, 8.

fullness of the Gentiles has come in, ... all Israel will be (restored to Him)” (Romans 11: 25-26).

“Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys” (Job 42: 12).

In short, the book ends with the transformation of the burning fire of temptation to a heavenly fire of glory; That is the amazing secret of suffering; the secret of the true glory.

6- JOB’S SONS AND DAUGHTERS:

“He also had seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42: 13).

The last time it was referred to his wife was in (Job 19: 17), when ‘Job’ moans, saying: *“My breath is offensive to my wife”* (Job 19: 17). That led some to believe that ‘Job’ got those sons and daughters from a second wife (probably after the death of the first one.

The scholar Origen believes that the sons and daughters refer to God’s gifts to the believer: the sons refer to the good works of the spirit, and the daughters to those of the body, sanctified in the Lord. Giving birth to sons and daughters refer to the work of the Holy Spirit of God, that sanctifies the believer to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit in his whole being.

In the great day of the Lord, ‘Job’ will stand before the Lord to say: *“Behold, I and the children that the Lord gave me”*. It is so befitting to every believer to be productive, to keep giving birth to holy children in the Lord.

“He called the name of the first ‘Jemimah’, the name of the second ‘Keziah’, and the name of the third ‘keren-Happuch’” (Job 42: 14).

The names of the daughters were mentioned here as an expression of the atmosphere of joy and happiness that prevailed on the family.

‘Jemimah’, came in the Septuagint version as ‘Heameram’, meaning (daylight); as though her beauty was like the daylight. So

it also came in the Chaldean version. The Septuagint, the Volgata, and the Chaldean versions, mentioned that the name 'Jemimah' is derived from the Hebrew word (Yowm); As 'Job' moved from the dark night of temptations to the bright daylight of joy. Light has shined over his tent.

Concerning Job's second daughter, In the Chaldean version, it was mentioned that She was as valuable as Cassia'; 'Cassia' (or Keziah) came among the precious perfumes (See Psalm 45: 8).

The third daughter carried the name of a cosmetic used on eyelashes to make the eyes appear wider and prettier; as wide eyes are a sign of beauty in the Orient.

'Rosenmuller', commenting on this phrase says, that 'Solomon Jarichi', a Jew author wrote that the names of Job's daughters refer to their exceptional beauty (Job 42: 15): The first name 'Jemimah', meaning a (a clear day), implies the splendor of her beauty. The second name 'Keziah', means (Cassia), one of the most costly and precious old perfumes; And the third name 'Keren-Happuch', according to 'Dr. Alexander' in Kitto Cyclopedia, means a horn of eye ointment, that bestows beauty on the eyes; or a bottle of horn in which oriental women used to keep an ointment to beautify their eyes. 'Thomas Roe', during his travel noticed that the Persians used to give their daughters the names of perfumes, jewels, precious stones, or anything beautiful and joyful. 'Gesenius' believes that the name 'Jemimah' is derived from the Arabic word (Yamama), meaning a turtledove, or (Hamama) meaning a dove¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa² believes that Job's daughters were called:

"Daylight"; As, according to the apostle: "*You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*" (Ephesians 5: 8).

"Cassia", where purity and nice fragrance are.

"A horn of Almatheia". The Greek literature tells about 'Almatheia' and her very productive wild goats.

¹ James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International Plainfield. N J, 1972, p. 216.

² *Commentary on Song of Songs, homily 9.*

Pope Gregory the Great believes that mankind passes through three stages:

1- The first stage, when man was created, was daylight like 'Jemimah'(Psalm 149: 1).

2- The second stage, as man enjoys salvation; and from him emerges the fragrance of Christ, like 'Cassia'.

3- The third stage, when we encounter God, face to face, together with the heavenly hosts, to become like the music instrument 'horn'.

❖ Calling Job's first daughter 'Yowm', the second "Cassia", and the third 'Cornustibii', refer to the entire human race, elected through the compassion and mercy of their Creator, to be referred to by these same names ... The human race shines splendidly on the creation with the light of innocence, hence the first daughter is called 'daylight'; And once they are saved, a sweet fragrance emerges from them by practicing the good exalted works, as it is said of the Savior, by the prophet: "*All Your garments are scented with myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad*" (Psalm 45: 8); hence the second daughter is called 'Cassia'. But as the human race in its third stage, when reformed anew for the resurrection of the body, becomes preoccupied with the harmony of the eternal praise; the third daughter is called "Keren-Happuch", or (Cornustibii), meaning (the praise of the joyful). What is said by the prophet: "*Sing to the Lord a new song*", will be indeed fulfilled by singing a song of praise to God; no more by faith, but by contemplating in the Person of Him who made the human race 'daylight' by creating it; 'Cassia; by granting it salvation; and 'Keren-Happuch' by acquiring it. We, who were light when we were created, now became 'Cassia' by our salvation; and ultimately we shall become 'Keren-Happuch' when we become preoccupied with everlasting praise.

Pope Gregory the Great

“In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers” (Job 42: 15).

With the Jews, the daughter used to inherit her parents, if she has no brother (Numbers 27: 8).

- ❖ By their exalted beauty, the souls of the elect surpass all human races on earth.
- ❖ When our merciful Savior comes, no one, because of his weakness, will despair of getting the heavenly inheritance; As our heavenly Father grants the women inheritance with the men; joining the weak and the humble to the strong and the perfect, in getting equal portion in the heavenly inheritance; according to the words of the Truth Himself: *“In My Father’s house are many mansions”* (John 14: 2).

Pope Gregory the Great

7- JOB DIES OLD AND FULL OF DAYS:

“After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations” (Job 42: 16).

According to the Septuagint version, ‘Job’ lives 170 years after the temptation; And as his age when he died was 240 years; so the temptation happened when he was 70 years of age.

Seeing the grandchildren is one of the signs of blessing given to the pious, as indicated in Psalm 128: 6.

“So Job died, old and full of days” (Job 42: 17).

‘Job’ had the experience of living with God while he has been the greatest man in the East at that time; And of living amid the bitter sufferings on a heap of trash, covered with worms, attacked by friends, and forsaken by his closest relatives. He tasted grief, poverty and anguish in a way never experienced by anyone before or after him; He tasted both the life of prosperity and the life of bitterness; namely, experienced God’s care for man in all circumstances.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF 'JOB' 42

LET ME SEE YOU IN THE FURNACE OF TEMPATIONS

- ❖ You testified to 'Job' that he was a righteous and an pright man.
The best man of his time;
Yet he did not enjoy seeing You, except while in the furnace of temptations.
I confess to You my weaknesses and my sins.
In Your love, You allowed for me to fall into bitter afflictions.
You wish to transfigure to me
Seeing you give me joy.
- ❖ People's comfort often increases my sufferings;
No one can partake of them except You.
Your words enter like arrows into my heart.
They cause me wounds of exalted love;
I truly know that I am not more than dust and ashes.
Yet I realize that you can turn my dust into heaven;
And instead of the ashes, my heart would become a holy temple for You.
- ❖ Your words prepare me to see You with the eyes of my heart.
To make my soul rejoice together with 'Job' and say:
"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You"
- ❖ Let me, together with the tempted 'Job', open my heart to those who ridicule me.
Let me keep praying for their sake with true love.
Let my soul even be crushed with contrition before You.
That the whole world enjoy seeing You;
And enjoy with me Your exalted gifts.
- ❖ You gave 'Job' seven sons and three daughters.
Grant me to be a father to many.
Wherever I go, let Your Spirit work through me to draw many to You.

My soul will never rest until I see the whole world become Your sons and daughters.

❖ Grant me a holy old age.

For every day of my sojourn, let my spirit have a fruit.

Let it be like a thousand years, according to Your divine promise.