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## The Paramount Lesson of Job: God's Glory Magnified by Faith Triumphant over Tribulation.

PROF. J. T. MUELLER, St. Louis, Mo.

From time immemorial Biblical scholars have been vitally interested in establishing beyond doubt the real purpose, the ultimate design, the one preeminent lesson of "the greatest didactic poem in the world" — the Book of Job. Ever since men have studied the Bible, from the time of the ancient Rabbis, who penned their mysterious glosses, and especially from the time when the first Christian scholar, Ephrem Syrus, Presbyter of Edessa, devoted his attention to the baffling problems of Job, the foremost students of Biblical lore — Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Aben Ezra, Saadia, Cardinal Cajetan, De Pineda, Bucer, Calvin, Beza, Luther, Schultens, Rosenmueller, Ewald, Delitzsch, Umbreit, Renan, Froude, and hosts of others, to this writing, have pried into the *locos vexatos* of this wonderful book; and yet, aside from a few obvious facts, we are assured by most eminent men that in the main we still "float upon a sea of conjecture."

It is true, many of the *quaestiones vexatae* refer to problems with which we, in the present discussion, are not concerned. The questions regarding the authorship, canonicity, and integrity of the Book of Job, while intensely important for other considerations, have little bearing upon the subject which shall hold our attention now. For our purpose it is immaterial by whom, at what time, and in what manner the book was composed, though we personally incline to the view that it is the oldest book in the Bible, and that it was written either by Job himself or by Elihu. However, be that as it may. The question before us is whether there is in the book a single great lesson, which the author desired to teach, and if so, what this paramount lesson may be.

That some special design was in the mind of the writer is obvious from the absolute unity and harmony that prevail through-

out the entire book. This single fact is sufficient to demolish the theory of Duhm, according to which the prose prolog and epilog are surviving fragments of a "Volksbuch" or popular story of a comparatively early date; while the intervening poetical speeches are attributed to a much later age because they are thought to reflect a very different point of view from that of the Volksbuch. In confutation of this theory we desire to point out that this would absolutely destroy the unity of the plot, which is most carefully elaborated, not only with regard to the content, but also with regard to the mechanical arrangement. Manifestly the whole book is a unit, was originally conceived as a unit, and carried out upon the basis of one great scheme or design. This is clear from the tripartite division, which obtains everywhere. There is a prolog, followed by the main body, consisting of three main parts, and the book closes with an epilog, which corresponds to the prolog, and is logically developed from the content of the poetical portion. A brief survey of the book gives us the following outline, which at once demonstrates the unity of plot, harmony of impression, and singleness of design.

I. PROLOG: SCENE, SETTING, PLOT. Chaps. 1. 2.

II. THE MAIN BODY, CONSISTING OF DISCOURSES.

Chaps. 3—42, 6.

- 1) *Discourses between Job and his friends*, chaps. 3—31.
  - a) First set of dialogs, chaps. 3—14.
  - b) Second set of dialogs, chaps. 15—21.
  - c) Third set of dialogs, chaps. 22—31.
- 2) *Discourse of Elihu*, chaps. 32—37.
- 3) *Discourse of Jehovah*, chaps. 38—41.
- 4) *Job's confessional discourse*, chap. 42, 1—6.

III. THE EPILOG. Chap. 42, 7—16.

In determining the lesson which the author meant to teach in his great didactic poem, we fear that, in the past, too little attention has been given to the germ thoughts, and explanatory suggestions offered in the prolog. The prolog, much as in any other great poem or drama, really and extensively explains the circumstances under which the subsequent dialogs take place, and thus shows, even in so many expressed words, the object of the whole book. Here we find, first of all, an accurate delineation of the character of Job, who is the central figure also in the poetical portion, and of whom, too, the author speaks in the closing sentence

of the epilog. Without this character delineation we should not understand either Job's conduct or his words under the great trials which were inflicted upon him. "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." 1, 2. The multiplication of synonyms is remarkable. Emphasis rests upon the fact that Job is a true believer (*vireh elohim, theosebaes*), who holds to his integrity (*machasik betumato*). This last sentence is supremely vital, as it is, according to our view, the keynote to the whole book. Of him God Himself declares that "there is none like him in the earth." V. 8. This assertion is again made by God in the epilog, though in different words: "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as *My servant Job hath.*" 42, 7.

Accordingly, the one great thing which the author wishes to stress is Job's *faith*. That faith Satan calls into doubt. For that faith Satan claims a selfish motive. The question which he tauntingly puts to God is: "Doth Job fear God for naught?" V. 9. And he charges Him: "Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee (renounce Thee) to Thy face." V. 11. Here we have the real clue to that mysterious portion which constitutes the main part of the book. The real question is not as to *why* the good must suffer. That problem is already solved in the prolog. The *source whence* suffering comes is clearly stated, for it is Satan who is the cause of a Christian's affliction. In the end, however, it is God who afflicts ("Put forth *Thine* hand and touch him." V. 11). The *purpose* of a Christian's suffering is to try his faith, so that God's glory, who is the Author of faith, may be vindicated. The *consolatory lesson* we may express in the words of the Apostle, that all things must work together for good to those that love God.

Such, then, we believe, is the true situation that obtains throughout the book. Job, the upright, devout believer, is to be tried as regards his faith. Satan has claimed that this faith rests upon selfish motives and that it cannot prevail if these motives be removed. The Lord stakes His glory in the preservation of Job's faith, and grants Satan permission to divest Job of everything that Satan thinks might preserve or foster faith, and in addition to assail his faith in the fiercest manner. So the real issue is between the Lord and Satan, the conflict turning about God's glory. If the faith of Job can be kept under the most trying circumstances, then the power, grace, and mercy of God are vindicated. That is, as we see it, the real problem of the Book of Job,

and accordingly, the paramount lesson: *God's Glory Magnified by Faith Triumphant over Tribulation.*

From this point of view we shall now examine into the dialogs, which have ever baffled the minds of men. The poetical part of the poem is the essential one, the true battle-ground where Satan cunningly, but vehemently makes war upon God's saint. He has already stripped him of every earthly prosperity, of his property, his numerous offspring, the delight of Job's heart, and has reduced him to unparalleled wretchedness. In these afflictions Job's faith has come out triumphant. His answer to the rude deprivation of everything dear to his heart was: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord (Jehovah, the God of grace) hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the Lord.*" 1, 21. And so the Lord Himself puts upon his behavior the seal of divine approval in the face of Satan's sarcastic taunt: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with foolishness." 1, 22.

The first trial over, Satan again, by special permission of the Lord, torments Job. This time his assaults are still more furious. The Lord, having through Job gained the victory over the Evil One, had boasted: "He still holdeth fast his integrity (*machasik betumato* — his faith in God), although thou movedst Me against him to destroy him without a cause." 2, 3. Upon this Satan suggests: "Put forth Thy hand now and touch his *bone* and his *flesh*, and he will renounce Thee to Thy face" (will renounce his faith in Thee). 2, 5. However, even now, though smitten from the sole of his foot unto his crown with the most dreadful form of leprosy, elephantiasis, and tempted by his own wife to renounce God and die, Job keeps the faith. "He did not sin with his lips." 2, 10.

"Here," the *Pulpit Commentary* says, "the narrative might have ended, Satan being baffled, Job's character (faith) vindicated, and the real existence of true and disinterested piety having been irrefragably manifested and proved"; also, we may add, God's glory having been magnified.

However, when the Lord had said: "Behold, he is in thy hand; only spare his life," 2, 6, He had yielded to Satan not only Job's *body*, but also his *soul*. Hence the following chapters which constitute the body of the book do not introduce a *new, foreign* element, but present the actual battle-ground, upon which the decisive battle was fought. The attacks upon Job were no longer physical, but spiritual. It was no longer brute force that Satan employed,

but clever cunning. Satan no longer presented himself as a *deadly foe*, but as a helpful, sympathetic friend. It is remarkable that, with the close of the prolog, Satan should at once disappear from the scene. In reality, however, Satan was there, all through the unspeakable horrors that darkened Job's believing soul, directing his attacks through the three "comforters," Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The fact that these three men are introduced already in the prolog, which, as we have already shown, presents and unravels the whole plot of the narrative, proves that the three friends of Job *are sent by Satan* to serve his purpose of destroying Job's faith.

However, that does not mean that we condemn these men as *manifestly wicked* and as *willingly serving* Satan's purposes. From their discourses we gather that they were God-fearing men. They had a fair knowledge of good and evil, of repentance and faith. Yet they err by a *wrong application of the Word of God*. A false application and division of Law and Gospel is always apt to work disastrous results. So also here. The result of their condemnations was that Job was only led farther away from God, and induced to make statements truly rebellious to the Lord.

For a scholar sitting in his easy-chair it is a comparatively simple matter to contemplate Job's suffering, and pass judgment upon his conduct. For Job the situation was dreadful. To him it was evident that God had turned against him. He could not think otherwise but that God had inflicted upon him all the terrors of hell, which in a short time was to be his. And yet, he, too, longed for *Sheol*, for his torments were beyond description. Never, outside of Gethsemane, does Scripture present to us a man so furiously assailed by Satan, both in body and mind. Viewed from the magnitude of Job's bodily suffering, the agony of his soul must have been monumental. We cannot picture it to us as we can picture the loathsome, leprous, writhing form of his wasted body, since mortal eye cannot vision the soul. However, the struggle must have been unparalleled. And yet, throughout that excruciating torment of spiritual conflicts Job *maintains the victory*. He curses the day of his birth, and in deep moments of despondency, caused largely by the chiding remonstrance of his "comforters," he even challenges God to show His justice, prove His mercy, and reveal to him the reason for his suffering, yet he *never renounces God*, never *gives up faith*, never ceases to regard God as His Redeemer and Salvation. The wrong words, which Job spoke about God, were mainly provoked by his friends' misapplied rebukes, yet

not even their harshest criticisms could move him to say a single word essentially contrary to his faith.

That under these circumstances Job's faith should gain the victory was an infallible proof of God's power, grace, and love, and thus over against Satan, with regard to Job himself, and also with regard to his "comforters" that tribulation redounded to God's glory. Job was a firmer believer for the trials he had passed through, his friends were wiser for having witnessed them, and God's sovereignty, majesty, grace, and compassion stand out in clearer contrast for having maintained the faith of His saint. To this day no Christian reader can lay away the Book of Job without having gained from it a clearer understanding of God's ways with His saints, a mighty strengthening of his faith in affliction, and lastly, a greater and deeper reverence for the Lord, whose loving-kindness upholds us, and whose tender mercies shine through the very chastisements which He allots to us for His glory and our own greater good.

Having laid down these guiding principles, we shall not reduce the reader's pleasure of private application, by illustrating for him how, in the various instances, the discourses bear out what has been said. We wish to add only a few remarks, as a further help to the reader to find his way through the maze of heterogeneous dialog. In the first dialog (chaps. 3—14) we are at once introduced to the mode of argumentation employed by Job's friends. Essentially there is no difference between their points of view. Having heard the woeful curse which Job pronounced upon the day of his birth, they are all three led to believe that Job's calamities have come upon him from God's hand as a condign punishment for sins that he had committed, and of which he had not repented. As the discussion advances, their charges are reiterated time and again by each in turn, Eliphaz being the most dignified, Bildad the most blunt, and Zophar the most rude. Very discourteously they maintain his glaring guilt, and see in Job's attempt at defense only a confirmation of the correctness of their diagnosis, expressing at the same time their conviction that he is a hardened-in-guilt, irrecoverable reprobate (4, 8; 5, 8; 8, 5; 11, 8. 20). While these charges may appear plausible, as a reason for his suffering, they are in reality a misapplication of God's Word, and tended to destroy Job's faith altogether. What a Christian needs in the hour of trial is not the denunciation of the Law, but the helping, healing, guiding comfort of the Gospel. The casuistry of the three "comforters"

was not evangelical, but papistical. Their advice was much like that given to Luther when, under the weight of affliction, he yearned for comfort. To speak words of condemnation to a believer, writhing under the agony of trial, is not "*speaking that of God which is right,*" is not serving him in God's place, but the devil's. Then, too, Christ has commanded us *not* to see in a particular chastisement a *special punishment* for particularly gross sins. Sinners, especially tried, are not to be regarded as sinners *above others*. John 9, 1—3. That was exactly the charge which the three friends preferred against Job, and in this they "spake of God that which is not right." Against these charges Job protests his innocence. He readily admits, it is true, iniquities of his youth (13, 26), and pleads guilty of frequent sins of infirmity (7, 20, 21; 10, 14; 13, 23; 14, 16). Yet he insists that he is not wicked (10, 7) and calls upon God to confirm this. It cannot be denied that some of the very expressions of Job, in which he asserts his innocency, are wicked. He permits himself to be drawn into statements with regard to God's indifference to moral good and evil (8, 22—24), which are both incautious and presumptuous, while he manifestly taxes God with injustice towards himself (3, 20—26; 7, 12—21; 9, 30—35). It is just such statements as these for which God afterwards rebukes him, and of which he repents in dust and ashes. But we also notice that this is the *very design of Satan* in charging Job, through his friends, with God's wrath upon his sins. Evidently, as we may infer from the whole series of dialogs, it was his purpose to say something at which Job might be scandalized to renounce God. That object must always be kept in mind. — However, throughout the whole first set of dialogs — and in these we see Job at his weakest, while the onslaughts of Satan are fiercest — the great sufferer in no way curses God or ceases to trust in Him. He is ever confident that in some way or other, and at some time or other, his own innocence will be established, and God's justice manifested. Meanwhile, he continually keeps a firm hold on God, and again and again turns to Him for deliverance. That was the *essence* of Job's faith, as it is that of every true faith. What Job fought against with might and main was the effort of his friends to *darken his vision of God as a loving friend*. As a friend Job often rebukes God, but God never ceases, in his mind, *to be his friend*. As a friend, Job thinks, God is dealing cruelly with him, but none the less, God *remains his friend*, though he cannot see the reason why this divine Friend should so turn against him.

As we carefully study each set of dialogs, we shall find that each apology of Job is arranged in *pyramidal form*. Out of the depth of despair Job's faith rises to dazzling heights, to be cast down again into bottomless pits of despondency. In the first dialog the pyramidal height is found in chap. 13, 7. Job had impatiently repudiated the charge of his friends that his calamity is a direct punishment of a God who is angry with him because of his sins. "Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?" he asks, with a wonderful display of right understanding. And then his faith rises to ethereal heights as he cries out, in heroic faith: "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. He also shall be my salvation; for a hypocrite cannot come before Him.*" 13, 15, 16. In these words Job clearly shows how he regards his three comforters. They are not *friends*, but in reality *emissaries of Satan*, to cause him to relinquish his hold on God. It is this consideration which no doubt moves him again and again to hurl against them those harsh epithets of defiance, much as Luther did against the Pope for the same reason. By presenting God to him as an angry judge, they could not help but instil into his soul thoughts of terror and despair, where already terror held sway. Against that spirit of terror Job's faith struggles, as now he suddenly rises over it, and again is suddenly drawn down into it. This becomes clearer still as we consider the next dialog, chaps. 15—21.

The second set of dialogs is noted for greater vehemence. The disputants have now become impetuous, and their language is often coarse. Eliphaz (15, 1—6) begins by charging Job with every manner of gross rebellion against God — presumption, impiety, arrogance, and by emphasizing that such wickedness is always punished in this life with utmost severity (15, 17—35). Bildad follows with a violent series of denunciations and threats, assuming the guilt of Job as proved, and maintaining that the calamity which has befallen him is no less than what he has actually deserved (chap. 18). Zophar recchoes Bildad's denunciations, and threatens Job with even greater ills (chap. 20). Thus the battle rages on furiously and perpetually, and little progress is made on both sides. This is psychologically correct. So, in the struggle which Satan inflicts upon a Christian's soul, there is a constant wavering to and fro, until the hour of trial is over. So, also, Satan again and again repeats the charges of a man's reprobation and God's consequent vehement wrath. Every Christian who has passed through the valley of fierce spiritual affliction will confirm this, and this is the



strongest reason why we believe that Job himself must have written the book. He alone could adequately depict the fierceness of his agony with such absolute psychological truth. — Job again answers the charges made against him (chaps. 16, 17, 19, 21). At first we see him writhing in the lowest depths of despair. Out of his misery and pitiful wretchedness his soul rises up against God, not to curse Him, but to wrest from Him a word of explanation. However, gradually his faith becomes stronger. God is *his friend still*, though he chides this divine Friend for His *severity* (chaps. 16, 17). Yet out of this very struggle his faith rises mountain-high to the portals of heaven, and thus again we find in chap. 19, 23—26 the summit of faith's pyramid, — words which have since reechoed through the vistas of ages: "*For I know that my Avenger liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*" (note the mountain of faith in the one little word "see"), "*whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.*" This is Job's defiance of Satan whose vicious attacks he espies in the charges of his "comforters." The faith of Job here shows a marvelous development; for the light that shines from the top of this pyramid is much clearer than that before. Job knows God as his *Redeemer*, his *Avenger* (Goel), who will not "slay him," but who will stand victoriously upon his grave claiming Job as one of His own. And then His eyes shall behold Him, shall see the why and the wherefore of his suffering. Surely, a most marvelous expression of utmost faith. However, immediately afterwards Satan casts the saint into the abysmal gorge of utter despondency (21, 7—33), and he avers that God, His Redeemer, smiles upon the wicked, and distributes good and evil without a discoverably just principle of equity.

The third dialog begins with chapter 22 and ends with chapter 31. Zophar is silent, and the discourse is confined to Job, Eliphaz, and Bildad. Eliphaz clearly misunderstands Job's plea that he is innocent, and shows that God is not profited by man's goodness (chap. 22), in consequence of which God owes man nothing, not even the explanation of His action. Once more he violently asserts Job's extreme wickedness (22, 5) and urges him to repent (22, 23—30), promising that God would then be gracious unto him. Eliphaz is hopelessly ensnared in his wrong diagnosis, and despairs of advising his friend. Bildad, too, speaks of man's weakness, littleness, and sinfulness (chap. 25), all of which he

ascribes to Job, urging him to change his ways. In his reply Job shows himself utterly disgusted at his friends, turns to God (chap. 23), requests of Him to prove his innocence (23, 10—17), pictures the extreme wickedness of the impious (chap. 24), to whom he surely cannot belong. He, too, retracts his former statements in which he asserted that God is indifferent to the evils of the corrupt (24, 24). "They are punished and brought low." In his answer to Bildad Job asserts God's sovereignty, greatness, and inscrutableness (chap. 26), and again expresses faith in God. In chap. 27, 6 we have the third pinnacle of Job's pyramidal faith. "*My righteousness,*" he declares, "*I hold fast and will not let it go. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?*" Such faith in God, combined with true fear of Him, is the true wisdom, the only source of comfort in his affliction (chap. 28). Comforted and sustained by the knowledge that God directs all things wisely, he regretfully reviews his happy past, when his faith was bright and strong (29, 2—4), and contrasts it with his present wretchedness (chap. 30). In chapter 31 Job's hopeful outlook is again changed into profound depression; the soul lifted up in strengthening trust is hurled down to the bottom of helplessness (chap. 31). And then his lips are silent. He *cannot* speak, for he feels that his speech is full of sin. Silently he grasps the comfort which his faith holds out, having resigned himself to God. No onslaughts of Satan, no charges of his friends that he is guilty and suffering at the hands of an angry God, yea, that God has cut him off, no seeming prosperity of the wicked, no apparent injustice to the pious, nothing can shake his faith. There are three beacon lights that shine into the gloom of his trials: 1) "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*" (13, 15); 2) "*I know that my Redeemer liveth*" (19, 25—27); 3) "*My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go*" (27, 6). Job has spoken sinfully against the dispensation of an inscrutable Providence, has spoken of God's injustice, His cruelty, His indifference towards the pious in their affliction, His disregard for the sins of the wicked, but *so far as his faith is concerned*, "he did not speak evil with his lips." He chode his divine Friend, but yet he maintained that God is his *Friend*. For such faith God finally commends him.

Job and his friends being silent, Elihu appears on the scene. He has heard all the colloquies, and is dissatisfied with both Job and his friends. Elihu is usually regarded as arrogant and con-

ceited, and his words are interpreted as cant and hypocrisy. Yet there is one important fact which commends his discourse to our earnest consideration. While the Lord rebukes the three friends, charging them with having spoken of Him that which is not right, He does not rebuke Elihu, but acquiesces in what he has said. Also Job silently submits to Elihu, and acknowledges the truth of his reproof. Elihu's arguments are noted for clearness, independence of thought, deep wisdom, just moderation, and, withal, true piety. His discourse carries us through chapters 32—37. He is angry with his friends for not having silenced Job's contentious striving with God (chap. 32). Clearly and logically he shows Job where he has erred (33, 9, 10). God has *not become his enemy* as Job imagines; for God sends affliction, not to punish, but to chasten, not in wrath, but in love (33, 12—33). Moreover, Elihu points out to Job that God is not unjust (34, 12). "Surely," he says, "God *will not do wickedly*, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." In the third place, Elihu rebukes Job's lack of faith, expressed in the words, "What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?" and directs him to trust in the Lord (35, 14). In chapters 36 and 37 Elihu summarizes the whole situation, showing how God in all His works is perfectly righteous, chastising, but delivering (36, 8—15), wherefore Job should not have passed judgment upon Him or desired death (36, 16—21). Rather should he, in his distress, have magnified the Lord, as all the creatures of God do that wait upon the Lord (36, 22, 23). For God's work is great and past finding out (chap. 37). So all men should acknowledge Him, and fear Him in true humility (37, 24).

We thus see that Elihu censures those very sins which in the heat of affliction Job had committed with his mouth — sins of murmuring against God's wonderful dispensation. Clearly and forcibly Elihu directs Job to the right path, by proving to him that punishment is not always punitive, but, in the case of God's people, disciplinary, that it is not penalty, but chastening. Silently Elihu therefore commends Job's faith, and this faith the Lord Himself emphasizes, as His best worship and service, by revealing to Job the magnitude of His works. These works show God's great *power*, but also His *mercy* (38, 41). All the beasts of the field turn to Him in their manifold needs, and find in Him a willing Helper (chap. 39). Hence God is not indifferent as regards His works, but *wisely*, *powerfully*, and *lovingly* ordains all things. So Job should not have charged Him with unfairness, negligence, and cruelty, longing for death as the termination of all evil.

Job readily repents of the wrong which his lips have spoken. He pleads guilty of having spoken that which he does not understand (40, 4. 5). Upon this God once more asserts His justice (40, 10—12), for He brings low the wicked (40, 12), just as He controls and keeps under subjection Behemoth and Leviathan (41, 34), the children of pride, symbols of the wicked and ungodly. Job now humbles himself again, and repents in dust and ashes (42, 1—6), whereupon God restores to him doubly all that which he had lost. This itself is God's own proof that He had not rejected His saint, but that Job, by holding to Him in faith, had in reality gained the victory. However, God, in addition, declares that Job *has spoken of Him that which was right*, and unqualifiedly acknowledges him as *His servant* (42, 7), whereas the three comforters of Job are said not to have spoken that which was right.

The last statements of God we can understand only if we bear in mind that they refer to Job's expression of faith. As Elihu had done, so the Lord censured Job's words of rebellion against the Lord's justice, mercy, and gracious dispensation. However, in the main Job spoke that which was right. Clinging to God, holding to Him in his deepest affliction, his faith prevailed even over his own doubts, and led him in the end willingly to repent of what wrong he had declared. This faith of Job made him whole.

Viewed in this light, the entire Book of Job lies open before us, with a vision of light clearer than day. Incidentally we are given the reason why also Christians must suffer. Yet the main lesson is of vaster import. Job is an example of true faith (Ezek. 14, 14), who ranks with Noah and Daniel, men who have kept the faith amid universal defection from God. With Ewald we are inclined to interpret his name as "One-turned-to-God," for throughout his deep affliction he keeps his eyes directed to the Lord, his Redeemer. Whence the afflictions came, he did not see, as we see it now, from the light which the prolog sheds upon the entire book. That Satan, the accuser of men (2 Cor. 2, 11; 12, 7), demanded a trial of his faith, and that God permitted this in order to magnify His own glory, he did not know. Nor was he conscious of the fact that by this very trial Satan essayed to destroy his faith, and that to this end he put into Job's mouth the offensive words of reasoning and murmuring. Yet Job kept the faith, though in the fire of affliction his soul was sorely tried, and his mouth uttered things that were "too wonderful for him."

The lesson is ever valuable to every sincere saint of God. So God to this day permits Satan to buffet His children, that their

faith may be tried, their hope strengthened, and their love to God rendered pure. Job was a truer Christian for having passed through the affliction, and so the faith of God's children becomes purer than gold only through the fire of trials and crosses. Hence it is not for us to murmur at the burden which God, for our own good and for the manifestation of His glory, imposes for a while, but patiently to bear it, until the blessed hour of God's deliverance shall have come; nor are we to doubt God's justice in thus afflicting us, and stumble at the apparent happiness and security of the unbelieving children of the world, whose doom is fixed, and who are beyond correction. True, the burdens often seem unbearably heavy; but they are not too heavy for the Christian to bear (1 Cor. 10, 13), and faith often grows strongest as the burthen is heaviest (chap. 19, 25—27). With us, too, will be found the "comforters" who misinterpret our sufferings, who, instead of strengthening our faith by properly applying the Word of God, weaken it by misapplication. In the end, however, the Lord will send us an Elihu to correct our erring minds, and lead us upon the right path, until God Himself, knowing our feebleness of understanding, will interpret to us His wonderful ways, showing Himself as the all-powerful, all-merciful, and ever-ready Helper, whose love is at all times supporting us. So days of rejoicing will follow the hours of affliction, and in the end we shall see that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Thus we would interpret this wonderful book, its main purpose and paramount lesson; a book rich in piety, instruction, and true consolation; a book that strengthens our faith, increases our patience, and renews our hope in our precious Redeemer.

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