CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
In Paradise Lost Milton says,

What in me is dark,
Illumine! What is low raise and support!
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

(PL. Book I. lines 22-26)

In the lines quoted above Milton invokes the holy spirit to illumine and elevate his soul to undertake the great task of justifying the ways of God to man and to assert the eternal providence. He wants to put forth the argument of the vindication of God's ways to men. Likewise, the Book of Job in the Old Testament of The Bible emphasises the objective of Milton in Paradise Lost i.e., justification of the ways of God to men. Book of Job is the story of Job whose obedience to God's will, faithfulness and refusal to sin against as advised by his wife were victories for God over Satan unlike Adam in Paradise Lost.

According to G. Buchanan Gray,

"The writers purpose is never so directly formulated as Milton's - to 'assert Eternal Providence. And justify the ways of God to
men, nor is it coextensive with it; but it is akin, and not really concealed, and the differences of opinion which have prevailed with regard to the purpose of the book have been due to seeking from the author more than he was able or intended to offer."

The books in the Old Testament in the English Bible are 39 in number and are classified as books of law.

a) Genesis to Deuteronomy (5 books)
b) Books of History - Joshua - Esther (12 books)
c) Books of Poetry - Job - Songs of Solomon (5 books)
d) Books of Prophecy - Isaiah - Malachi (17 books)

The Hebrew Bible consists of 24 books and is divided into 3 categories.

1. Books of Law
2. Books of Prophets
3. Books of Writings

The books of writings are also designated as 'HAGIOGRAPHIA' i.e., Sacred Writings. They are classed thus: three books - (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Job; Five Rolls, (a) Song of Solomon, (b) Ruth, (c) Lamentations, (d) Ecclesiastes, (e) Esther.
The Book of Job divides itself into five parts.

I. Chapter I and II form the prologue and are written in prose.

II. Chapters III-XXXI forms the main poem and is made up of the speeches of Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

III. The speeches of Job are presented in chapters III, VI, VII, IX, XII, XIII, XIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI and XLII.

IV. The speeches of the three friends of Job form chapters II, IV, V, VIII, XI, XV, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXV, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII.

V. The Divine speech forms chapters XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL and XLI.

The author of the Book of Job is unknown. Various suggestions have been made about the authorship: Elihu, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Baruch are some of the names mentioned but none can be established. Some critics believed that the book was originally written in Arabic or in Edomite and then translated into Hebrew. N.H. Gladzer feels that it "is a work of imaginative literature". D.Guthrie
says, "it is sounder to hold with W.A.Irvin that we are
dealing with a Hebrew dialect different from that found
usually in the Old Testament.

The Book of Job bears the name that has become
synonym for patience under suffering. In its artistic plan
of poetical expression and sustained argument, the Book of
Job takes the foremost place among the composition of sacred
writings. The Book depicts the life of Job whose integrity
was put to test.

All the story is presented in forty two chapters.
The poet creates a multiple perspective in which the opinion
of others regarding the justification of God's ways are given
due weight and consideration. The first three chapters
introduce us to the happenings in heaven regarding Job's
uprightness and firm faith in God.

The Book of Job exemplifies the relationship of a
godly man and God's dealings with men for good in this world
of evil. In the Book of Job, Job the protagonist was put to
test. Job was an upright man and righteous in his ways. He was
encompassed with blessings and possessed real piety. Satan,
the accuser, goes to and fro on the earth seeking occasion
for evil and presents himself before Jehovah among His mighty
angels and God states the case of Job, the subject of His
government in blessing, faithful in his walk. Satan attributes Job's piety to God's manifest favour and his prosperity to the hedge God has put around Job. God gives all this into the hands of Satan who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies. They attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise.

Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar arrived at the scene to mourn for him and comfort him. They were hit desperately by the calamities that had overtaken Job. They were dumb-founded with agony. The sense of being baffled is common and Job is feeling completely baffled by God's dealing with him. God's ways appear to be mysterious to them. Eliphaz is the first of the friends to emerge from their dumb-founded silence and he starts out syllogistically that God will never act differently from the way He always acted and that man must accept it. He says:

Behold, thou hast instructed many, and
thou hast strengthened the weak hands
Thy words have uphelden him that
was falling, and thou hast strengthened
the feeble knees.
But now it is come upon thee, and
thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and
thou art troubled.

(Job IV. 3-5)

Eliphaz has a genuine esteem for Job and is deeply sorry for him. He is mildly shocked by Job's lament in which Job wishes for death and does not utter a prayer for recovery of prosperity and happiness. Job's lament also gives him impression that his misfortune is an unaccountable mystery. But Eliphaz diagnoses Job's case at a glance. He strongly feels that Job was punished for some transgression of culpable negligence which went unnoticed. He says,

Remember, I pray thee, who
ever perished, being innocent? or
where the righteous cut off?

Even as I have seen, they that
plow iniquity, and sow wickedness,
reap the same.

By the blast of God they perish,
and by the breath of his nostrils
are they consumed.

(IV.7-9)

* The First Scofield Reference Bible, Ed.Rev.C.I. Scofield, D.D. All subsequent references are to this edition only.
Bildad is younger, more narrow minded and less tactful than Eliphaz. He is shocked at Job's freedom or irreverent familiarity, in speaking about God. These protests and complaints seem to him to undermine the main principle of religion, that God can do no injustice. Like Eliphaz, he considers that strict retributive justice is the only principle underlying God's dealings with men. In fact he implies that God's functions are automatic. Men have freedom to choose this or that but no allowance is made for liberty or love in the judgements of God. The latter can only react, according to the actions of men. Hence Bildad's crude representation. Mankind is divided into two groups, the wicked and the righteous; the former, perhaps after brief prosperity, God utterly destroys; the latter he blesses. Bildad argues not from personal experience, but from the tradition of former generations, the unquestionable source of wisdom.

Zophar, the least tactful of the three friends made direct accusations against Job repeating the common refrain that Job was being punished for some sin. He claims that Job's sins have caused his troubles. Where Bildad undertook to define divine justice, Zophar is glorifying divine wisdom which he feels must equally be indicated against Job's scandalous and ignorant criticisms. Finally
like the other two speakers, Zophar encourages Job with the prospect of restored happiness. He wishes Job to shed his garb of innocence and repent of his iniquity and ask for God's pardon. Thus he will enjoy renewed prosperity. Zophar sincerely desires Job's amendment and recovery. Thus the three friends of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar also express their sentiments regarding Job's suffering. They strongly feel that Job was punished by the Lord because of his hidden iniquity:

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent?

Or where were the righteous cut off?

Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow

wickedness, reap the same.

(IV. 7-8)

Job is the central human figure in the Book. As we read the text thoroughly we know how he behaved in good fortune and bad. The interest in human behaviour under adversity is a subject commonly dealt with in wisdom literature. Job's claims to integrity made on his behalf by God is put to test. We are shown how an innocent man is outrageously mishandled in life and misjudged by friends.
Under the pressure of his sufferings, Job repudiates the conventional orthodoxy which sought to explain the divine governance of the world on the basis of a theory of retribution. Job and his friends speak as teachers of wisdom. The friends represent conventional wisdom teaching, although of course, there are minor differences in emphasis among them. Although Job, too, is to be regarded as a 'wisdom teacher', he rejects the current theology and refutes the points of view of his friends. But even Job himself found no satisfactory answer to his problem. The book ends with the vindication of Job's character, the condemnation of the teaching of his friends, and the renewal of his prosperity.

Job spurns the empty efforts of his friends. He calls them 'miserable comforters'. He wants his lips to assuage grief. He talks about God's gift of wisdom. To him true wisdom means faith in God and renunciation of evil. His attitude to riches never runs the risk of the warning. He realises that he cannot serve God and Mammon. He is given to hospitality.

Job refutes the arguments of his friends for ten times. He tells the three friends that their wisdom is not superior to what he knows. If God breaks down, they cannot
build it again. He expresses his desire to reason with God. He tells them that though God slay him, yet he will trust Him but he will maintain his own ways before Him.

Though he slay me, yet I will trust in Him: but I will maintain my own ways before Him.

(XIII.15)

God will not disappoint the hopes of those who put their trust in Him. According to Marvin H. Pope "Job cries out for vindication appealing for the help of a witness in heaven an arbiter to intercede for him with God just as a man would do for his friend. His hope is the grave and maggots." Job charges his friends with tormenting and taunting him. The present study aims at the multiple perspectives on the theodicy in the Book of Job.

Of all the Hebrew scriptures, the Book of Job is most provocative of meditation. It is concerned with the fundamental confrontation, the ultimate mystery of man's existence, the irreconcilability of absolute and contingent in the natural order. Why does evil exist? Whether God exists or not there is still the inexplicable waste of value in the world of facts. The law of the conservation of energy may be substantiated by experiment, but there is no
demonstrable principle of the conservation of good. From this mystery all the other dilemmas of the moral life depend.

Job's friends believe in retributive justice that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. Kenneth Rexroth says "they deny evil as such. In one way or the other they argue that the evils of the world are really goods, they are private, educative, disciplinary, deserved, misunderstood, illusory, but never gratuitous, much less malevolent. The poet underlines every speech of the 'comforters' with irony like the mounting bass notes of an organ." Finally Job swears an oath, stakes his integrity as a person of his innocence. Then the Almighty answers as a voice from the whirlwind.

Elihu, the son of Barachel, was the Buzite, belonged to the family of Ram. When compared with 'Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, he has an infinitely higher conception of God.' He has been listening to Job's friends in silence all this time. As he cannot restrain himself any longer, he flares up and refutes all four of them by turning their own words against them. He tells Job that God allowed suffering in his case is not to punish him but to purify him. God can use suffering to improve a person if it is received in the right spirit.
The divine speech dispels all the misapprehensions relating to God's scheme of chastisement of the elected. It puts Job's problem in a new perspective. God puts to Job a series of unanswerable questions. In this way he cross examines him on the divine activity in the universe. Thus Job's ignorance of hidden things is questioned and the mighty power of God is vindicated. The revelation of Heaven has made the defiant combatant a humble worshipper. Job is made to realise and say thus:

Behold, I am vile: What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

(XL.4)

The friends of Job are charged with not speaking of Him what is right. God tells Eliphaz that his wrath is kindled against him and the other two friends, Bildad, and Zophar. So to redeem themselves they should go and offer themselves a burnt-offering and Job shall pray for their pardon which He will accept. Thus He commends Job for his sincere quest for truth and censures the friends for their opposition to that quest. When Job is praying for others his material prosperity and his family are restored.
Thus 'The Book of Job' begins with a heavenly debate between God and Satan, moves through three cycles of earthly debates between Job and his friends and concludes with a dramatic "divine diagnosis" of Job's problem. In the end, Job acknowledges the sovereignty of God in his life and receives back more than he had before his trials. In this way the multiple perspectives of theodicy are presented in this book by Job and Jehovah.

The epilogue leaves us with a note of hope but not with a mechanical answer to the problem of suffering. All servants of God may not be treated as this great servant was but all can be rest assured that, however paradoxical life may appear to be, God has the whole world, and every human life in His hands. An attempt is made in the present study to examine the divine justice or theodicy in The Book of Job.
REFERENCES


