CHAPTER III

JOB'S SPEECH
SECTION-I

Job's speech comprises of 21 chapters in The Bible. They are Chs. 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 42.

Job mainly asked for one thing i.e., an appearance by one person who could explain his miserable fate. Two subordinate themes become prominent in Job's speech (1) denunciation of his enemies and (2) the oath of exculpation.

Job considers life wretched and the death blessed. We hear a cry of anguish from a soul quivering with agony. He was soon to complain that his friends were training their verbal armoury upon the speeches of a desperate man, which he himself readily acknowledged were as wind.

Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?

(VI-26)

Cursing his birthday Job wishes that God may have not sought it. He wished the day of his birth to perish since it brought forth his wretchedness. Let it sink into
darkness which symbolises his grave. He wished it be 
obliterated from the calender. He feels that a proud joyful 
voice had once welcomed his coming into the world. Now 
considering his present position he never wished to hear such 
a voice again. It implies that Job's very existence, which 
has been a joy to him because of God's favour is now his 
intolerable burden. He feels it is his predicament.

To Job life seems to be fitful fever. The 
troubles of life are contrasted with the placid sleep of 
death. The more Job dwells on the fact of death the more he 
finds himself fascinated by it. He thinks of his company in 
the dormitory of death. St. Francis of Assisi could address 
death as 'thou!, most kind and gentle death'....." Job could 
have used exactly the same language but for different 
reasons. "For Job, death was an escape from life, an 
anaesthetic which would make his soul forget the slings and 

arrows of outrageous fortune." The light of life appears 
as a doubtful privilege. It only shows up the hopeful lot of 
the miserable and the embittered.

In Job we have a man in whose eyes death is no 
longer the prince of terrors to be shunned, but a prize to be 
sought with the avidity of a man digging for treasure. The 
light can only mock the man who has lost the way in life, who 
has the feeling that God has hedged him in at every turn.
Strahan says, 'Light without liberty is a poor boon'. The most brilliant light can only mock a man in a dungeon or a bird in a cage. This idea is quite contrasted in Psalms.

I called upon the lord in distress; the lord answered me, and set me in a large place.

(Psalms CXVIII - 5)

Job's sighing comes as his bread. Moffatt interprets V 24 as 'sighs are my daily bread.'

For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters.

(III-24)

Job accuses Eliphaz of looking only at one side of balance as the latter obviously views with the disapproval of Job's impatience under suffering. He feels like a man into whose body the archer of the Almighty is sending poisoned arrows. They are gnawing his inwards and consequently he is pining away by slow degrees and in this way God's hostility is directed against him. He cannot help the poison going right through him. There is reason for his cry of agony. His is not a case of 'much ado about nothing'. According to
Moffatt, 'Job has lost his taste for life, and so he compares it to 'insipid food and saltless'; which is an indication of waning of charisma. Job claims that the right to betray and bellow since he has been wounded by God and offered tasteless food (words) by his friends.

Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

(VI 6-7)

Since Job has lost his taste for life, he has developed an eager taste for death. To him the prospect of death is his only comfort. The fearlessness of Job's attitude to death is emphasised. His mind runs to meet the thought of death, even death through a gateway of unsparing pain. He has nothing to fear from death, nor from God whose commands he has never denied.

Job's apprehension of death is reminiscent of Emily Dickinson attitude to death. She regarded death as the great unknown and never ceased to ponder its fascination and mystery. Miss Dickinson's finest poem on the subject is "Because I could not stop for Death" in which death is seen
from various angles and in which her views on death and immortality are revealed with an artistic perfection. Life has made too heavy demands upon Job's strength and patience. He can fight no further battles for he is no superman with the strength of stones and with flesh of brass. So natural resources are exhausted. It is made explicit when he says that friends should be kind to a despairing man or in Moffatt's words, "he will give up faith in the Almighty." But Job has been denied human pity. In a striking figure he compares his friends to brooks. In a figurative language their ignorance of God's plan towards Job is well described. They are like the brooks which are bound by snow and ice in the cold weather and thawing with the return of warmer weather, until at length they dry up altogether.

My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away.

Which are blakish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid.

(VI.15-16)

We are next given a glimpse of Arabian caravans hurrying towards the brooks, only to be disappointed. They swing away into the desert to their doom.
What time they wax warm, they vanish.
When it is hot, they are consumed out of
their place.
The paths of their way are turned aside;
they go to nothing, and perish.

(VI.17-18)

The lavished imaginary employed in the above verses indicate
the short-lived nature of the love and sympathy of Job's
friends. A reason for the friends becoming broken cisterns
whose waters have failed is suggested here. The fear roused
by the contemplation of Job's calamities has chilled their
sympathy. They are afraid that to take Job's side would mean
standing on the other side from the God who has it within His
power to bring similar trials upon them. It strikes a
contrast between what Job expected from his friends and what
he actually received from them. Though he had not expected
any balm from them, he had at least hoped for genuine sympathy
and for forthright dealing. On the other hand there had been
insinuations against his integrity. His friends had made the
mistake of dealing with the wild, whirling speeches of a
desperate man as if every word was cool and calculated. He
is ready to stand by his integrity to look at the whole world
in the face with clear conscience and steady eye. Job asks
whether his moral taste perverted and can he not
differentiate between good and evil.

Job pictures life as a hard struggle in a series of striking images. According to him it is like a 'distasteful period of service laid upon a hired servant, whose only consolations are the cool shadows of the evening in which the day's work is forgotten and the wages which he receives at the end of the day. Job can think of no sweeter rest and no more valuable wages, than death. Further there is no wonder if life holds sleepless nights and loathsome disease. He proceeds to dwell on the brevity of life. Life is a swiftly moving shuttle. It is like wind and an insubstantial fading cloud moving towards the grave which is a realm from where there is no turning back to common place things or familiar scenes.

O remember that my life is wind:
mine eye shall no more see good.

(VII-7)

As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.

(VII-9)
Therefore I will not refrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

(VII-11)

Cramped by the weight of human misery and by his own suffering, Job utters a bitter complaint. The divine treatment of him might almost seem to imply that he was like the sea to be kept under restraint, or a cruel monster endangering the order of the universe. Self pity totally blinded Job's perception regarding God's ways.

"What accounts for this unremitting superintendence of him, which has scared the wits out of him and made him detest life?" The atmosphere is quite contrasted with that of

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

(Psalms. VIII-4)

Now the question arresting the attention is if God is so benevolent and so great, why can't God leave him alone at least for a moment.
How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?

(VII—19)

Job is very much grieved that God is always on the prowl. He seems to think of God as an irate inspector with his unhappy visits. It is shocking to Job why such a mighty God is always mindful of this minute sin of man. In verse 21 a divine approach to forgiveness will be too late for the sleep of death will have overtaken him.

And why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

(VII—21)

Job confesses that he is a sinner but he cannot understand why God refuses to forgive him.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.

But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which
is good; that sin by the commandment
might become exceeding sinful.

(Romans VII-13)

Raymond E. Brown S.S. says "Job's friends should
not take his wickedness as proved merely by the fact of
suffering. After this vehement protest Job re-affirms his
innocence, describes his pain, and then makes a pathetic
appeal to God, mingled with bitter reproaches for this unkind
treatment . . .

"Job is not allured by the happiness that Eliphaz
had augured for him. His affliction does not result from any
act of his and it cannot be removed by any facile
'repentance'. All he desires is a speedy death. His own
consolation will be that he has not, as his wife had
proposed, failed in loyalty, even when so severely treated.
With great pathos Job bursts into protest against the
increase of his suffering by failure of the expected comfort
from his friends. "Stones" and "bronze" imply reference to
statues. Then of marble or metal feel nothing, but Job is
living flesh and blood . . .

Job expresses disillusionment with his friends.
Without going into any arguments, He expresses his profound
disappointment. He feels his friends instead of bringing him
comfort, they are acting as his enemies. His reaction is illustrated by a Homeric simile, the most elaborate in the Book of Job. The streams that flow down wadies in Arabia and Syria, are mostly not perennial. They run furiously in the rainy season but sooner or later dry up completely when the rains cease. Desert travellers who counted on finding water in a particular wady might be exposed to death by thirst, if that stream had ceased to flow. Their disappointment and despair are the images of Job's reaction to his friends' attitude as revealed in the speeches of Eliphaz. He has not asked much of his "brothers" to spend their money nor risk their lives but he has only asked them to show him sympathy by adopting his point of view and by helping him, if they can to make him sense of this waking nightmare."

Job, accustomed to an untroubled, relationship with his divine benefactor, appeals implicitly to the love God has for him. His human friends have failed him but he takes for granted that his divine friend will come looking for him. This statement of the finality of death is important and will recur several times. The whole problem would be different if Job knew anything of a judgement and possible happiness after death, but he has no evidence or basis for such a belief.
Job's first formal prayer to God must be shocking to Eliphaz even to hear it. The former's conception of God is not as one of retributive justice. But the conception of the Adversary and that of Eliphaz is analogous to an ordinary man who observes certain rules, does certain things and avoids others and the just judge rewards him in due proportion. Job has known God as a person adored and loved, whom he can address intimately, the relationship is a personal one, whose possible categories are friendship and enmity, love and hatred. This dearly loved friend has now turned on Job, maltreating him and tormenting him. There is no question of justice or its opposite. The problem is why is a friend suddenly acting like a vicious enemy. Job asks God emphatically "why have you set me up as your target? My soul prefers choking and my bones prefer death. Job ends by making more explicit the idea in verse 8. God cannot really mean to treat him like this; but according to Job when he realises what he is doing, he will be dead and it will be too late to put things right.

The eye of him that hath seen me
shall see me no more: thine
eyes are upon me, and I am not.

(VII-8)
SECTION-II

Job holds the view that it is impossible for a mortal man to be declared just in the sight of God. He sticks to a general principle acceptable to all the three friends which is expounded by Eliphaz in the verse mentioned below:

Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his maker?

(IV-17)

Job accepts the truth of the principle, but goes on to deny that there can be a grain of comfort in it. According to him there is no point in attempting to establish one's innocence before a God of infinite wisdom, who can ask a thousand unanswerable questions. He is a God of infinite power too, shaking heaven and earth, heaping up marvels beyond human ken. Hence it is futile to plead one's case before such a God. When God transfers His attention from nature to man, His power sweeps on just as arbitrarily.

Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.

(IX-11)

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When God pounces upon His prey who can challenge His action? Even when the stoutest rebels have to capitulate before the naked strength of God, what about Job to withstand the onward rush by mere words. Job further says that even stainless innocence would be struck dumb before Him. Even if God had answered Job's call that God and he should meet in some judgement court, the latter is skeptical about receiving a fair hearing.

Job does not know that God has allowed Satan to crush him for a high purpose. Hence his bitter complaint against God. To him He is a storming God striking without cause not giving him a moment's breathing space. God is relying not on justice but on might, destroying good and evil indiscriminately. He is laughing at the tortures of the innocent allowing the earth the happy-hunting ground of the wicked covering the faces of judges so that they do not see what is right. It means that God has blindfolded the judges so that they see neither crimes nor innocence. So he cannot expect any fair hearing from such a God and life has become obnoxious to him.

Job turns from the wounds of the world to consider his own sorrows and the fleeting nature of life. When more optimistic feelings struggle towards the surface, they are
driven down again by the knowledge that God is determined to hold him guilty. Job seems to give up the unequal struggle. He is up against a God who plunges him into a slime pit even if he washed himself with soap and his hands with washing soda so that even his clothes would detest him. When he is genuinely craving for purity of soul, he feels that he is battered by God. Job feels that God is not a man, as he is, that he may answer Him and that they should come to trial together. Hence he expresses his feeling for the need of an umpire between himself and God.

Neither is there any daysman between us, that might lay his hand upon us both.

(IX-33)

Perhaps Job is not aware of God's offer:

Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

(Isaiah, I-18)

...the remarkable yearning for the God of the mysterious, terrifying beyond to reveal Himself in the fabric...
of understandable human experience, one is reminded favourably of the words of Browning's Saul. "It is my flesh that I seek in the Godhead." In this cry for an umpire between God and man we see a prophetic reaching out for the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

(I Timothy: II.5-6)

But to Job God is so immense that he tells that he needs someone who can help him and someone who can argue his case in court. Job's call seems not directly predicting the mediatorship of Christ, for he is not looking for one to forgive him but for one who can testify to his innocence. Job turns sadly from what might have been to the stern reality he knows i.e., the terrifying divine rod smiting him. If God revokes his rod, he will be able to speak out fearlessly in affirmation of his innocence, for he has a clear conscience.

With no umpire to help him, Job is forced to appeal directly to God, in an attempt to solve the mystery of the divine antagonism to him. Giving a free utterance to his complaint, Job asks God to let him know why he has contended
against him. He also questions God whether the latter has human eyes to see just like a man sees. Or whether His days are limited to examine Job's case thoroughly.

Are thy days as the days of man?
are thy years as man's days;
That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin.

(X. 5-6)

Even while expressing these suggestions Job knows their emptiness. He cannot get past the conviction that God must know him to be a man of integrity. Job appeals to the divine Potter who has lavished such painstaking care upon His handiwork. He continues to question God as if he were his adversary in court. He wants to know how God, who so wonderfully formed him in the womb, could all the while have planned to punish him despite his innocence. This is reminiscent of a poetic description of God making a baby in the womb.

For thou hast possessed my reins,
thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made; marvellous are
thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

(Psalms: CXXXIX.13-16)

We see Job touching depths of doubt and despair blacker than anything found elsewhere in the book. The Potter has concentrated on making the verses especially beautiful so that, in the hour when He decides to mar it, the contrast between the past and present may be all the more striking. In this connection we may quote Moffatt who says "All the while this was thy dark design!" Job feels that he is dealing with a God who is swift to note even trivial sins. His imagination quails at the prospect of what would happen if he were really guilty. Righteousness makes no difference. He still has to hang his head, cowed before a
God who, like a fierce lion, delights in hunting him with relentless assiduity i.e., with careful attention what one is doing. The thought is that host after host of afflictions which are God's witnesses against his integrity lurk about him. We find the two pathetic cries in the following verses.

Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?
Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!
I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.

Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.

Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;

A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

(X. 18-22)
In a nutshell Job says that whether he is guilty or innocent, the all-powerful God will not treat him justly. The friends idea of a sort of communicative justice between God and man destroys God's transcendence and tends in this respect to bring him to man's level. Hence Job suggests this "reductio ad absurdum."

Job addresses himself to the "real" God. The friends understanding of his case is false. So he must try to find a truer one. Desperately he speculates on possible motives for this persecution, proposing wild theories, trying to provoke an answer. He recalls with awe the process of his formation in the womb, by the hands of God and the gifts then made and continued. For all this solicitude, he could never be sufficiently grateful. But now that gratitude is poisoned, if all along God was only preparing a victim to be tortured. Here is the denial of friends' idea of the strict moral causality of human acts. Whether Job acts rightly or wrongly it makes no difference. God has chosen to torment him for reasons of His own. So God's 'impatience' is not only reserved for the foolish but also afflicts the just. Hence Job can desire only that God withdraw from him.

Resenting his friends' assumed omniscience, Job gives only scanty attention to the sentiments of his friends.
Now Job employs his powers of sarcasm and logic to bitterly criticise the facile assumption of his friends, that they have a right to talk down to him. He feels that it is for them to mouth their glib common-places in their still secure and comfortable world. It implies that the tents of the robbers are at peace and those who provoke God are secure. He now states his familiarity with everything that they have said about the wisdom and power of God. Even the beasts of the field are not ignorant of that.

Job is also aware of the fact that all life is in the hand of God. The question perturbing his mind, which his friends will not face, concerns the use to which God puts His power. He wants to know what kind of character controls the operation of the power. He is not prepared to swallow down unexamined and undigested, the opinions of others, no matter how ancient, if they do not commend themselves to his moral and spiritual palate. Job pictures God's power sweeping on indiscriminately and irresistibly, devastating the earth in natural calamities, shattering the influences of the wise, the mighty, the respected, bringing them to power only in order to grind them down again, saddling the people with leaders whose idea of the direction they are taking is no clearer than that of one, groping in the dark, or of an intoxicated man. We look in vain for any principle
integrating the divine actions which he describes, and feel that we are meant to conclude that for Job in this hour there was none.

Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

(XII-14)

He discovereth deep things out of the darkness and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.

(XII-22)

In the above lines there is a reference to God's exact knowledge of the most deeply concealed secrets of heart.

Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

(XXIX-15)

Job feels that his counsellors have become completely untrustworthy. He calls them quacks and accuses
them of showing partiality to God (since God is stronger than Job) by telling lies about Job. Someday God will examine and punish them for their deception.

Rejecting their counsel, Job turns from his friends scathingly and impatiently. To him, they are futile physicians of the soul, seeking to justify the ways of God by maxims of ashes and defences of clay. He accuses them of being, not genuine allies of God, but cringing sycophants using twisted arguments to bolster a cause they support out of a wholesome respect for their own skin. We may compare them with a man supporting the cause of a bully, not because he is interested in the rights and wrongs of the cause, but because he is afraid of the man's strong right arm. Thus the friends have made much of God's omniscient gaze upon Job. Job feels that they are not mindful that the very same gaze is upon the motives for their own championship of God. How will they fare when they stand at the bar of majesty and the omniscience of God? It is a burning question one might ask, if one did not understand the ways of God. Job's conception is that sincere opposition to God may fare better than insincere support of Him.

As Job becomes conscious that further appeals to his friends are useless, he turns to God. He is aware that such an appeal is a risky affair, but he cannot prevent
himself defending his case. Recklessly he calls for a successful challenger of his innocence. If such a person could be found, he would not have one further word to say. Hence he intends to seek vindication from God and believes that he will receive it.

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

He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite shall not come before Him.

(XIII. 15-16)

W.A. Irwin recommends the translation (Vs.15). Though he may slay me, I will not delay; but I will argue my ways to His face. It implies that the verdict will go favourably for Job and that it is only godless people who have reason to be afraid in God's presence. The thought that God is opposed to the dishonesty of the friends, suggests a just God who will not disappoint the hopes of those who put their trust in Him. Job wants God to withdraw his hand of punishment and to start communicating with him.

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Withdraw thy hand from me: and
let not thy dread make me afraid.

(XIII-21)

If these conditions are granted, he will be equally happy in the role of a plaintiff. As he is ignorant of the charge levelled against him, he asks for a clear statement of the reason for the divine hostility, which has issued in such a harsh sentence. Just as a humble creature Job was tossed about by life, with the mark of corruption upon him.

To Job it is strange that divine justice should fasten on a creature like man. His existence is fleeting and troublous and involved in the universal sinfulness of humanity. The fate of things is contrasted with the fate of persons to the advantage of the former. A felled tree may sprout again but death writes an inexorable 'nevermore' on man's life. Man is like a flower that lives its short life and is gone, not like a tree that revives even after it has been cut down. The gloom of the picture penetrates Job's spirit so profoundly that there is a dramatic revulsion from it.

O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, but that thou wouldst keep me secret, until
thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint
me a set time, and remember me!

If a man die, shall he live again?
all the days of my appointed time
will I wait, till my change come.

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee:
thou wilt have a desire to the work
of thine hands.

(XIV. 13-15)

Job's spirit now appears to rise above the despair engendered
by his rotting body. Although resurrection in the fullest
sense is not taught here, Job is saying that if God so
desires He is able to hide Job in the grave, then raise him
back to life at a time when the divine anger is past. His
soul soars up in quest for the light of a worthwhile here
after. At present he feels the rod of the God of wrath
across his shoulders. Presumably, he must bear it while the
present life lasts. He gives expression to the lovely dream
of the God of grace granting him asylum, first in Sheol, the
abode of the dead, and then calling him back to an existence
in which He, the creator, would yearn over the work of His
hands. He is like a man raising questions which Jesus alone
can answer.
Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall be live.

(John. XI-25)

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

(II. Timothy. I-10)

The glory of the dream fades in the recollection of the grim facts of the present. The God of grace retires to the background and Job imagines a God who, miserlike, keeps constant touch on every sin and a God who pulverizes the mightiest works of nature and dashes the hopes of man. Death is the supreme trump card of man's Divine Antagonist. It makes man unable to rejoice in the rejoicings of the children that he leaves behind, or to weep with them in their perplexities. It does not even mean the cessation of his own pain. This may refer to the terrible idea that the soul in Sheol had sympathy for the decomposing body, feeling the touch of corruption upon it.
As Job realises his friends unanimous and blunt refusal to accept the testimony of his own clear conscience, he turns on them all with withering sarcasm. He feels that what they said is based on common place knowledge. It needs no wisdom to declare that God governs the world and can do all things. Job underlines this with another doxology, this time describing the divine government of human affairs, and how God, for his own mysterious reasons, brings about the rise or fall of peoples and kingdoms. Gods ways are not so easy to interpret and understand. They are extremely mysterious to men. The friends will not admit the mystery. In the teeth of the evidence, they are defending God in human terms and are even telling lies his on his behalf. This outrageous perversion is denounced by Job in strong terms.

Job holds the view that reverence for God demands respect for truth in the first place. He will testify to the truth and will proclaim his clear conscience, if need arises before God himself. Basing on the friends conclusion Job feels that if he is a guilty man, let God make clear his guilt. He is ready to endure this estrangement if he was assured that there would be a future reconciliation i.e., there would be a happy reunion with God after suffering this unhappy ordeal. But this is a wishful thinking. To him
death is the end. So no restoration of recovery of happiness is possible.

Job feels that calamities whether of nations or individuals, demonstrate God's supremacy and mystery, but not necessarily wickedness in the sufferers. Therefore the friends are being unjust to him. Throughout the dialogue Job alone utters prayers to God. The friends praise Him but they do not address Him. They have no need of such personal reference. Their God works retribution in strict accord with human deserts and they need to only act correctly. There is nothing they need or wish to say to Him, and there is no place for a relationship of love. They do not reason with God. But they reason only about Job and in part wrongly. They ignore God’s offer:

Come now, and let us reason together
Saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson,
they shall be as wool.

(Isaiah. I-18)
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they shall be as wool.

(Isaiah. I-18)
In Job's words there is a pointed rebuke to wisdom teachers:

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace,
is counted wise: and he that shutteth
his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

(Proverbs. XVII-28)

The famous passage containing verses 6-11 in Chap.XIII,

Hear now my reasoning, and
hearken to the pleadings of my lips.

Will ye speak wickedly for God?
and talk deceitfully for Him?

Will ye accept his person? Will
ye contend for God?

Is it good that he should search
you out? or as one man mocketh
another, do ye so mock him?

He will surely reprove you, if
ye do secretly accept persons.

Shall not his excellency make
you afraid? and his dread fall upon
you?

(XIII : 6-11)
There is a warning against a temptation that may come to all controversialists and apologists, in theological as in other contexts. The Vulgate version is still more forceful:

"Numquid Deus indiget vestro mendacio?" "Does God need your lies?"

Job reasons with God. His protest and the plea for explanation are genuinely religious, inspired by His past experience of God's love and by his intense concern over his personal standing with Him. According to the conventions of the psalm of lament, enemies are thought of as opponents in a law suit against whom the sufferer must defend and establish his innocence. The friends have shown themselves to be such enemies, and such an enemy according to outward appearances, and the general estimation of men; is God himself. Thus Job pictures Him as his adversary at law which leads him to conceive a relation of justice one to the other. It is for this misrepresentation that Job must repent at the end of the book. But it does not corrupt his intense faith in God's love. He has complete faith that God, if He speaks, will speak in Job's favour. He is confident that he has committed no such misdeeds as would be reason for his suffering.
Job spurns the empty comfort of his friends which is otherwise called windy words. He hurls back Eliphaz's accusation of him that he is a windbag rebel against God. He feels that if he were a comforter instead of a sufferer there would be genuine substance in the comfort he would offer. The woefulness of his impasse is drawn in poignant fashion. In his afflictions he feels that God is straddling him like a wild beast looking down on its powerless prey with flashing eyes. These divine assaults have condemned him to habitual mourning and humiliation. Yet the target of these assaults has been an innocent man.
Once again Job rises from the profoundest depths to the greatest heights. He has been unable to let go his God in the face of his ugliest doubts and fears. He feels when an unjust death lays his innocent life in the dust the voice of the innocent blood will rise to the highest heaven. There is heaven that he suddenly catches sight of a divine champion a divine sympathiser, who will be prepared to vouch for his integrity. Tearfully he appears to the heavenly witness to support his cause in the teeth of the insinuations of his friends and of the shattering blows of the God who is responsible for his earthly afflictions. This passionate longing for a heavenly witness on his side strikingly points forward to the Christian thought of an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

(I. John. II. 1-2)
Here faith is reaching out for a 'God for us'. Again Jesus (Jehovah) alone can answer Job. Away with all hopes offered by men, Job feels only God can give him surety of atonement. He has become an object of scorn. His only hope is in the grave for which he has almost family affection. Job rises from the most tragic sense of dereliction to the most triumphant affirmation of faith. Anger gives way to sorrow as he addresses the friends. Job complains that God is bent on humiliating him. His relatives, intimate friends, servants, and his very wife, all turn from him with loathing and he is thus robbed off the affection of those who mean most to him. Quite broken down by the realisation of his only state, he pathetically appeals to his friends for pity. The tragic relationship between Job and his friends appears in a clear light. He says surely the realisation that the hand of God is afflicting him ought to move them to pity. Yet it was for that very reason that they could not pity him. Their inflexible creed would not allow them to do so. They had to choose between their friend and their faith. Job's complaint against his friends was that they were too god-like. In their attitude to his suffering, which was gradually becoming more unsympathetic, he imagined that he saw a reflection of the attitude of God who seemed so callous about the weight of the sorrow with which He was crushing him down to despair.
Surely generations to come would react more favourably to it than does his own. As seen Job cannot rest content with the thought of a future 'well done' from the lips of humanity. His sense of alienation from man is infinitely less serious than his sensed alienation from God. There we have the key to the agony of heart which we see in the book.

For I know that my redeemer 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.

Whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold, and
not another; though my reins be
consumed within me.

(XIX. 25-27)

Here we have suddenly a wonderful vision of a 'Redeemer' or
16 'vindicator' (RSV mg) appearing to champion his cause, to allow him to hear the 'not guilty' for which he craved and to give him a vision of God. In general it must be said that no
One can read the above mentioned verses without finding the passage a mirror of the one who always lives to make intercession:

He ever liveth to make intersession for them.

(Heb. VII-25)

Who has brought life and immortality to light through the 'gospel'.

(II. Tim. I-10)

Job was unaware of the priceless jewels encased in his words. He was like an aeolian harp across which the wind sweeps making music says George Morgan. Job was expecting to be a spectator at his vindication from the vantage-point of a body of flesh, or that he looked forward to being present at the scene as a disembodied spirit. The thought of the coming vindication overwhelms him. Job's vindicator will punish those who have arrayed themselves against him assuming that they have diagnosed the real cause of his affliction.

Job flatly contradicts Zophar's dogmatic picture of the wicked. In bold colours he paints their enduring prosperity in home, family, field and flock. At the end of the day they pass away without any struggle.
They spend their days in wealth
and in a moment go down to the grave.

Therefore they say unto God, Depart
from us; for we desire not the
knowledge of thy ways.

What is the Almighty, that we should
serve Him? and what profit should
we have, if we pray unto Him?

(XXI. 13-15)

Is not their prosperity in their hand? In Moffatt's own
words "Are they not masters of their fortunes?" There is
no genuine answer to this question even if the friends want
to say in the defence of their position that the children of
the wicked will feel the weight of the divine displeasure.
It would imply that the wicked world get off scot-free. They
cannot feel the woe of their children after them. Suddenly,
Job accuses the friends of presumption in their cut and dried
theories about divine government. They are virtually
teaching God how He ought to govern, instead of facing the
facts as they are.
While Job's friends try to evolve a theory from watching the lives of people, Job seeks facts only. One man dies in effortless prosperity and another in abject misery. Who can attribute virtue to the former and vice to the latter? This is only a theory and not a fact. From this point of view what comfort can he expect to find in his friends' sweeping generalities. Job describes how an honourable burial is given to the wicked man. His grave is carefully guarded. His success inspires widespread imitation. Those who go before and after him are members of the funeral procession.

Job expresses a passionate longing to find the God of grace. Such a God would deal intelligibly with him, meeting out justice to this cause and not numbing him by a parade of sheer power.

Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!

I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments.
I would know the words which
he would answer me and understand
what he would say unto me.

Will he plead against me with
his great power? No but he
would put strength in me.

There the righteous might dispute
with him; so should I be delivered
for ever from my judge.

(XXIII. 3-7)

The wistful cry of these verses from a man seeking
to find God can be answered only by Jesus, in whom God takes
the initiative to find man. Job expresses the frustration of
his longing to find God. The most untiring efforts to bring
about the meeting for which he yearns are fruitless, although
God has the means of knowing the integrity of his heart of
hearts.

But he knoweth the way that
I take: when he hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold.

(XXIII-10)
In the words 'when he has tried me, I shall comeforth as gold', Job is contradicting the insinuations of his friends. They maintained that Job was being punished and was successfully screened from men. In his sufferings, according to them, God was tearing the screen aside.

The longing to find God is somewhat clouded over. Job finds himself wearily toiling up the hill of predestination with its icy altitudes. Job's most baffling problem was not the external darkness of calamity about him nor the darkness that had invaded his own person but rather his sense of the arbitrariness of the divine action.

Job probes into the providence of God. He puts the problem in a world setting. He describes the terrible injustice that, often exhibits in the world. Robbery of both the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is equally obnoxious to him. His suffering enabled him to empathize with the poor, who must forage for food and "gleam in the vineyards of the wicked". The scene which he described in chap.XXIV, is heart-rendering. The naked shiver in the cold of the night, the fatherless infants, are snatched from the breast, field hands harvest food but they go hungry, vineyard workers make wine but suffer thrust and groans rise from the dying and the wounded. Job cannot understand why God is silent and
indifferent in the face of such misery, but the fact that God waits disproves the counsellors' theory of suffering. Job is no more out of God's favour as one of the victims than the criminal depicted in the following verses.

They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.

The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face.

In the dark thy dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light.

For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

(XXIV. 13-17)

It is not easy to distinguish between Job's sentiments and those of his friends. Job passes from his
particular experience to the general. In moving terms, he describes the oppression practised by unscrupulous rulers and the misery of the poor and the unprotected. According to all orthodox Israelite theology these were two of God's functions regarding men. They are (i) God did not intervene to punish the impious, (ii) He does not rescue the oppressed. In defiance of the sentiments of his friends, Job maintained that there was nothing abnormal about the death of the wicked.

Job feels that his controversy with his friends cannot be explained by failure to stand where they have stood in appreciation of the omnipotence of God. It must rather be explained by his honesty in facing certain puzzling facts of experience which they have either overlooked or suppressed. A.B. Davidson says that "Job rivals Bildad in magnifying the greatness of God." Job's words embody the most painted sarcasm. Such words of wisdom offered by Job bear the stamp of the inspiration of some great person. With biting sarcasm Job responds to Bildad alone indicating that Eliphaz and Zophar have already been silenced. Job is impressed with the severely limited character of man's understanding. Thus the knowledge possessed by Job's friends was not superior to that of Job himself. If it is difficult for us to understand to comprehend the little that we know about God, how much more
impossible it would be to understand to the full extent of his might.

Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

(XXVI-14)

Job again repudiates the charges insinuated or directly affirmed by his friends. His affirmation is introduced by what Strahan calls "the most extraordinary form of oath in the scriptures. He swears by a God who has taken away his right." It is a remarkable picture of a man whose faith is abiding with him in the storm who still can call 'my God', the God he is tempted to imagine, is forsaking him. Despite the insinuation of his friends Job cannot doubt the reality of the almighty God. It is the mode of His government and in particular its application to himself which startles him. The present vexations cannot be explained by his sinfulness.

The connection between Job's affirmation of innocence and this picture of the end of the wicked is hard to fathom. The friends had maintained that sinfulness was the clue to Job's adversity, and had accordingly denied his
innocence. Job calls for his friends, who had falsely accused him of being wicked, to be treated as though they themselves were wicked men. He is about to remind the counsellors an issue on which they all agree that the truly wicked deserve God's wrath. The three friends falsely put Job in that category.

Job's friends' application of traditional wisdom to human suffering has been even more unsatisfactory than Job's untraditional response. Both attempts to penetrate the mystery have failed, and the dialogue has come to an unsatisfactory conclusion. Therefore Job or perhaps the unknown author of the book, inserts a striking wisdom poem that answers the question. Where can wisdom be found? The poem consists of three parts (1) precious stones and metals are found in the deepest mines, (2) wisdom is not found in mines nor it can be bought with precious stones or metals, (3) wisdom is found only in God and in the fear of Him. Thus Job anticipates the theme of God's speeches. God alone is the answer to the mystery that Job and his friends have sought to fathom.

But where shall wisdom be found?

and where is the place of understanding?

(XXVIII-12)
Whence then cometh wisdom?
and where is the place of understanding?

(XXVIII-20)

And unto man he said, Behold
the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.

(XXVIII-28)

Hence the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. The placid acquiescence in the superior heights of the divine wisdom contrasts strangely with many of Job's sentiments before and after this stage in the book. Elsewhere Job appears as a chained eagle, who spreads his wings and dashes himself against the bars of his cage. In the words of A.B. Davidson 'Job would soar unto God's place and pluck the mystery out of the darkness.' We must bear in mind that it is unreasonable to expect level headed consistency in a sufferer. We have been striking inconsistencies in Job's view of God. God has appeared sometimes as foe, sometimes as friend. The pendulum may also have swung in respect of Job's thoughts on human understanding of the ways of God.

We are brought face to face with the truth that true wisdom means faith in God and renunciation of evil. It is the reverence which acknowledges that there are more
things in heaven and in earth than are dreamt of in human philosophy. It is the obedience to the will of God however mysterious, which brings the seeker for truth much further than intellectual speculation. He also looks forward to the only possible answer in the word of God conveyed in the Yahweh speeches. The succeeding chapters restate the problem for which the word of God alone has the solution.

Like a lawyer submitting his final brief, Job presents a three-part summation. Part one (Ch.29) is a nostalgic review of his former happiness, wealth and honour. Part two (Ch.30) is a lament over the loss of everything, especially his honour. Part three (Ch.31) is a final representation of his innocence.

Recollecting his golden past Job says that he was a God preserved man. The sources of Job's happiness are portrayed with consummate skill. Firstly he was God preserved man secondly he was a domestically happy man. Thirdly he was a prosperous man. In the fourth place he was a universally respected man. When he took his seat as a city councillor it was noted with respect by all classes of the community. His speech was like a refreshing rain for dropping spirits. His very smile was a tonic for the irresolute. Even perfect strangers could depend on his thorough championing of their cause. In all these social
activities, righteousness was his garment and justice was his turban. The idea is almost that justice incarnated itself in Job. This is reminiscent of:

But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

(Judges. VI-34)

Job's anticipations for the future at that time, so rudely shattered by the calamities described in the first two chapters of the book are here portrayed. He expected an unbroken prolongation of the 'golden' days. He speaks of prosperity in touch with unfailing springs

He hath cast me into the mire and
I am become like dust and ashes.
I cry unto thee and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not.

(XXX. 19-20)

Deploring his predicament Job feels that he is insulted by men, even by the underdog class with whom in the old days he used to make friendship. He became like dust and ashes,
symbolic of humiliation and insignificance. No doubt he would some day use dust and ashes in Ch.42:6 to symbolise repentance.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

(XLII-6)

The miserable lot of the men who now reviled Job, is depicted in Vs.4-8:

Who cut up mallows by the bushes and juniper roots for their meat.

They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them as after a thief).

To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys in caves of the earth and in the rocks.

Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together.
They were children of fools, yea, children of base men; they were viler than the earth.

(XXX: 4-8)

The miserable lot of the men who now reviled Job, is depicted in Vs.4-8. He has become their song and a byword to them. Job now directs his thoughts away from men and toward God. He accuses God of abusing his power by attacking him despite his pleas for mercy. He feels that he is treated unjustly whether by God or by man. The rabble distressing Job appears as a host beleaguering a city, making escape impossible and then pouring in when the wall has been breached.

Job feels that misery approaches from above. He is dealing with a God who has cast him into miry pit. This is reminiscent of:

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

(XLII - 2)

Job is now cruelly indifferent in his cry for help. God's tempest of trouble is inexorably sweeping him forward to the
grey portals of the house of death. He felt himself sinking in a storm which he imagined cruelly callous which God had sent. Yet again and again the cry rose in his heart. 'Lord save me'. It was the hand of faith reaching out for a Saviour he could not yet firmly trust. The lines:

Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?

When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I wanted for light, there came darkness.

(XXX. 25-26)

imply 'if God only had dealt with him as generously as he had dealt with others, then his position could have even quite different. He feels that he is ostracized from the civilized community and he seems to wear black mourning garments, while his heart is turned to mourning and his flute to the sound of wailing.

We finally watch Job's final protestation of innocence. Here we find a remarkable insight into the character of man. His ideas are not easy-going and unambitious but exacting and inward. Strahan says "Job
judges himself by an almost evangelical standard of excellence." His attitude speaks of the high-water mark of the Old Testament ethic. We shall note several striking correspondence with the New Testament teaching. He was untainted by immorality. His external conduct had been pure, but no purer than his secret thoughts.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
(Matthew, V-8)

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
(Matthew, V. 28)

The purity of Job's action had emerged from a background of the fear of the lord that is wisdom. Job denies vanity and deceit of any kind. He is not afraid of the scales of God's justice if only they are fair and just. If his claim to integrity is unsound, he will gladly forfeit the produce of his work in the field. He was untainted by thoughtlessness. His servants always received fair play from him, for he remembered that there was a God in heaven to whom he was answerable - the creator of both master and servant.
And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

(Ephesians. VI-9)

Did he not that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb.

(XXXI-15)

In Job the protagonist surely stands out as a gem because of his remarkable social consciousness. His kindness was not confined within the walls of his own household. It went out to seek and to save the needy, the poor, the widows and the fatherless. Exploitations and oppression of the weak were foreign to his nature. Rather he had been a help of the helpless. His full stomach had never made him indifferent to the empty stomach of others. No Lazarus was allowed to be at his gate unnoticed and unhelped. He was given to hospitality when he could not have the faintest chance of return:

Then said he also to him that bade him,

When thou makest a dinner or a supper,
call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.

And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

(Luke XIV. 12-14)

Job was untainted by insincerity. His true eyes had never practised how to cloak offenses with a cunning brow, because he dreaded popular disapproval and more especially the disapproval of the great families. The recollection of past way of life causes Job to break into and almost reckless but not guilty cry with which he challenges high heaven. Hence the appearance of the indictment would not confuse or humiliate him. He would carry it triumphantly, joyfully and openly and with princely confident step and enter the presence of the Adversary whom he had found so elusive, ready to give Him an exact account of his daily walk.
I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him.

(Job 37:37)

Job has so far claimed that neither the voice of man nor the voice of God can convict and confuse him. He is guiltless of such charges as his friends have sought to fasten on him. He further says no effect: "Even my land had a voice, no more could it condemn me". Job calls for a curse on his land if he has not been fully committed to social justice.

At times Job thinks his own suffering will be pointless as Abel’s and utters a poignant appeal that earth refuse to cover his blood. Behind this wish is the notion that innocent blood cried to heaven until the wrong was vindicated. At other times Job seems certain that he is being tested in a furnace of affliction, just as metal is purified by fire, and that he will come forth as pure gold. Of course, Job also recognises the friality of life and hard lot of human kind, but he knows that his own misery cannot be explained solely by the appeal to finitude. To be sure Job sings about God’s grandeur just as readily as his three friends do, but knowledge that mortals touch only the fringes of God’s power brings no relief. Absolute power which turned malicious, threatened Job’s very existence.
Job’s physical suffering paled in comparison with his mental agony over this unfathomable face of God, which no longer smiles upon him but now contorts itself angrily before him. It seems to Job that his God actively destroys all hope, wearing it away like the slow erosion of rocks brought about by flowing water. Job perceives an element of unfairness in the natural order of things which grants sure expectation that a tree will put forth after it has been cut down provided sufficient water reaches the stump, but denies similar hope to humans. Memory of previous relationship with God evokes an astonishing declaration: God will remember me when it is too late, and he will long for his faithful servant. On one occasion Job recalls the reciprocacy that characterised their relationship (whenever he called upon God he answered), contrasting that memory with the present when God seems bent on disgorging his former friend.

Job’s lament unfolds a curing situation which bristles with irony. On the one hand, he endeavours to escape God’s constant vigilance while, on the other hand, he longs to find God who conceals himself from his former friends. Job cannot believe God capable of such personal antagonism, although his eyes tell him that such misfortune can only come from God. Death alone will afford relief from the "Hound of Heaven". So he earnestly begs God to look away
for a brief moment into which the messenger of death can insert itself. The realisation that death cancels any opportunity to vindicate himself gives Job renewed resolve to find God at any cost, for only by doing so can he obtain the divine declaration of innocence. That is why Job complains bitterly that he cannot discover God and thereby states his case before the heavenly court.

Job remains adamant in his protests of innocence and this unyielding stance obliges him to attribute fault to God. Failing to obtain a hearing in the divine court, Job concludes that God has abandoned justice also together. Because Job believes in the unlimited power of God, he naturally assumes that the problem belongs to the realm of will. The deity clearly does not want to execute justice throughout the land, Job charges, and with this concession Job broadens his scope to include the miserable wretches of society who know nothing but deprivation from birth to death.

Fleeting thoughts about survival beyond the grave only distress Job who denies the likelihood itself. He soon realises that his only hope consists in a formal pronouncement of innocence within a court of law. To this end he pleads with God to write about the crimes for which he now suffers, vowing to parade the charges for all to see. In desperation he enters into an oath of innocence, a self-
imprecation designed to force God to answer. Confused to the end, Job forgets that human action has no control over arbitrary deities.

In the legal procedures of ancient Israel, the "oath of innocence" denying an accusation was important. Thus swearing was a solemn religious act, submitting the case to a divine verdict. Job now swears that he is innocent of the crimes imputed to him by the friends - crimes which according to them, are also imputed to him by God. He challenges the divine judge to give his verdict to acknowledge Job's innocence.

Job examines his conscience and spells out exactly what crimes he in his time and situation, might have been tempted to commit. The code of ethics here implied is that proper to the ancient Oriental aristocrat, the head of patriarchal family who need fear no constraint from government or the power. Only religious motivation, and, to a lesser degree, public opinion will impel such a man, to virtuous action and self-restraint. Job's motive was simply the desire to please God. His moral standards are, in fact the highest to be found in the Old Testament.
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