



FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Job

Chapter Twenty Eight:



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

*Job Continues His Discourse -
In Praise of Wisdom*

*The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P.
The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.*

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT: JOB CONTINUES HIS DISCOURSE- IN PRAISE OF WISDOM

The First Lesson: Wisdom is not in a Determined Place

1 Silver has its origin in veins and gold a place where it is formed. 2 Iron is taken from the earth and stone released by heat, changed to bronze. 3 He placed a time for the darkness and he considers the end of the universe; and also the stone of dark and the shadow of death. 4 A torrent divides them from people traveling both those whom the step of the poor man has forgotten and those trackless. 5 The earth from which bread arose in its place has been destroyed by fire. 6 Places whose stones are sapphires, whose dust is gold. 7 This land does not know the path of the bird nor has looked upon the eye of the vulture. 8 The sons of peddlers have not trodden it; nor will the lioness cross it. 9 To the flinty rock he extends his hand; he overturns the mountains from the foothills. 10 He hollows out watercourses in the rocks and his eye has seen every precious thing. 11 He also searches fully the depths of rivers and he has brought hidden things to light.

“Wisdom has its source in hidden things.”

END OF JOB CHAPTER 28

Above Job had shown how frail and perishable is the lot which the wicked receive from God. (27:13) Now he intends to show on the contrary the dignity of the spiritual good which just men receive from God even in this world. He understands the spiritual good to be arranged under wisdom. He therefore intends to prefer wisdom to all corporeal things both as to its origin and as to its precious worth. (v.15) He begins to show that everything which seem precious in corporeal things has its origin in determined places, and begins with metals which are considered precious in the opinion of men. Note that metals are generated from the humid gases, released from the earth by the power of the sun and of the other stars and conserved in the earth. This is the origin of the pliability and the fusibility of metals, whereas, on the contrary, stones and other things like them which are not pliable or fusible are generated from the dry vapors trapped in the earth. Metals are specifically divided according to the greater or lesser purity of the vapor released and the difference of the heat of fusion. Among these gold seems to be the most pure, after this silver, and after this bronze, and finally iron. Metals have as many different origins as possible according to their greater or lesser purity. Because gold is most pure, it is generally found generated in its purity in the sand of rivers because of the great evaporation and the warmth of the sand. Silver is found generally in certain veins, either in the earth or also in rocks. Bronze is found incorporated into rocks. One finds iron in muddy earth which has not yet been perfectly integrated so that it has not yet arrived at the generation of a stone. In commenting on the various locations of the metals he says, "Silver has its origins in veins," in certain determined places, from which such gases are released which are apt for the generation of silver. Thus as soon as these vapors are mixed with either earth or stone, veins of silver are produced there. As to gold he then says, "and for gold there is a place in which it is refined," because some nuggets of gold are collected from a great quantity of sand which are melted into one mass. This does not happen in every place, but only in some determined place where a due proportion of active power coincides with the matter proportionate to such a species. As to iron he says, "Iron is taken from the earth," because it is found in the earth not yet refined, as it were. As to bronze he says, "and stone," with which one finds a gas proportioned to its nature is mixed, "released by heat," of great intensity, "changed to bronze," when what is found there of the nature of bronze is made aqueous by the heat of fire.

He then proceeds to examine other things which have a determined time and place from divine disposition and so are subject to divine knowledge. The greater part of these are hidden from men. The darkness of night hides the sun and many other things from us, but this happens by divine disposition, and so he says, "He placed a time for the darkness." Also, some things are hidden from us by their corruption when they are resolved into their principles, which are known to God but hidden from us, and so he says, "and he considers the end of the universe," the end of the resolution of things. Some are also found to be hidden from men because of the inaccessibility of place, for example, some mountains are sometimes inaccessible on which there are things which are removed from human sight, and expressing this he says, "and also the stone of the dark," which is the cliff of some high mountain always covered over by clouds like darkness, "and the shadow of death," some shadowy place in the canyons of the mountains which the life giving heat of the sun never touches. "A torrent divides them from people traveling." For torrents often flow down in the foothills of certain mountains which cannot be crossed so that on one bank of the river is the road for travelers to pass, and there is no access to the other bank. Sometimes it happens that there are some men who live here and there in such inaccessible places like these. Even the beggars who go everywhere do not presume to go to these places because of the difficulty of the approach, and so he says, "and," the torrent divides from the people traveling, "those," men, "whom" living in inaccessible places, "the step of the poor man has forgotten," so that they do not go there, "and those trackless," because there is no road open to them.

There are also some places which are inaccessible, not because of their location, but because of something extraordinary happening, for example, because they are ruined by some physical change, like Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen. 19:24) and so he says, "The earth from which bread arose in its place, (as proper and fitting) has been destroyed by fire," for the cause of its destruction proceeds from a very great heat. When there is a great abundance of heat, the resolutions both of the dry and wet attain a great degree of integration, which generates certain precious things like rocks or metals from them. So as to the precious stones which are formed from dry evaporation, he says, "Places whose stones are sapphires," in the land ruined by fire. As to precious metals which are generated from humid evaporation he says, "whose dust is gold." Because these places release a harmful air from the abundance of sulphur, not only men, but also brute animals avoid these places. First as to the birds concerning which there is less reflection he says, "Land," that kind of earth, "does not know the path of the bird," namely, it does not dare to fly over it, nor even to approach it, because of the harmful air. Thus he says, "nor has looked on," it is the eye of the vulture," who can normally see things from far away. Or one can interpret the text in another way. This land "has not known the path of a bird." The bird has no experience of that land, because the bird does pass through it, "nor has he" anyone, "in that land," looked upon the "eye of the vulture." Next he treats of men saying, "The sons of peddlers have not trodden it," (the merchants who are used to go to places that are hard to reach for profit). Then he treats of the four-footed animals saying, "nor will the lioness," who lives in wild places, "cross it."

Lest anyone believe that God receives knowledge taken from things like we do, he shows, consequently, that he knows things as the cause of everything. He therefore continues as to the hidden creatures like the winds and the rains, "he gave the winds their strength," for he gave them their inclination of motion so that sometimes they move in this direction and sometimes in that. Then he speaks about the rains, first they are raised to become clouds in vapor, and so he then says, "and the waters," subject to evaporation", he holds suspended," in the air, "in measure," so that they do not overflow and flood everything if they were to overflow, or if they decrease unduly, make everything dry out. Next he speaks about the very generation of the rains when he says, "when he made a law for the rains," to come down at certain times and in certain places. Third he speaks about their effect, especially in the sea which is disturbed by atmospheric changes, and so he continues, "and" he was setting, "the way for the storm," the waves, "which roar," from great agitation, because even storms of this kind arise at certain times and in a certain intensity.

Because God does not acquire wisdom from creatures themselves as we do, but rather he produces creatures according to his wisdom, he therefore continues, "Then," when he was making creatures, "he saw her," wisdom, in himself, insofar as he produces things in their being through the actual considerations of his wisdom. Wisdom was derived from him first to the angels who were made participants in the divine wisdom, and expressing this he says, "he made her known," manifesting his wisdom to them. Second, to the universe of creatures by governing it through his wisdom, and he expresses this theme saying, "and he prepared" the rotation of the land in his wisdom. Third, to men who do not perceive the wisdom of truth by simple apprehension, as the angels do to whom it is made known, but arrive at it by the investigation of reason, and so he says, "he inquired," i.e. he made men investigate her. He expresses this as he continues, "and he said to man," namely, by illuminating himself and by communicating wisdom to him through interior inspiration: "Behold the fear of the Lord," which I am giving to you by presence, "is wisdom," because man clings to God through the fear of the Lord in whom is the true wisdom of men as in the highest cause of all things. "And to withdraw from evil," that is, from sin in which man loses God, "understanding," because understanding is especially necessary so that through understanding he may discern evil things from good ones. When he has avoided these evil things through the execution of good works, he attains the participation of divine wisdom. Thus because "The fear of the Lord is wisdom; and to withdraw from evil, understanding," the consequence is that the just who fear God and withdraw from evil have wisdom and understanding, which are preferred to all the earthly goods which evil men possess. So it is clear that the reasonability of divine providence is saved in the fact that spiritual goods are given to the just as better goods and temporal goods are given to the wicked as transitory.

Therefore, since he had said that wisdom is so incomparable and has a hidden origin, he inquires where the source of wisdom lies, saying, "Where, then, is the origin of wisdom?" where does it come from? "And where is the place of understanding," from what source do men participate in the light of understanding? He shows this source excels all human cognition, and so he then says, "She is hidden from the eyes of all the living," because, "the fount of wisdom is the word of God on high." (Qoheleth 1:5) There have been some augurs of omens who believed that certain birds of prophecy participated in a certain effect of wisdom over men, and in as much as they believed men could know the future from them. But he shows that wisdom exceeds this soothsaying saying, "and she is concealed also from the birds of the air." Therefore the origin of wisdom exceeds the heavenly bodies which move these birds. There are also some who seek the knowledge of the future from the dead, but not even this attains the origin of wisdom, and so he then says, "Ruin and death said: We have heard of her fame with our ears." He rightly attributes the fame of wisdom to death and ruin, because ruin and death imply the end and withdrawing from the goods which attain wisdom. Nevertheless, the three things already discussed can be metaphorically referred to the three kinds of rational creature. Thus when he says, "She is hidden from the eyes of all the living," he refers to men; when he adds, "she is concealed from the birds of heaven," he refers to the angels. When he further continues, "Ruin and death said: 'We have heard of his fame with our ears,'" he refers to the demons who are separated from God by damnation, in that they have knowledge of divine wisdom only by its reputation from afar.

To show the root of wisdom he then says, "God understands the way to her," the whole process of wisdom, since he himself is both the origin of wisdom and the "place of understanding." (v.20) Because God knows himself perfectly, he then says, "and he knows where wisdom is found," that is, he knows himself in whom wisdom is perfectly found as in its first origin. Wisdom proceeds from him in all creatures which are made by the wisdom of God, as art proceeds from the mind of the artist in his work, and so Sirach says, "God showers wisdom on all his works." (Sirach 1:10) Thus the very universe of creatures is like the secondary place of wisdom. So to show that God knows the place of wisdom, he continues saying that he knows the universe of creatures. First he shows this as to the most elevated creatures under which all things are contained, and so he then says, "He sees the ends of the earth," which are the most excellent creatures in which the order of creatures terminates in ascending from lower creatures, and these are heavenly bodies and the heavenly spirits. Then he shows this as to the other creatures contained under them, like the elements, and so he then says, "and he sees everything which is under the heaven."

Although these places are hidden from men, they are still not hidden from God who exercises his power in both the mountains and the rivers, and so he says, "To the flinty rock," the mountains made of rock, "he extends his hand," his power. He demonstrates this in two effects. First, by the fact that the mountains are sometimes completely leveled to the ground, and he expresses this by saying, "he overturns the mountains from their foothills." Second is the fact that "waters cross through the middle of the mountains," (cf. Ps. 103:10) as though there were a way hewn for them by divine power through the rocks, and so he says, "He hollows out watercourses in the rocks," in the courses of streams. Just as his power extends to do all splendid deeds, so his wisdom is extended to know every precious thing, and so he says, "his eye has seen every precious thing." For if he can lay the mountains low, if he can cut through rocks and exercise the same power over all the earth, he consequently can see the precious things which are hidden there although the eye of man cannot see them. His eye not only sees those things which lie hidden in the earth, but "he also searches fully the depths of rivers," i.e., he knows what lies hidden in the depths of rivers so perfectly he seems to carefully inspect them, and the sign of this is that, "he has brought hidden things to light," to reveal them to men.

The Second Lesson: Where Wisdom is Found

12 But where is wisdom found and what is the place of understanding? 13 No man knows its price, nor is it found among soft-living men. 14 The deep says: It is not in me; and the sea says: it is not in me. 15 The gold of Ophir cannot be traded for it, nor will one give its weight in silver in exchange. 16 She cannot be compared with the sparkling color of India; nor with the most precious sardonyx and sapphire. 17 Nor will gold equal her, nor glass nor will vessels of gold be exchanged for her. 18 Though they are lofty and exquisite, none are thought anything in comparison with her, for wisdom has its source in hidden things. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia will not equal her, nor are the most elegant dyed things comparable to her. 20 Where, then, is the origin of wisdom and the place of understanding? 21 She is hidden from the eyes of all the living and she is concealed from the birds of the air. 22 Ruin and death have said: We have heard of her fame with our ears. 23 God understands the way to her and he knows where wisdom is found. 24 He sees the ends of the earth and he sees everything under heaven. 25 He gave the winds their strength and the waters he holds suspended in measure, 26 when he made a law for the rains and the way for the storms which roar. 27 Then he saw her, he made her known, he prepared, he inquired 28 and said to man: Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom and to withdraw from evil, understanding.

Since he had shown that all the precious things found in corporeal bodies are contained in determined places, which though they are unknown to men are still known to God, he shows the eminence of wisdom by first introducing the fact that it is not contained in a determined place, and so he says, "But where is wisdom found?" This is as if he says: Wisdom is shut up in no corporeal place because it is not something corporeal. However, not only precious things themselves in corporeal bodies, but also their sources are shut up in corporeal places. But one cannot say this about wisdom, and so he says, "and what is the place of understanding?" For understanding is the source of knowledge and wisdom. Just as wisdom then is not shut up in a place, so neither is understanding which is its principle. Second, he shows the dignity of wisdom, because the price of wisdom cannot be reckoned, and so he says, "No man knows its price," for there is no thing known to man which is a sufficient price for wisdom.

He clearly shows the consequence of both these premises. First, he had said that wisdom was not found in a determined place. Those things which are esteemed as valuable among men are partly found among refined men, who strive to collect precious stones and metals, and so he says, "Nor is it found among soft-living men," that is, refined men, because they are especially impeded from the perception of wisdom since their hearts are preoccupied with pleasures. Such valuable kinds of corporeal things are partly found in some dark places, but this is not true with wisdom, and so he says, "The deep says: It is not in me," that is, what lies in the hidden places of the depths is especially hidden from human wisdom. They are partly found in the sea, both because they are generated there, like pearls in sea shells, or because they are lost there in sunken ships, but this is not true with wisdom. This is also so because valuable things are usually transported by sea from place to place, and so he says, "And the sea says, 'it is not with me.'" On the contrary, things in the sea are often completely hidden from human wisdom.

Next he explains what he had said about the fact that wisdom has no price, and he enumerates those things which are thought most valuable among men, saying, "The gold of Ophir," that is, the most pure gold, "will not be traded for it," because the price of wisdom cannot be valued in any amount of gold. After gold, silver is esteemed the most precious among other metals, and so he continues speaking about it, "nor can one give its weight in silver for exchange." Besides these metals there are some very precious stones of different colors which are especially cultivated in India, he then says about these, "She (wisdom) cannot be compared with the sparkling colors of India," i.e. the precious stones of diverse colors naturally tinted in India. He continues with precious stones found also in other lands, and so he says, "nor with the most precious sardonyx," which "is composed of two stones," from carnelian, which is red in color "lighting the soul up with joy and inciting cleverness of spirit," and of onyx, which is joined to it as having some harmful powers, like "exciting sorrows and fear." This harm is restrained by the carnelian. So it is said to have the property of "expelling lust and rendering a man pure and chaste." So it is called a very precious stone. He then adds, "and sapphire," which is the color of heaven, and is valuable because it has many powers. There are still other very precious stones (since the values of these stones are not the same in all places and times), and so he does not refer to them. He then speaks about things which have a value because of their beauty saying, "Nor will gold equal her," which has beauty from splendor, "nor glass," which has beauty from its transparency, although it is not distinguished by its high price. He then speaks about the beauty by reason of craftsmanship when he says, "nor will vessels of gold be exchanged for her, which are lofty" in size "and also exquisite," in composition. Just as they cannot be exchanged for wisdom, so also all these things are accounted as nothing in comparison to wisdom, and so he then says, "none are thought anything in comparison to her," because they are not even worth remembering when one mentions the excellence of wisdom.

Because he had said that some corporeal things were precious because they were hidden from us, he consequently shows that wisdom does not lack even this value when he says, "Wisdom has its source in hidden things." For the origin of human wisdom is hidden in two ways. In one way on the part of the light of the intellect, which is derived in us from the most hidden cause of all, God. In another way on the part of things known. Wisdom seeks the hidden properties and essences of these things, and by these ascends to the knowledge of divine matters, which is especially characteristic of wisdom. Thus he concludes that nothing can be compared to wisdom either by reason of value or by reason of concealment not even in the case of precious stones, and so he then says, "The topaz of Ethiopia will not equal it," which "takes its name from the place of its discovery, or because it has a resemblance in color to gold." As to costly garments he then says, "nor are the most elegant dyed things," any sort of silk or wool cloth, "comparable to her," to wisdom.